

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS PERCEPTION ABOUT DEVELOPMENTALLY
APPROPRIATE PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS IN THE
GA NORTH DISTRICT**

REGINA OWUSUA ACHEAMPONG



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GA NORTH DISTRICT**

**REGINA OWUSUA ACHEAMPONG
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**A dissertation in the Department of Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Educational Studies, Submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Education
(Early Childhood Education)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

APRIL, 2023

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

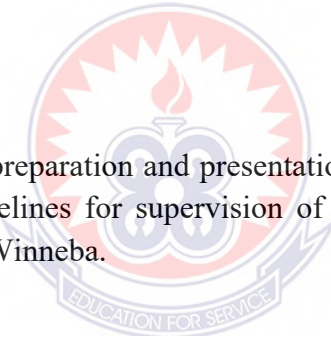
I, Regina Owusua Acheampong, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree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

Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

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



Mrs. Justina Adu (Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my lovely mother, Madam Victoria Dansoa Acheampong and my children, Bryan, Prince, Solomon, Daniel and Berlinda.



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I acknowledge with a heart full of gratitude to my supervisor, Mrs. Justina Adu of the Department of Early Childhood Education, UEW who provided invaluable assistance in guiding me through the completion of this research. I wish to say but of you this work would not have seen the light of day.

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed knowledge and practices of preschool teachers' perception about developmentally appropriate practices in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data. In all, 217 respondents were sampled using random sampling technique. The results from the study revealed that pre-school teachers are aware of and have knowledge developmentally appropriate practices. Again, the results from the study unravelled that even though pre-school teachers have knowledge about some of the developmental appropriate practices, they do not apply or implement them in the classroom. Finally, the study identified some challenges that included the lack of parental support, inadequate teaching and learning materials, lack of pupil's readiness, Inadequate school facilities, lack of full government support, and attitudes of school heads. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should provide teachers with comprehensive training and awareness about the use of DAP within a culturally-relevant context. Again, the Ministry of Education should ensure the developmental goals and objectives in the syllabus reflect local values and inform approaches to classroom practices.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

A developmentally appropriate pedagogy is a program that takes a developmental approach toward the education of young children. It applies to aspects of an early childhood program such as the materials and furniture provided and the activities and interactions between adults (teachers) and children. All the experiences within this program should be developmentally appropriate. What this means is that the early childhood environment and what occurs in it need to be structured to accommodate both the developmental age and stage of the children (Bredekamp, 2011). Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) relies on three assumptions to guide decision-making regarding what is appropriate practice: (a) research in developmental psychology is a valid source of children's learning, (b) individual pathways are evident in developmental research results, and (c) programs must be sensitive toward the social and cultural context in which children develop (Copple & Bredekamp 2019).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), is an approach to teaching grounded on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development (Cochran, 2007). Charlesworth (2017) argued that DAP is for everyone with diverse socioeconomic status, culture, race, gender, age, or special needs. Elkind (2018) also stated that a challenging, developmentally appropriate learning environment would help children develop creative thinking and critical thinking abilities. Empirical studies have demonstrated the efficacy of DAP in enhancing preschool children's learning and development. For instance, preschool

children who enrolled in DAP classrooms had better grades in science and in physical and social skills (Marcon, 2018) and scored higher on rote learning and applied knowledge skills (Huffman & Speer, 2017).

In the classrooms, developmentally appropriate teaching practices encompass a wide range of skills and strategies that are adapted to the age, development, individual characteristics, and the family and social and cultural contexts of each child served. Grounded in the caring relationships that educators nurture with each child and family as well as among all children and families these teaching practices are designed to foster development and learning for each child across all domains and subject areas. Teaching practices build on each child's multiple assets and actively counter various forms of bias (McDonnell, 2011).

Through their intentional teaching, educators blend opportunities for each child to exercise choice and agency within the context of a planned environment constructed to support specific learning experiences and meaningful goals. Educators recognize that children are active constructors of their own understanding of the world around them; they understand that children benefit from initiating and regulating their own learning activities and from interacting with peers (McDonnell, 2011).

On the other hand, children in developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) classrooms exhibited more stress behaviors than those in more DAP classrooms (Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, & Kirk, 2015). National Association of Educating the Young (2014) in U.S reported that one of America's larger challenges regarding ECE is the dearth in workforce, partly due to low compensation for rigorous work. Because the teacher is critical in the implementation of the developmentally appropriate approach, the teacher's perception about classroom practices are important. Research

showed that teachers' developmentally appropriate perception not only influence program quality but children's learning outcome.

McCarty, Abbott-Shim, and Lambert (2001) found that teachers in low quality classrooms have more inappropriate perceptions than those teachers in high quality classrooms. Jones and Gullo (2011) found that both teachers' developmentally appropriate perceptions were associated with children's positive social skills ratings, but not academic achievement. Research findings indicate teachers' perceptions and how they are related to their practice are important issues in the delivery of early childhood education (Rusher, McGrevin, & Lambiotte, 2013).

Pre-school teachers as key players in young children education have a crucial role to play in best practices this may include child guidance and discipline, respecting cultural diversity (McDonnell, 2011), establishing reciprocal relationship with families, (Lundin, 2017), creating a caring community of learners, teaching to enhance development and learning (NAEYC, 2013) in the classroom. In pre-school best practices, both personal and environmental factors are effective. As researchers we agree to the idea of National Association of Education of Young Children that teachers, as human beings, bring their past experience into classroom settings so their beliefs regarding how children learn and develop affect quality of the pre-school best practices. In the study of Cronin- Jones (2016), it was elaborated that if the teachers' existing belief structures were not consistent with the philosophy of the curriculum, then they affect the success of curriculum adversely.

In contrast, Kern, Kruse and Roehring (2007) also maintains the ideas that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are strongly influencing the best practices in early childhood education. In other words, once the teachers are defending the ideology of

the curriculum being implemented, then the performance of the teacher in the real classroom setting is affected positively during implementation. Furthermore, besides appreciating the philosophy of the new curriculum, Park (2018) suggested that understanding of the curricula by the teachers is crucial for proper implementation. Because once the teachers do not comprehend what the curriculum's theoretical framework is in details, they will not be able to successfully implement best practices in early childhood education.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The concept of DAP is based on Western ideology (Gupta, 2016), and therefore, within the Ghanaian context, the adoption of the standards of DAP reflects a 'Western' orientation towards constructs of good and effective practice. Juxtaposing this with the fact that while much has been gained, the historical and cultural legacy of traditional teaching approaches, based on Euro-American notions of child development, is still evident in many of the EC classrooms. In a post-independent Ghana, where the education system is trying to reform itself to address the needs of the population, it is worth exploring early childhood teachers' beliefs about DAP as well as their self-perceptions as early childhood practitioners. Additionally, with the reform of the early childhood sector, the pedagogical competence of the early childhood practitioner has come under greater scrutiny (Williams and Charles, 2018).

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAPs) have been recognized as an effective approach to promoting learning and development in young children (Marcon, 2013). However, there are concerns about the extent to which early childhood educators, particularly pre-school teachers understand and implement DAPs in their classrooms.

In the Ga North District of the Greater Accra Region, there is a lack of research on pre-school teachers' perceptions and implementation of DAPs.

In addition to the lack of research on pre-school teachers' perceptions and implementation of DAPs in the Ga North District, there are several other factors that make this problem relevant and important to address. For example, there is a growing body of research that highlights the importance of early childhood education in promoting children's academic and socio-emotional development. However, the quality of early childhood education can vary widely, and inadequate implementation of DAPs can negatively impact children's learning outcomes.

Furthermore, pre-school teachers play a critical role in promoting children's learning and development, but they may face numerous challenges in implementing DAPs in their classrooms. These challenges can include limited resources, inadequate training, and conflicting expectations from parents and administrators. Therefore, understanding pre-school teachers' perceptions and experiences with DAPs is crucial for identifying barriers to implementation and developing effective strategies to support DAP implementation in early childhood settings.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The study was to explore pre-school teachers' perception about developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District. The purpose of the study was to:

1. determine the knowledge preschool teachers have on developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana

2. Find out how preschool teachers implement developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.
3. Find out the challenges in the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What knowledge do preschool teachers have on developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?
2. How do preschool teachers implement developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?
3. What are the challenges preschool teachers faced in the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study intends to offer fresh insight into the belief systems and self-perceptions of early childhood teachers and how these influence their classroom practices. Presently there is no known similar study in Ghana and thus this research study will add to the body of scholarly literature on the subject. The study will also serve as reference for other researcher who may want to do similar or further on the subject-matter.

The outcome of the study will be of help to policy makers and stakeholders of education to initiate regulations and formulate policies in dealing with the issues at stake.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

The study focused on the perceptions of preschool teachers about developmentally appropriate practices at the Early Childhood Education settings. Pre-school teachers were chosen by the researcher as the main respondents of the study because they are the direct players in developmentally appropriate practices at the lower primary school and kindergarten levels.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

Preschool Teachers: Teachers who teach children between 3 and 8 years old.

Early childhood Curriculum: A curriculum that focuses on building relationships, developing physical skills, and teaching developmentally appropriate practices

Preschool – It is an educational establishment offering early childhood education to children before they begin compulsory education at primary school.

Kindergarten School – A school that prepares children, usually 5 or 6 year-olds, for the first year of formal education.

Day Care Centre - Usually refers to full-day programmes for young children up through the age of three.

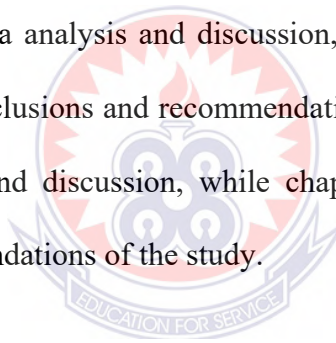
Infant Department - Sections of public primary or All Age schools which operate like a basic school for children ages four and five, prior to entrance to Grade One.

Infant School – A school for children between the ages of about 4 and 8 years.

Early Childhood Institution – A branch of education theory that relates to the teaching of children from birth up to the age of 8.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This dissertation is organised into five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction and provides a background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and the organisation of the study. Chapter two deals with the literature review, while chapter three discusses the methodology of the study which includes the research paradigm, research approach, sample and sampling procedures, instrumentation, validity and reliability, pilot testing, data collection procedures, data analysis procedure and ethical considerations. Chapter four was the data analysis and discussion, and finally in the last chapter, a summary of finding, conclusions and recommendations is offered. Chapter four deals with the data analysis and discussion, while chapter five discusses the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the study. Literature was, therefore, reviewed under the following subheadings:

1. Historical Perspectives of Pre-School Program
2. Objectives of Pre-School Education
3. Qualitative Of Kindergarten Curriculum
4. Theoretical Views on Early Childhood Education
5. The Concept of Early Childhood Education
6. The Importance of Early Childhood Education
7. Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Self-Perceptions
8. Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs about DAP and Classroom Practices
9. Developmentally Inappropriate Practices or Culture-Based Beliefs and Practice
10. Early Childhood Practices and Challenges in Ghana
11. Challenges of Implementing ECE Educational Practices

2.1 Historical Perspectives of Pre-School Program

Throughout the history of early education, there have been number of philosophers, educators and theorists who have observed young children. Frobel, the 19th century German who created and named the kindergarten (German to children's garden). Children between the age of 3 and 6 spent their days working in identically laid out gardens, participating in especially composed singing, games, and interacting with materials designed to teach a series of specific skills. (Suzanne & Kristine, 2001). Frobel is generally considered the founder of early childhood education not only

because he was the first to design a curriculum specifically for young children but because he introduced play as a major medium of instruction (Carol, 2017).

Another early childhood educator was Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor who was inspired, in part, by Frobel's materials. Observing and working with the same age children, she focused on creating curricula that permitted youngsters to advance in their learning to the greatest extent possible. Her learning materials were nearly as prescribed and rigid as Frobel's, but Montessori also was dedicated to creating citizens for democracy and built a variety of choices into the curricula and the teaching methods (Bloch & Popkewitz, 2017).

2.2 Objectives of Pre-School Education

Education has played a definite role in human history as a means of transmission of knowledge, skills, ideas and values from generation to generation (Brown et al, 2010). According to children's Family and youth welfare organization of Ethiopia (2013), the following are some of the objectives of kindergarten education. To develop in the children a feeling of self-dependence and self-reliance. To develop and encourage positive attitude towards work, to build children with enjoyable behaviour necessary for life. To make children aware of their rights and responsibilities, to prepare children for social life, to teach about nature, their environment, and to make them innovative and creative and finally to develop in the children a sense of respect, and love of their society and country.

As stated by MoE (2002) the main aim of pre-primary education is the all-rounded development of children in order to prepare them for formal schooling. On the other hand Wasserman (2018) pointed out that the aim of the program can be achieved through meeting the following goals by participating in the kindergarten program:

children will develop confidence in themselves and their ability to learn, demonstrate curiosity and the ability to focus their attention, acquire a level of communicative competence that is personally satisfying, acquire social skills and abilities which enable them to relate to other children and to adults and remains true to their individual natures, being free to develop to their own potentials.

Agarwal (2013) also suggests more specific objectives of pre-school education institutions. These are to develop in the child good health, habits and to build up basic skills necessary for personal adjustment, such as dressing, toilet habits, eating, washing, cleaning etc. To develop desirable social attitudes, manners and to encourage healthy group participation, making the child sensitive to the right and privileges of others. To encourage aesthetic appreciation, to stimulate the beginning of intellectual curiosity concerning the environment and to help him understand the world. To develop the child's ability to express his thoughts and feelings in fluent, correct and clear speech; and to develop in the child a good physique, adequate muscular coordination and basic motor skills.

2.3 Quality of Kindergarten Curriculum

Quality education is education that focuses on the learner to prepare them for life, not just for assessments. Quality education includes learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace (Hawes & Stephens, 2015).

Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (Grisay & Mahlck 2014). Hawes and Stephens (2015) stated that, the general concept of quality of education is made up of three interrelated dimensions. These are: the quality of human and material resources available for teaching (inputs), the quality of teaching practices (process) and the quality of results (outputs and outcomes). The quality of preschool education can be seen in many perspectives.

The classroom must be equipped with sufficient materials and toys. Communication throughout the day, with mutual listening, talking/responding and encouragement to use reasoning and problem solving. Provision of materials and activities to promote understanding and acceptance of diversity. Encouraging parents to involve in all aspects of the program small size groups Qualified teachers and staff, and supervision and evaluation of all staff with professional growth (Hawes & Stephens 2015).

2.4 Theoretical views on Early Childhood Education

2.4.1 Maria Montessori Model

Pestalozzi (2015) thinks that a teacher must have a special training combining both intellectuality and the ability of touching the hearts by feeling respect and sympathy for the children (Montessori, 1972). Montessori followed the ideas of Pestalozzi and she focused on the process of normal development to discover how human beings could reach their potential more fully than they did in traditional schools. Montessori began her experiment in January 1907. She viewed her schools as Labourites in which to study how children learn best (Lillard, 2015).

According to Montessori's philosophy, child-sized environment offering beauty and order is the best for children's learning because it is cultivating and stimulating. In such an environment, children may choose their own work-activities that have meaning and purpose for them. In addition, there are times when carefully sequenced and structured materials (sensory materials) are introduced by the teacher to the child (Wortham, 2016). The Montessori curriculum is divided into motor education, sensory education, and language and intellectual education (Wortham, 2016).

Motor education: Montessori classroom is designed in order to provide children's free movement during the day. Children's fine motor skills are enhanced by the sensory materials as well as the work in the area of practical life. In addition, as children learn pouring materials, sweeping, polishing shoes, they have opportunity to foster both large and fine motor skills (Miles & B rowne, 2004).

Sensory education: Manipulative and didactic materials are used for sensory education. The sensorial curriculum includes a large number of sets of materials that promote seriation, classification and conservation activities in a variety of media. The materials are sequenced according to difficulty with control of error being a primary objective (Miles & B rowne, 2004).

Language and intellectual education: The sensorial materials are part of intellectual education. The teacher involves in careful pronunciation of words as he or she talks to the children and during teaching a concept, it is common to use physical dimensions of the objects such as big, thin, large and small. On the other hand, there is a three part lesson and when learning, for example, concepts of large and small, the teacher would first say, "This is the small ball". Second the teacher wants the child to show the small ball and finally, the teacher wants the child to name the object (Wahyuni, 2012).

Writing and reading activities are also crucial in Montessori curriculum. First children's fine motor skills are enhanced by active hands-on activities with the sensory materials. At the same time, the visual-motor understanding of alphabet letters and how to form them introduced. Exercises to write letters, words and how to read them are done. Once a child does those independently, reading and writing are expanded to writing sentences and reading simple books.

2.4.2 Reggio Emilia Model

Thorton and Brunton (2019) developed his theory and philosophy of early childhood education from direct practice in schools for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers. The teachers in Reggio Emilia are partners and collaborators in learning with the children and parents. The teachers become skilled observers of children in order to plan in response to the children. Each group of children is assigned co-teachers. There is no lead teacher or director of the school. A pedagogists, a person trained in early childhood education, meets with the teachers weekly. Every school has an atelierista, who is trained in visual arts, working closely with teachers and children (Goffin & Wilson, 2001). The hundreds of languages of children is the term teachers use in referring to the process of children depicting their understanding through one of many symbolic languages, including drawing, sculpture, dramatic play and writing. Teachers and children work together to solve any problems that arise (Goffin & Wilson, 2001).

2.4.3 Head Start Model

Head Start is a publicly funded program. Developed in the 1960s by Sargent Shriver for intervention with at-risk minority and low-income children, it is a comprehensive program that addresses the educational, nutritional and social needs of such children.

It can be associated with public school districts or conducted as a separate program through a community agency. These programs are the largest publicly funded educational programs for infants and toddlers (Early Head Start) and preschool children. They include health and medical screening and treatment, required parent participation and involvement, and comprehensive services to families. “Today there are Head Start programs in every state and territory, in rural and urban sectors, on American Indian reservations, and in migrant areas” (Essa, 2013, p. 24). From its inception in 1965, Head Start has sought to provide classroom-based and, most recently, home based comprehensive developmental services for children from low-income families.

An essential part of every Head Start program is the involvement of parents in education, program planning and operating activities. Many parents serve as members of policy councils and committees and have a voice in administrative and managerial decisions while others participate as volunteer or paid aides to teachers, social service personnel, and other staff members. Head Start programs have a low child-staff ratio, with 10 per cent of the enrolment in each state available for children with special needs (Essa, 2013).

2.4. 4 High/Scope Model

High scope is a cognitively oriented curriculum when it is first developed by Martin Barnes in order to serve 3 and 4 years-old children from poor neighbours in Ypsilanti, Michigan, in 1962 so it helps children to become independent thinkers and problem solvers (Peyton, 2015). However through the four decades of working, the curriculum has evolved to the model that is used today. There are principles of the curriculum (Morrison, 2018, pp.101-102):

Active learning: Active learning is the most crucial way for children to make sense of their world because as they interact with the real world, as they have immediate first-hand experience, they are able to build their own understanding.

Key experiences: Interacting with people, materials and ideas through a creative and ongoing way helps children to enhance mentally, emotionally, socially and physically.

Plan-do-review process: Children have right and time to plan their own activities, perform them and at the end, reflect on what they had done.

Parent component: By offering ideas about child development and learning, teachers make home visits. Among those principles, active learning and key experiences form the core of the High Scope Model. In fact the four elements, child-adult interaction, learning environment, daily routines and assessment are the ones support active learning.

Child-adult interaction: Adult is the supporter in High-Scope Preschool program. Positive interaction strategies such as focusing on children's strengths, sharing control with children, forming an authentic relationship with children are highly valued in High- Scope classrooms. In other words, when dealing with the every situation in the classroom, the teacher is the guider and supporter which creates a harmony in the classroom.

Learning environment: Environment is significant in this model and it is arranged into different areas to foster children's different developmental levels. Many kinds of activities can be carried out in High-Scope classroom by the wide variety of materials.

Daily routines: Active learning is also supported by daily routines. Consistent routine is important. Plan- do- review session, small group and large group times when teachers also engages in, are crucial part of a typical High-Scope preschool classroom.

Assessment: There is a special observation record used for assessing the children's progress, The High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) because observation is the major tool to understand children's development and learning. While observing and interacting with children, teachers also keep daily anecdotal records and planning sessions. As early childhood curriculum models and guidelines were enhanced throughout time, countries' early education curriculum also affected by the innovations and developments in the field accordingly. Ghana also had gone through many ways regarding early childhood curriculum.

2.5 The Concept of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is considered as the period from birth to eight years of age (Miles & Browne, 2004). Grotewell and Burton (2018) state it is the time between the zero and eight years of age. However, by school terms, early childhood education incorporates the group settings for infants through elementary school grade three (Miles & Browne, 2004). In other words, early childhood education is a special branch of education serving with children from infancy to elementary grade level of three (Gonzalez-Mena, 2018). As definitions of these authorities imply, it is believed that early childhood education brings or exposes children (birth to eight) into the world. Significance of the early childhood education increased tremendously all over the world within the last twenty years. This situation is complementary with research results based on long term effects of early education to later life (Groark, et, al., 2007).

2.6 The Importance of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education, within the last few decades, considered different fields (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2015) such as developmental psychology, cultural psychology, childhood studies, cultural anthropology, history and philosophy. This is because recent studies showed that babies and young children are born with the capacity to understand the world around them (Nutbrown, 2016). More so, children's brains are ready to learn when they come to the world. During this process; both the environment and genes take an important role which in turn, builds the brain (Levitt, 2018). Considering what have been said so far by authorities in respect to childhood education, it can be asserted that children are been perceived as competent learners rather than empty slates. This has therefore brought changes in the way of perceiving children or early childhood education. The readiness of children to learn even when they are just born triggered the ideas of necessity of early childhood education both for the individual child and for the society as a whole.

Longitudinal studies have shown that early childhood education is the period when children develop more rapid and expand their intellectual faculties as they grow (Chan, 2011). Therefore, education in this crucial period creates significance for the development of children. In a study conducted by Barnett (1995), it was found that getting an early childhood education provided an increase in the IQ level of children in the short term and in the long term; it increased the child's school achievement.

Early childhood education also becomes more beneficial especially, for the children coming from low socio-economic background. Bassok, Bridges, Fuller, Loeb and Rumberger (2007) identified benefits of being exposed to early education for children coming from low-income families as cognitive growth and school readiness. Besides

children from low socio-economic background, good quality of early childhood education provides early reading and math skills to children from high and middle socio-economic status. Early education cultivates children in terms of socialization rather than purely academic enhancement such as math and reading. Webb (2013) elaborated that children learn cooperation through education in child care centers and such skills help them to obey rules and stay safe in the society. Regarding socialization, parents also share the same perspective. In the study of Seng (1994), it was revealed that one of the biggest reasons for parents sending children to early childhood education center is to get them socialized. In fact, in a longitudinal study, Kagitcibasi (2014) explained that children who received early childhood education became emotionally and socially more competent adults compared to the ones whom did not receive early education.

In addition, early childhood educationists also has the conviction that proper early childhood education will help children enjoy academic benefits; early education provides children a better future in the long term such as preparing them for school and increase in high school graduation rates.

It is however imperative for the Government of Ghana to start to pay particular attention to the early childhood education since it has been proved that good quality of early education has long lasting effects on the children's later life and very productive for the society. To affirm this idea, Oppenheim and MacGregor (2002) established that children who receive early education are less likely to involve in crime and more likely to complete their high school education and get into a college education.

In other studies, such as Chicago Longitudinal study and the Cost, Quality and Child outcome study indicated that getting high quality early childhood education make

children become successful students and citizens in their later lives (Reynolds & Ou, 2004). On the other hand, according to the World Bank Report (2015), between 0-6 years of age, each 1 dollar invested on children was returned in a fold of 7.6 dollars in the future as a result of the productivity gained through early childhood education. In contrast to this study, Everingham, Karoly, and Kilbourne (2013) indicated that rate of the return of the investment in people in early childhood period is higher compared to investment in other periods of human life.

In addition, research indicates that through early childhood education, children are exposed to good quality experience, which allows the connections in their brains to develop and this is of immense importance to the society (Fleer, 2013). In one of the study conducted by Knudson (2004), it was elaborated that developmental flexibility of brain wiring or its ability to change due to influences of experience were affected by both genes and early environmental factors. So, the necessity occurs for educators, policy makers and others in the society helping children to construct their initial brain architecture by providing education for them in their early ages.

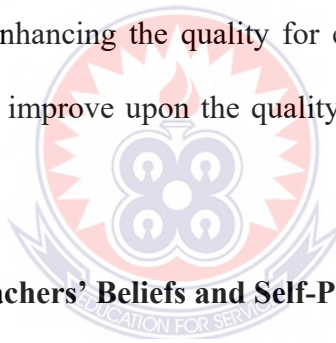
Findings of the longitudinal and cross-sectional studies by (Kagiticibasi 2014; Barnett, 1995; Openheim & MacGregor, 2002; Reynolds & Ou, 2004) related the benefits of early childhood education provided logical reasons to emphasize on early education for a better society. Besides, in the last twenty years, socio-cultural changes such as getting into the information age and changes in the world order through globalization triggered early childhood education to be a concern of many societies.

2.7 Globalization and Early Childhood Education

Globalization has reshaped many issues such as international relations, population growth, development, human rights, the environment, labour, health care and poverty.

It also affected and reshaped the education as well (Grant & Grant, 2007; Koggel, 2013). In the light of this, countries started to reshape their curriculums in all levels of education (from early childhood to college) towards cultivating those types of people (Dulger, 2017).

In addition to the need for fully competent individuals having the skills and knowledge of dealing with the new world's demands, changes in the family units (Morrison, 2007) such as more mothers entered into the work force or rich parents who look for the best educational places for their children as early as possible, projected the early childhood education as growing concern. It is based on this knowledge that the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2017) put much effort and started to make investigations on enhancing the quality for early childhood to strengthen our early childhood centre to improve upon the quality of education needed to meet the standard of the country.



2.8 Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Self-Perceptions

Studies have pointed to the fact that a teacher's belief system will determine the quality of education in the classroom (Garvis, 2011; Garvis, Twigg & Pendergast, 2011). According to Fang (2015), the teachers' beliefs or philosophy affect teaching and learning. Research also suggests that there is a strong relationship between the teacher's thoughts and actions in understanding teacher effectiveness (Brophy & Good, 2016; Edwards, 2013; Leung, 2012).

Kagan (2013) viewed teachers' beliefs as their "assumptions about their students, classrooms, and academic materials to be taught." (p. 65). Teachers' beliefs are therefore what teachers say and do in the classroom based on their thinking about educational practices. This point is supported by Richards and Lockhart (2017) who

posited that a teacher's action is reflective of what they know and believe and this knowledge and belief becomes the philosophical framework which guides their teaching methodology.

Beliefs also emerge from one's past and present experiences and socialisation or cultural models that were presented (Raths, 2001). The development of these beliefs is based on previous experiences in the teachers' life and has a bearing on how they relate to the children in their classroom (Inozu, 2011; Borg, 2001; Farrell, 2016; Richards and Lockhart, 2017). This point is especially critical in light of the cultural-historical legacy of early childhood education in Ghana and the teacher pedagogy that are still evident today. This brings me to the point of self-perception, especially as it relates to the professional self. How one views self has an impact on one's behaviour.

In other words, an individual's self-perception is formed implicitly by meanings derived from events and interactions in the environment. Teachers are no different as their perceptions and beliefs influence their actions (Kagan, 2013; Borg, 2001). They concluded that whether teachers were confident or unsure of their abilities, this perception is reflected in their classroom practices. In fact, Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2017) concluded from their study of Netherland secondary school teachers' perception of their professional identity, that self-perception is the schema from which teachers derive their professional identity as experts in subject matter, pedagogy and didactic teaching.

This has similar implications for EC classroom practice. The early childhood teacher's personal and professional experiences are intertwined and are linked to their personal and professional identity (Court, Merav & Ornan, 2019; Rodgers & Scott, 2018). Court, et al. (2019), described the professional self as "a product of the

interaction between the teachers' personal experiences and the social, cultural and institutional environment within which they work on a daily basis." (p. 208). In their study of ten Israeli teachers' reasons for choosing the teaching profession and their perceptions of their roles as teachers, the researchers drew a relationship between the teachers' expressed beliefs about early childhood education and their roles as teachers. According to Court et al (2019), these teachers perceived themselves to be 'nurturers', and "perceived their work as allowing for an intensive relationship with children, contributing to their moral, social and cognitive development..." (pp. 213-214).

However, Garvis, Fluckiger and Twigg, (2012), from their study on pre-service teachers' beliefs and perceptions, alluded to the fact that this may be an "idealized or romanticised view of early childhood education..." (p. 101). While the participants in their study also perceived teaching in a positive, almost idyllic fashion, Garvis, Fluckiger and Twigg commented that the teachers "lacked understanding of the complexity of the profession" (p. 101). They called this a 'deficit' and warned that this perception of the early childhood teacher faces a challenge, as dissonance may arise when the pre-service teacher experiences a 'reality shock' in the real classroom versus what was experienced during field work. This disequilibrium may re-position the teacher's belief system and at its extreme, may lead to the teacher lowering his/her own expectations "to risk a self-assessment of failure" (p. 101). It would suggest therefore that socio-cultural contextual factors must be taken into consideration when looking at beliefs and self-perceptions.

In the same manner, teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions may also determine the nature of the interactions that occur between them and the children they teach (Lim

and Torr, 2007). According to Miller and Smith (2004), teachers' beliefs have an influence on their nature of interaction with, and the resources and structure that they provide to children. Additionally, their beliefs also unconsciously affect the attitudes they convey to children (Miller & Smith, 2004). The teacher's attitude and behaviour will have an impact on the young child's emotional well-being and positive sense of self, and so the quality of teacher's interaction and relationship with the child are very important (Davies, 2018). Thus the teacher's beliefs shape his/her approach to teaching and influence instructional strategies and performance in the classroom as these beliefs help to define their professional identity (Cheng et al., 2019; Tsai & Chuang, 2015).

Early childhood education in Ghana is at a critical juncture and as such its services are evolving and changing to meet global standards. The teacher is crucial in this evolution of providing high-quality services as these services are based on a secure relationship between the children and the teacher (Sims, 2010). This secure relationship will also impact on effective pedagogy because, according to Bowman, Donovan and Burn (2001), young children depend on the adults with whom they interact and in many instances, it is their classroom teacher. Brophy and Good (2016) described teachers as socialising agents who have a significant influence on students' behaviour as they transmit powerful interpretations of values and expectations. However as Court, Meray and Ornan (2019) found in their study, early childhood teachers' self-perception as professionals are subjected to constant testing and shaping by the environment within which they work and as such, acknowledgement and recognition by significant others, including parents will have a direct positive effect on the teachers' self-esteem.

2.9 Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in Early Childhood Education

Developmentally Appropriate Practices presented at the NAEYC Conference in 1987 defined DAP as “the outcome of a process of teacher decision making that draws on at least three, critical interrelated bodies of knowledge: (a) what teachers know about how children develop and learn; (b) what teachers know about the individual children in their group; and (c) knowledge of the social and cultural context in which those children live and learn”. (Bredekamp and Copple, eds., 2013). DAP also serves two major purposes namely, a) to enhance the quality of early childhood experiences of young children by using developmentally appropriate activities, materials and having developmentally appropriate expectations in early childhood programmes and b) to balance academic instruction in early childhood programmes with other socio-emotional and physical development aspects (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 2013).

Additionally, teachers need to meet the children where they are. This involves observing children’s engagement with materials, activities, and planning curriculum and adapting teaching strategies based on observation; assessing what children already know and their interests, and keeping teaching goals in mind. (Bredekamp, 2011). So in essence, developmentally appropriate practice is teaching that is in keeping with a child’s age, experiences, abilities and interests, that seeks to help the child reach challenging yet achievable goals (Copple & Bredekamp, 2019; NAEYC, 2019). Built on a constructivist platform, and informed by the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (Schunk, 2017), this approach also emphasizes the role of play as a crucial vehicle for children to learn language and develop social, physical and problem-solving skills.

Topcu (2011) supports this point by claiming that “Teachers whose epistemological beliefs are consistent with a constructivist approach pay more attention to student discussion, interaction, and problem-solving...” (p. 100), as opposed to teachers who use traditional approaches. Therefore the use of physical punishment, prolonged seatwork, and rote-learning without hands-on experiences, would be considered developmentally inappropriate practices and not to be encouraged in the classroom. DAP soon therefore became the ‘best practices’ model and guiding principle for early childhood education (Copple and Bredekamp, 2019; NAEYC, 2019).

In 2019 NAEYC revised its policy statement based on new research and concerns from experienced practitioners regarding the changing contexts in which early childhood education occurs (Bredekamp, 2011; NAEYC, 2019). These contextual concerns included issues such as learning expectations, curriculum, classroom practices and decision-making, the role of culture and language, and including children with special needs. The statement was revised to reflect these ongoing concerns and acted as a guideline for teaching children from birth to 8 years. NAEYC also recommended practices based on age groups, namely, infants and toddlers, pre-schoolers, kindergarten and early primary grades (Bredekamp, 2011; Copple & Bredekamp, 2019; NAEYC, 2019).

File (2012) challenged some of these notions in her recent revised edition of DAP. She argued that the philosophical underpinnings of DAP still had strong ties to traditional child development theories with child development “framed as universal and singular.” (p. 34). She added that the DAP statements “provided little room for philosophy and values” (p. 34) and may not sufficiently contribute to curriculum decisions. She also bemoans the fact that the voices of children’s families have been

largely silent in the professional discourse and suggests that “Children’s families and communities provide an understanding of desirable traits and skills” (p. 39) and so should shape what should be part of the curriculum. Blaise and Ryan (2012) support this view and concluded that the early childhood curriculum shares a complex yet inter-relationship with not only content and methodology that it contains, but a socio-cultural relationship with the people it serves.

2.10 Developmentally Appropriate Practice

NAEYC’s (2012) DAP guidelines also emphasized the importance of play. Their policy statement on play states that, “Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as promoting language, cognition, and social competence...” (p. 2). Smidt (2011), views play as: a way of being able to use hands-on or real or life-like situations to answer questions that arise in children’s heads as they constantly seek to make sense of their lives, experiences and feelings. (p. 3). She went further to opine about the appropriateness of play by stating that play is not just for pleasure, but can be “cognitively challenging, requiring the child to use memory, signs and symbols, cultural tools including language, social skills like negotiation and planning and sharing, prediction.... (p. 69). Of such import is play that it continues to be taken seriously by academic researchers and policy-makers (Wood & Attifield, 2015).

In defining play, Fler (2012) posits two theories of play namely, developmental/maturational, where play is internally driven, and a cultural-historical perspective which suggest that “rules of everyday life and the child’s experiences of everyday practice shape how play is enacted.” (p. 26). Wood and Attifield (2015) however believed that play cannot be defined or categorized as it is context-dependent and the contexts vary (p. 5). As the contexts vary, so do the types of play. There are

different types of play such as role-play, imaginative play, socio-dramatic play, heuristic play, constructive play, fantasy play, free-flow play, structured play, and rough-and-tumble play, all resulting in a variety of learning and developmental outcomes (Wood & Attifield, 2015, p. 5).

There are many benefits of play to academic learning (Bennett, Wood & Rogers, 2013; Fleer, 2010; Sherwood, 2010). However, the role of the teacher is important in providing meaningful learning experiences for children. It is therefore important for teachers to observe and assess children while they are engaged in play activities. Drake (2019) claimed that observing children is vital to understanding children's interests and learning needs and is a significant feature of the 'teaching' role (p. 186). This has implications for DAP. One of the challenges faced by Ghanaian EC teachers is how to make learning relevant to the children and connect subject matter knowledge with students' everyday lives and existing knowledge (Fleer, 2010; Smidt, 2011). Both researchers endorse the fact that children benefit most when play and learning are relevant.

Another implication or challenge is the importance of teachers interacting and participating with the children during play. The teacher, although the observer should not just be a spectator, but a participant taking care to give the children ownership of what they are doing. If play is a natural response to the environment (Moyle, 2001), then the teacher may miss a great teaching moment by not participating in play activities. Unfortunately, traditionally, many Ghanaian EC teachers view their roles as 'supervisor' of children's play activities.

2.11 Appropriate and Inappropriate' Practices

According to Bredekamp (2011), the NAEYC policy statement “is widely used as a summary of the field’s best thinking, a defence of its valued practices, and an advocacy tool for improving programs for young children.” (p. 71). DAP also seeks to reflect educational values such as respect for children, building children’s self-esteem and supporting active learning.

Bredekamp (2011) pointed out that the term appropriate is a culturally laden term (p. 90) and continues to provoke controversy. She furthered her argument that to be developmentally appropriate, teaching practices must be effective, in that they must contribute to the child’s on-going development and learning. In other words, if the child is not learning and progressing towards important learning outcomes, then the practices and experiences are developmentally inappropriate. Being responsive to children’s individual development and varying culture is deemed appropriate.

According to Bredekamp, early childhood teachers need to be intentional in everything they do. Intentional teaching and making purposeful decisions are important facets of DAP and go hand in hand with developmentally appropriate practice. Bredekamp (2011) posits that in DAP, “teachers’ intentionality undergirds the entire program and all of the experiences provided.” (p. 73). This requires the early childhood teacher to carefully organize the physical environment, select and arrange materials to promote active engagement and supporting children’s learning and developmental progress. These decisions are made as a result of careful advance consideration and planning, based on learning experiences, curriculum planning and considering the social and cultural contexts in which the children live (Bredekamp, 2011). Bredekamp further added that intentional teachers acknowledge that play is

developmentally appropriate and therefore promote play so that it benefits the children's development as far as possible.

In keeping with DAP guidelines, developmentally inappropriate practices (DIP) included the use of didactic lessons, mostly formal and teacher-driven, delivered through consistent whole-group instruction. Students engage in seat work, using pen-and-pencil, workbooks, worksheets and rote learning with drill and practice, with the teacher spending most of her time correcting the children and using extrinsic rewards to encourage student engagement and manage behaviour (Bredenkamp, 2011; Chi-Hung Leung, 2012; Stipek & Byler, 2004). This practice is also strongly discouraged in the Ghanaian early childhood classroom, despite our history where these very practices have been acculturated in earlier forms of practice, but is still evident today.

As such, DAP guidelines have become one of the leading theoretical perspectives that have helped to shape the guiding principles of the new Ghanaian early childhood curriculum (Davies, 2018) and was the basis behind its conceptual framework. Appendix E provides a breakdown of the nine fundamental principles of the Ghanaian curriculum in keeping with NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8 (2019) policy statement along with the principal theorists discussed earlier in this chapter.

As mentioned earlier, much of the curriculum surrounds to a large extent a Euro-American perspective of early childhood development. The adoption of the DAP philosophies expressed through NAEYC policy statement have also impacted how the curriculum shapes what is taught to the children. This brings me to the next discussion on early childhood teachers' beliefs about DAP and the continued debate on culturally and developmentally appropriate practices.

2.12 Early Childhood Teacher Beliefs about DAP and Classroom Practices

According to Bredekamp (2011), DAP has a history of well-grounded research about children's learning and development and provides scientifically-based guidance for early childhood teachers. These research studies also form the basis for NAEYC's work on DAP (Bredekamp, 2011). Since the late 1980s there has been a growing body of research especially out of the United States, that supports the effectiveness of DAP in children's learning, (Bredekamp, 1987; Burts et.al., 2015, 2018; Bryant, Clifford and Peisner, 2014; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts & Hernandez, 2014; Charlesworth, Burts & Hart, 1994; Buchanan, Burts & Pellar, 2017; Huffman & Speer, 2017; Hart, Yang, Charlesworth & Burts, 2013).

The study by Hart, et al., (2013) was significant as it revealed there was a negative correlation between developmentally inappropriate practices and student outcome. The study concluded that regardless of children's socio-economic status, race or gender, they were more likely to experience more stress and attendant behaviour problems. They were also more likely to lag behind in mathematics and reading achieved compared to their peers from DAP classrooms. This study was corroborated by a study conducted nearly a decade early by Marcon (2013). In that study Marcon concluded that children who experienced child-initiated DAP, had better language, mathematics and science skills compared to children who experienced more teacher-directed instruction. The study also concluded that children in DAP classrooms had better social skills and work habits and possessed a stronger self-esteem, compared to children coming from developmentally inappropriate classrooms (Marcon, 2013).

Research from Head Start, a poster child for DAP, and the use of the High Scope (2007) DAP approach, also supported positive correlations between DAP and

children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Bierman, Domitrovich, Nix, Gest, Welsh, Greenberg, Blair, Nelson and Gill, 2018). The Head Start programme utilizes 'hands-on' lessons and activities and specific teaching activities that promote the development of children's socio-emotional, language and emergent literacy skills (Bredekamp, 2011).

However, the successful implementation of DAP relies heavily on the early childhood teachers' beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning (Vartuli, 2015; Parker and Neuharth-Pritchett, 2016; Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb and Gheith, 2010). According to Chi-hung Leung (2012) "Teachers are an important component of high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs." (p. 39) and as such, they have an impact on student outcomes.

There is much debate regarding the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices. Parker and Neuharth-Pritchett (2016) pointed to the gap that exists between teacher beliefs and practices by arguing that "there is often a discrepancy between what the research indicates and the philosophies of early childhood educators, which tend to be developmentally appropriate in nature, and their actual teaching practices, which tend to be developmentally inappropriate for young children." (p. 65). Like Kim (2011), I too will posit my arguments regarding this relationship within two categories, namely: a) the relationship that exists between teachers' stated beliefs about DAP and observed practice and b) the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs and reported practice.

While DAP assumes a universal view of teaching practice (Kilderry, 2012), we must not begin to think that the relationship that exists between beliefs and practice can be

measured objectively in trying to determine whether a teacher is using appropriate or inappropriate practices (Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb & Gheith, 2010; Kilderry, 2012).

2.13 Developmentally Inappropriate Practices or Culture-Based Beliefs and Practices

Canella and Viruru (2004) posited that ECE has been organized and justified around the principles of DAP and has failed to recognize the diversity of children and their families in a global context. Several studies about early childhood teacher beliefs and practices pertaining to DAP have been conducted in different parts of the world (Doliopoulou, 2015; Chen; 2013; Edwards, 2013; Kim, Kim & Maslak, 2015; McMullen, Elicker, Goetze, Huang, Lee, Mathers, Wen and Yang, 2016; Hedge & Cassidy, 2019; Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb & Gheith, 2010; Lee, 2010; Walsh, McGuinness, Sproule & Trew, 2010; Kim, 2011; Leung, 2012). These studies pointed to the fact that although early childhood teachers believed in the principles of DAP there are contextual barriers to implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

2.14 Early Childhood Practices and Challenges in Ghana

In a post-modern world, the concept of childhood has made a significant shift in meaning as adults and children share very much the same world (Mook, 2007; Janzen, 2018). In this technologically rich, information saturated and sometimes chaotic world, 21st century young children are expected to display competence in technology, creativity and innovation. They also are expected to adapt to early formal schooling, while coping with changes in family structure and dynamics and the attendant social issues that become a part of their lived experiences (Elkind, 2017).

However, by virtue of being children, they continue to have social, emotional and intellectual needs that must be met by the adults around them. It has been well

documented that children's early exposure to quality learning environments that are developmentally appropriate will contribute to their cognitive, academic and socio-emotional outcomes (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 2017). It is within this context that investing in early childhood education has become particularly significant, especially as post-independent Ghana seeks to bring about desired changes in the delivery of early childhood education services.

The early childhood period is divided into two stages: from birth to three years, and from three to six years. Like many countries around the world, the early childhood care and education system in Ghana was divided into two components, namely day-care or nursery (which accommodates infants 0-3 yrs.) and basic/infant schools (pre-schools which accommodate children 4-6). Day-care centres are full-time programmes provided to working parents who need custodial care for their children. Basic schools are community-based sponsored institutions and exist mainly as 'recognised' and 'unrecognised' institutions. Recognised basic schools receive financial assistance from the Government in the form of subsidies to offset teachers' salary, meals for the students, furniture and appliance and building grants. Unrecognised basic schools (often operated by the Church or private individuals) on the other hand receive no financial assistance at all from the Government and have to rely on fees charged to parents to offset teacher salary and other expenses.

Infant schools are operated by the Ministry of Education and some are attached to Primary and Primary/All Age, schools and are referred to as Infant Departments. Kindergartens are often found in privately-owned preparatory schools. All these settings provide children with readiness skills for formal schooling in Grade One. Presently there are approximately 2,661 early childhood institutions in Ghana with

140 being Government operated, and 135 Kindergarten. Basic schools account for the remaining figure (M.O.E., 2013). Nearly half of the total number of EC institutions are classified as ‘recognised’, while approximately 7% are considered ‘unrecognised’ (Jones, Brown & Brown, 2011).

The primary cause for concern however remained the delivery of early childhood education and development programmes for young children. According to The United Nations World Data on Education for Ghana (2010/2011), this is due to several factors. These factors include the disparity between the quality of teachers in preparatory and government infant schools and infant departments versus those who in community basic schools. Teachers in basic schools are usually minimally trained or not formally trained unlike their counterparts in government-run institutions. Presently, the Ministry of Education is placing one trained teacher in recognized basic schools with a minimum enrolment of one hundred children. This is woefully inadequate and compromises the quality of curriculum delivery and care provided to the children (Ho, 2018).

As discussed earlier, ECE in the Caribbean evolved as a response to a need to provide custodial services to working mothers and as such, operated outside of government action for many years (Charles & Williams, 2016; Williams & Charles, 2018). Many of the facilities, especially in Ghana were unsupervised and were primarily owned by non-government organizations. The informality of the early childhood sector led to the low levels of training among the caregivers. Teachers in these facilities had little theoretical understanding of child development and displayed a lack of awareness of appropriate early childhood pedagogical strategies (Davies, 2013; Charles & Williams, 2016). Many of these teachers had no experience and were mainly Sunday

school teachers or other paraprofessionals with poor basic education and who had little or no teacher training (Charles & Williams, 2016). Much of my early childhood years were spent sitting in front of many of these teachers. This practice continued for quite a while and became a common feature within the Caribbean.

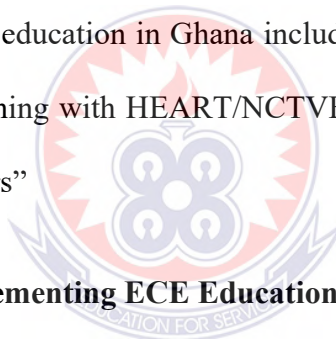
The field expanded during the 1980s with greater focus being placed on teacher training to equip teachers with the acquisition of skills needed to teach at this level as prior this, most of the teachers were being trained primarily through participation in-service training (Davies, 2013). Additionally, the University of the West (U.W.I.) and some Teachers' Colleges in Ghana and Trinidad selectively offered undergraduate degree programmes. During the 2015s, the sector expanded by way of increased subventions from the Government as well as the establishment of pre-school units in primary schools. Despite this, the level of training within the region has remained low (Charles & Williams, 2016).

Historically, training for basic school teachers in Ghana took the format of workshop-based training that did not lead to certification. With the exception of Barbados where a significant number of teachers possess undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in early childhood education, employment in most day-care centres in the Caribbean do not require post-secondary qualifications to become part of the support staff. The method of delivering educational content was primarily by rote learning, delivered by mostly untrained teachers. These teachers (many who came out of 'Sunday School') were inexperienced and lacked in-depth knowledge of essential child development and education principles and practices (Davies, 2018).

Presently, in order to achieve registration, basic schools are only required to have one teacher who is college trained. Amid concerns about the state of early childhood

programmes in Ghana and the number of untrained teachers who are still in the system, many teachers received their training through fortnightly workshops conducted by the Ministry of Education to better qualify them for their teaching roles. The University of the West Indies and Teachers' Colleges such as Mico, Shortwood and St. Joseph's have also contributed to the improvement in the quality of pedagogical skills offered in early childhood education. This has come with the recognition that the early childhood system needs to be transformed if it is to be effective in preparing young children for a rapidly changing globalized world.

Over the last few years, Ghana has initiated a competency-based certification system aimed at upgrading the skills of teachers within the early childhood sector. Current trends in early childhood education in Ghana included increasing the professionalism of the sector through training with HEART/NCTVET certification of practitioners or "Early Childhood Workers"



2.15 Challenges of Implementing ECE Educational Practices

Teachers in early learning programs face pressure from a multitude of sources to conform to procedures that contradict Developmentally Appropriate Practices (Brashier & Norris, 2018). DAP promotes the use of learning centers while giving children opportunities to play, inside or outdoors, to explore and investigate learning environments. However, many teachers feel pressure from administrators, other teachers, and parents to conform to highly structured and curriculum driven learning experiences (Brashier & Norris, 2018).

Brashier and Norris (2018) identified constraints for teachers in the implementation of DAP. Teachers report state curriculum and standards requirements are so rigid that they feel little freedom to allow children to investigate and explore the environment

for fear that children will not meet curriculum goals and promotion standards (Brashier & Norris, 2018). A paradigm shift is evident in many early learning environments where school policy requires that teachers focus on test driven curricula instead of the development of the whole child (Brashier & Norris, 2018).

Teachers in the Brashier and Norris study report that kindergarten children are thought to be too old to play. Play was seen to have no educational value and frivolous by the school community when working to meet curriculum goals. Teachers in this study reported that they felt pressure to “teach” concepts and foundational skills through pencil and paper tasks instead of play-based activities. Many educators may view play as a waste of time and see no educational benefit in embedding academic skills in play (Brashier & Norris, 2018). However, an active and engaging play-based curriculum is the foundation for developmentally appropriate learning environments (Bredekamp & Copple, 2019).

Curriculum implementation as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same child to function effectively in a society. Putting the curriculum into operation requires an implementing agent. Stenhouse (2019) identifies the teacher as the agent in the curriculum implementation process. She argues that implementation is the manner in which the teacher selects and mixes the various aspects of knowledge contained in a curriculum document or syllabus. Implementation takes place when the teacher-constructed syllabus, the teacher’s personality, the teaching materials and the teaching environment interact with the learner.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology of the study which includes the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instrument, validation of instrument, pilot testing of instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical consideration.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm underpinning this study is positivism. The positivist research paradigm produces generalisable results, which are typically reported quantitatively, and allows for making predictions about general phenomena (Wahyuni, 2012). One prime aim of the positivist investigation is to generate explanatory connections or causal relationships that eventually bring about the prediction and control of a phenomenon in question (Wahyuni, 2012).

Thus, positivists argue that knowledge can and must be advanced objectively, without the values of the researcher or participants influencing its development (Killam, 2013). Knowledge, when properly developed, is true because it is certain, congruent with reality, and accurate. Absolute disengagement must exist between the research participant and the researcher to correctly develop the truth. To realise this separation, positivists operate in dualism and objectivity (Varpio & MacLeod, 2020). Consequently, positivist thinking emphasises that participants and researchers can be separated, connoting dualism. Positivism further relies profoundly on objectivity, dismissing the significance of people's subjective experiences and values. This necessitates the researcher to stay objective and not interact with participants during

data collection. Further, it requires the researcher not to be entwined in the experiment in any meaningful way. Positivist methodology emphasises engaging in research settings where variables can be controlled and manipulated (Bakker, 2019; O'Donohue, 2013; Varpio & MacLeod, 2020). This entails the researcher creating rather artificial environments where other extraneous factors beyond the study variables are curtailed. The sole focus of positivism is to scrutinise the explanatory or causal relationships amongst variables in a study; thus, experimental designs are favoured in the positivist paradigm, including quasi-experimental designs (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Howell, 2012; Varpio & MacLeod, 2020).

The current study adopted the positivism paradigm, it is a collective meaning-making process (Seale, 2017). Seale further revealed that positivist social scientists value quantifiable elements, statistical measurement, neutrality, and observable events to put in place causal laws. Therefore, positivist social science duplicates steps followed by natural scientists to control and comprehend the natural world. They also focus on establishing a cause-effect relationship between events and uphold objectivity in explaining events and predicting laws (Grix 2004). To them, social reality is typically external to individuals; hence, events exist independently without external control (Cohen et al., 2013; Pring, 2018; Creswell 2018).

The choice of positivism is appropriate for the study as it offered the researcher the opportunity to remain distant in the process of investigation in this study, where the focus is to evaluate the use of social media tools by lecturers to promote their research visibility. The positivist philosophy allowed the researcher to objectively examine issues without directly deciding to influence the process subjectively regarding how and for what reasons lecturers decide to use social media in promoting their research

and overall academic work. More so, the positivist paradigm remains an affirmation of the overall logic of the study because, again, the constructs could be measured objectively and subjected to statistical manipulations that allow for objective outcomes based on some established statistical criteria for the evaluation and validation of the research findings.

3.2 Research Approach

The approach of the study is a quantitative one. Quantitative research is very advantageous as it endeavours to fragment and restrict phenomena into measurable or common categories that can apply to all the subjects or broader and related circumstances (Williams et al., 2022; Roni et al., 2020; Osborne, 2018). According to Silverman (2020), quantitative research techniques such as surveys merit being used on much larger samples than qualitative interviews. It is therefore imperative to note that quantitative research employ standardised and reliable measures to elicit data or information on the phenomenon under study. Nonetheless, quantitative research outcomes may be statistically significant but are regularly humanly insignificant as the numerical precision of some results may not reflect the true situation on the ground. Quantitative research tends to neglect social and cultural attitudes embedded in the variables under study (Silverman, 2020; Goertzen, 2017; Osborne, 2018). Thus, quantitative studies are acceptable where quantifiable measurements of variables of interest are available, where hypotheses and inferences from population samples can be formulated and checked (Connaway & Powell, 2010).

3.3 Research Design

The researcher employed descriptive survey for the study. This enabled the researcher to collect information on the issue under study. A descriptive survey deals with the

collection of data so as to provide answers to the research questions or hypothesis. The descriptive survey presents issues as it is on the ground with less or no personal sentiments. That is to say, a descriptive study reports findings the way they exist. Typical descriptive studies are concerned with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, demographic information, conditions and procedures. This was considered most appropriate for this research since the study seeks responses from the respondents with little or no biases. The descriptive survey basically enquires into the status quo; it attempts to measure what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Aryetal, 2015).

The above notwithstanding, Creswell (2013) holds the view that descriptive survey basically enquires into a status quo. It is easy to identify attributes of a large population from small groups of individuals. Again, according to Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2004) in a descriptive survey design, researchers gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared. The descriptive survey helps to deal essentially with questions concerning what exists with respect to variables or prevailing conditions in a situation. Again, as recommended by Leedy and Omrod (2010), descriptive statistics is suitable for purposes of making generalisations from a sample to a population so that inferences could be made about the characteristics, opinions, attitudes and past experiences of the population.

The descriptive survey determines the nature and the situation as it exists at the time of the study. The descriptive survey design describes and interprets events as it occurs (Best & Kahn, 2013). It is versatile and practical, in that it identifies present

conditions and points to the recent needs. It has the characteristic of analysing the relationships, differences and trends that contribute to teacher's knowledge, challenges in early childhood best practices at the pre-school level. By this, the researcher could find clues to answer the research questions or hypothesis which involve classroom related challenges (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Varpio & MacLeod, 2020).

The researcher employed the descriptive survey design because of its myriad of merits. For instance, the design provides a more accurate and meaningful picture of events and seeks to explain people's perception and behaviour on the basis of data gathered at a particular time (Frankel & Wallen, 2017). This would allow for in-depth follow up questions and items that are unclear to be explained. More so, descriptive survey design has the potential to provide a lot of information from quite a large sample of respondents (Frankel & Wallen, 2017). It is as well considered as the best approach for the study because it is a relatively inexpensive way of getting information about people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. It assures manageability of the data collected. Descriptive survey is more economical since many subjects can be studied at the same time (Mitchell & Jolley, 2004; Frankel & Wallen, 2017). Also, findings from the study can be generalized for the entire population.

Despite its advantages, the researcher acknowledges its disadvantages. Frankel and Wallen (2017) identified that the difficulties associated with descriptive surveys are that, it is difficult getting respondents to answer questions thoroughly and honestly. Again, there is a difficulty in getting sufficient number of questionnaires completed for meaningful analysis to be made. Further, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), maintain that in descriptive survey, there is the difficulty of ensuring that the

questions answered are clear and not misleading. The reason is that survey results can vary greatly due to the exact wording of questions. As a result, it may produce unreliable results. There is also the difficulty of obtaining adequate number of questionnaire completed and returned for meaningful analysis to be made in some cases. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the descriptive survey design was found to be most appropriate and applicable for the study. It would help the researcher gather accurate data on teachers on variables underlying the study for concrete conclusions to be made.

3.4 Population

The population of the study comprised the entire public basic school teachers in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The target population of the study comprised three (3) selected circuits in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Within the three circuits, the researcher targeted only teachers at the pre-school level. Their population was estimated around 399.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the teachers. The sample size of 217 respondents from the various schools was selected based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table with its appropriate confidence level and confidence interval on a population of 496. Seven schools were purposively selected from the ten (10) Basic Schools in the in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana for the study. These schools were selected based on the fact that they are all public schools that are less restrictive to the study and at the same time teachers are readily available. The teachers were further selected for the study to ensure a fair representation through simple random sampling technique.

3.6 Data Collection Instrument

Although a number of instruments for data collection could have been used, a questionnaire was deemed most appropriate for the study. The questionnaire was used to gather information from the preschool teachers in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004), questionnaire is widely used and is a useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, numerical data and can be administered without the presence of the researcher.

May (2001) also maintains that the purpose of the survey questionnaire is to elicit information about the characteristics or opinions of the respondents. The questionnaire has the advantages of allowing the researcher to collect data from a group of respondents at the same time and it is easy to score. Another advantage of the questionnaire to this study is that it consists of questions that can be used to measure the perceptions of preschool teachers about developmentally appropriate practices in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

The questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the teachers. The choice of questionnaire was based on the assertion of Osuola (2001) that, they are particularly advantageous whenever the sample size is large enough to make it uneconomical for reasons of time or funds to observe or interview every subject. The four-point Likert scale questionnaire was used and has various score values. Positive statements were scored as Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

The questionnaires were designed for teachers at the early childhood level. The questionnaires elicited demographic data, the perceived knowledge of teachers on

early childhood best practices, teachers perceive the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices, the perceived challenges in the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices and finally, how early childhood educational practices issues will be addressed or managed in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The items in the questionnaire were structured in such a way that they enabled the respondents to pick alternative answers against their choice of responses.

Questionnaire for respondents comprised four sections respectively. The first session was on the bio-data of the respondents. The second section considered items regarding the perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on developmentally appropriate practices, while the third section looked at teachers' perception of the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices. The fourth section took care of the perceived challenges in the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices and finally the last section considered how early childhood educational practices issues be addressed or managed.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

In terms of measurement procedures, validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure.

Face validity: Face validity of the instrument was established by showing the questionnaire to friends for their criticisms.

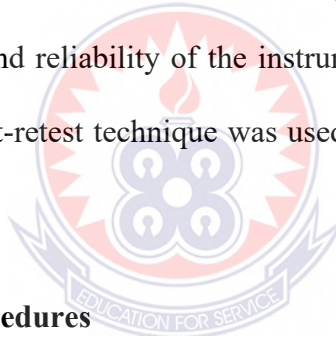
Content validity: In establishing the content validity of the instrument, the researcher gave her questionnaire to the research supervisor to scrutinize and edit the items. The instrument was validated in terms of its relevance to the topic, ambiguity of statement, clarity of language and adequacy of the items. After examining the instrument and

making the necessary corrections, it was handed to the researcher to make a final draft.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaires were pre-tested on 40 preschool teachers in the Ga West District. The pilot test results were used to determine the reliability of the instruments with the Cronbach's Alpha measure of internal consistency achieving reliability coefficient of 0.7.

3.8 Pilot Testing of the Instrument

A pilot-test of the instrument was conducted to ascertain any need for revisions. A piloting of the instrument was carried out on 40 pre-school teachers in the Ga West District. These schools were excluded from the study. The aim of the pilot testing was to improve the validity and reliability of the instruments. After collecting the results of the pilot study, the test-retest technique was used to calculate the reliability of the instrument.



3.9 Data Collection Procedures

To obtain the data, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Head, Department of Early Childhood Education. The letter spelt out the purpose of the study, the need for individual participation, anonymity as well as confidentiality of respondents' response. After establishing the necessary contact with the head teachers of the selected schools, permission was sought for the administration of the instrument.

3.10 Data Analysis Procedures

For effective statistical presentation and analysis, the questionnaires were serially numbered to facilitate easy identification. It is necessary to observe this precaution to

ensure quick detection of tiny source of errors when they occur in the tabulation of the data. Responses to the various items in the questionnaires were then added, tabulated and statistically analysed. Data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

Punch (2018) was of the opinion that researchers should be mindful of ethical issues especially in social research because it is concerned with data about people. Consideration for moral issues and respect for participants is essential in social research. One of the issues involved in this research was informed consent. It affords prospective participants the opportunity to accept or decline to engage in the research. It describes the need for participants to understand the aims, objectives and potential harm that such involvement may have on them (Varpio & MacLeod, 2020). It also spells out that they have the right to withdraw even after consent has been given; this is in line with Cohen et al (2018); and Mertens, (2010), who stated that informed consent arises from the participant's right to freedom. In this study, the purpose of the study was carefully reviewed with each participant before they was involved in the research.

Anonymity of study respondents was highly taken into consideration in the present study. Oliver (2010) pointed out that anonymity is a vital issue in research ethics because it gives the participants the opportunity to have their identity concealed. In this research, pseudonyms were used for identification purposes which cannot be traced to the participants. Codes were also adopted where necessary to ensure anonymity of information and prevent harm. In order not to unnecessarily invade the privacy of participants, the researcher made prior visits to schools before the data

collection commenced. Neither names nor any identifiable information from respondents was taken as a way of ensuring the ethical principle of anonymity in social research. This is to prevent possible victimization of respondents where certain responses may be viewed as unpalatable to other stakeholders.

On the issue of confidentiality, efforts were made to maintain confidentiality of the responses of the participants. Participants were told that their responses would be kept confidential and that no one known to them would have access to the information provided and none of the respondents names was recorded in the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the data analysis and discussion of results. The data were analysed using inferential statistics that is independent sample t-test and descriptive statistics that is means and standard deviations. The first part of the analysis was on the demographic characteristics of respondents, while the second part dealt with the research findings.

4.1 Demographics of the Respondents

This phase of the questionnaire was considered to elicit the personal information of the pre-school teachers. These demographic data includes the teacher's gender and years of teaching experience. Pie and bar graphs were used to present the analysis.

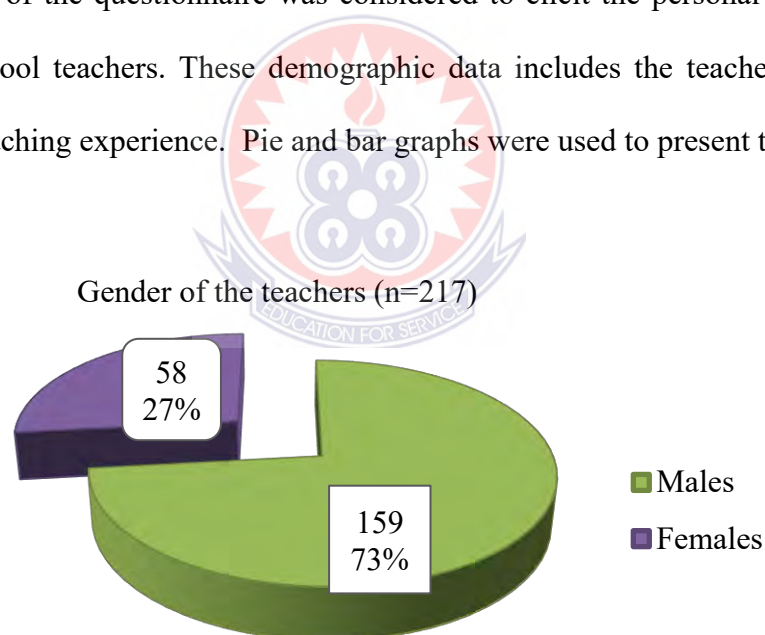


Figure 1: A pie chart showing the gender of the respondents

Figure 1 gives the graphical representation of the gender of the respondents. From the Figure 1, 58(27%) were males while 159(73%) were female. This shows majority of pre-school teachers in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana are females.

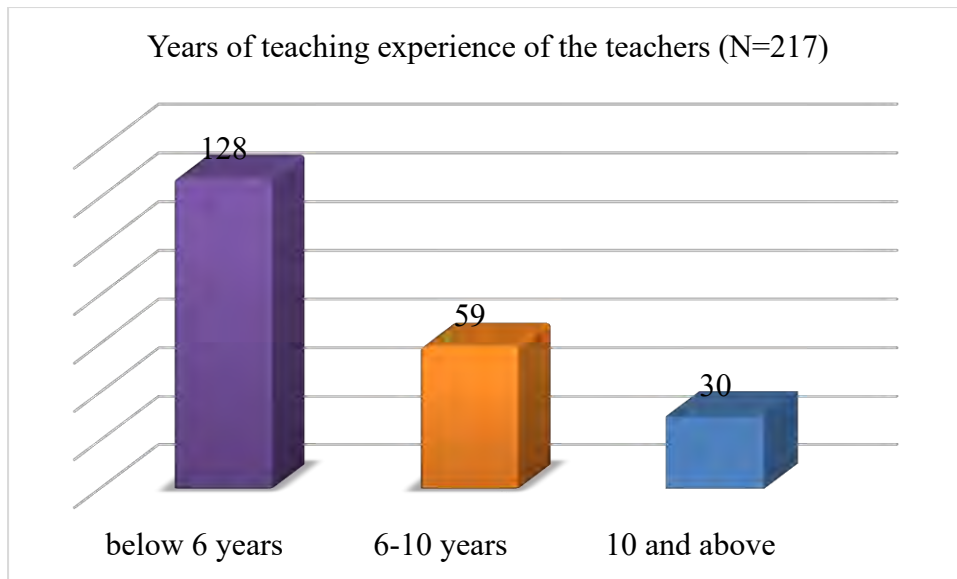


Figure 2: A bar chart showing the years of teaching experience of the teachers

Figure 2 presents the teaching experience of the teachers at the pre-school level. The figure 2 shows that 128 (59%) had teaching experience below 6 years. Within 6-10 years teaching experience recorded 59(27%) and 10 years and above recorded 30(14%). This shows that majority of the teachers had less than 6 years of teaching experience.

4.1 Analysis of the Research Questions

Research Question One: What knowledge does preschool teachers have on developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

In analyzing data, means and standard deviations were computed for the responses of the teachers with regards to perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on developmentally appropriate practices. Table 1 presents the findings.

Table 1: Knowledge preschool teachers have on developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

Statements	N	Mean	Std. D
Developmentally Appropriate Practices consider children's individual differences	217	3.25	.437
Developmentally Appropriate Practices take into consideration children in interest	217	3.33	.471
Developmentally Appropriate Practices rest on the idea that children to select their own activities	217	3.46	.500
Developmentally Appropriate Practices provide a variety of concrete learning materials in centers (writing center, science center, math center, etc.)	217	3.34	.796
Developmentally Appropriate Practices allow children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials.	217	3.21	.408
Developmentally Appropriate Practices allow children to learn by interacting and working cooperatively with other children	217	3.22	.413
Developmentally Appropriate Practices allow teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions,	217	3.46	.500
Developmentally Appropriate Practices allow children to establish rules for their classroom	217	3.79	.408
Developmentally Appropriate Practices allow children to have stories read to them daily, individually or in groups.	217	3.20	.403
Overall mean and standard deviation	217	3.37	.426

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 1 presents the knowledge preschool teachers have on developmentally appropriate practices. From Table 1, the overall mean and standard deviation of

($M=3.37$, $SD=.426$) shows that majority of the teachers indicated that they are aware and have knowledge in the childhood educational best practices. To illustrate few of the statements, majority of teachers indicated that ECE best practice takes into consideration children's individual differences. The mean and standard deviation of ($M=3.25$, $SD=.437$) confirms that most of the teachers agreed that ECE best practice takes into consideration children's individual differences.

The findings further shows that majority of the pre-school teachers are knowledgeable and aware that ECE best practice is the one that takes into consideration children's interest. The mean and standard deviation of ($M=3.33$, $SD=.471$) shows that evidence. The findings lends support to the work of Bredekamp (2011) who posited teachers need to meet the children where they are. This involves observing children's engagement with materials, activities, and planning curriculum and adapting teaching strategies based on observation; assessing what children already know and their interests, and keeping teaching goals in mind.

The results again shows that majority of the pre-teachers have the knowledge that ECE best practice allow teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions. The teachers responses to that statement produced a mean and standard deviation of ($M=3.46$, $SD=.500$) to confirm that evidence. The findings is consistent with that of Morrison (2007) who also revealed in ECE best practice there is the need for fully competent individual child having the skills and knowledge of dealing with the new world's demands, changes in the family units.

On the issue of whether pre-school teachers are aware that ECE best practice allow children to establish rules for their classroom. The mean and standard deviation of (M=3.79, SD=.408) gives statistical evidence that majority of the pre-school teachers indicated that they are much aware that ECE best practice allow children to establish rules for their classroom. The study confirms the findings of Webb (2013) who elaborated that ECE practice pay way for children learn cooperation through education in child care centres and such skills help them to obey rules and stay safe in the society.

Research Question 2: How do preschool teachers implement developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

The researcher went further to explore how preschool teachers implement developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. To achieve this, means and standard deviation were deemed appropriate for the analysis.

Table 2: How Preschool teachers implement developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana

Statement	N	Mean	Std. D
I use all aspect of the development in teaching	217	1.28	.257
I promote a positive climate for teaching and learning	217	2.03	.271
I use a variety of teaching strategies	217	1.06	.300
I asses and evaluate children's learning progress primarily through observation, check lists, work samples as part of their classroom assessment	217	1.14	.496
I provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allow for children to increasing responsibility	217	2.01	.298
I use enough teaching and learning materials	217	1.22	.323
Overall mean and standard deviation	217	1.27	.226

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 2 presents results on how preschool teachers implement developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The results shows even though majority of the teachers are aware of the developmentally appropriate practices, they do not put them into practice. The overall mean and standard deviation of (M=1.27, SD=.226) which is less than 2.50 gives evidence to that effects. For example, to find out whether the pre-school teachers use all aspect of the development in teaching, the mean and standard deviation of (M=1.28, SD=.257) shows that most of the teachers agreed that they do not use all aspect of the development in teaching. The findings agree with that of

Hart, et al., (2013) study which revealed that there was a negative correlation between developmentally inappropriate practices and student outcome.

Table 2 further shows that majority of the pre-school teachers do not use a variety of teaching strategies. This was evidence after the teachers responses produced a mean and standard deviation of (M=1.06, SD=.300) which is less than the test value of 2.50 shows that most of the pre-school teachers agreed that they do not use variety of teaching strategies.

To further explore from the teachers whether pre-school teachers provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allow for children to increasing responsibility, the results shows that majority of the teachers indicated that they do not provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allow for children to increasing responsibility. The mean and standard deviation of (M=2.01, SD=.298) gives statistical evidence to that effect.

These findings confirm the assertions of Brede-kamp and Copple (2013) and Buchanan et al., (2017) that teaching practices for young children include opportunities for choice, hands-on learning, promotion of collaboration between children, use of a variety of teaching strategies, individualization, and self-regulation however most teachers do not engaged pupils in these activities and such they are not able to teach pupils to unearth their potentials.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges in the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

To find out whether teachers face some challenges in the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Descriptive statistics using means and standard deviations were computed for the responses of the teachers.

Table 3: Challenges in the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana

Statements	N	Mean	Std. D
Lack of parental support challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices	217	3.54	.500
Inadequate teaching and learning materials challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices	217	3.20	.403
Lack of Curriculum materials challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices	217	3.54	.500
Lack of pupils' readiness challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices	217	3.25	.437
Inadequate government support challenges the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices	217	3.00	.300
Inadequate government support challenges the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices	217	3.25	.437
moral responsibility in my entire life in the society			
The attitudes of school heads challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices	217	3.22	.413

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 3 presents results on the challenges in the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood setting in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The result shows that there are many factors that hinder the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices. The pre-school teachers' responses produced a mean and standard deviation of (M=3.22, SD=.413) showing that majority of the teachers agreed to the pre-coded items that they are responsible factors that challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices.

On the statement "lack of parental support challenges the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices" the mean and standard deviation of (M=3.54, SD=.500) shows that majority of the teachers agreed that parents do not support the smooth running of the childhood educational best practices. The results further shows that inadequate teaching and learning materials challenge the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices. The mean and standard deviation of (M=3.20, SD=.403) gives ample evidence to that fact.

The findings agree with that of Marrison (1986) who states that parents who visit schools in which their children learn have a good opportunity to understand children, teachers and the entire activity of the school. Similarly, Lilley (2007) also postulated parents who share ideas and feelings with teachers accommodate more guidance from the teachers about their children, so that it would help the teachers to adjust their lessons.

Lack of curriculum materials was also identified as one of the challenges the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices. The mean and standard deviation of (M=3.54, SD=.500) shows that majority of the teachers agreed that lack

of curriculum materials pose a challenge in the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

It was noted from the literature that one of the primary challenges in implementing DAPs is the lack of understanding of what DAPs entail among early childhood educators (Bredekamp & Copple, 2010; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007). Many educators are not trained in DAPs, or they have misconceptions about what DAPs mean. For instance, some educators may equate DAPs with a lack of structure or rigor in the classroom, which is not the case (Bredekamp & Copple, 2010).

Another challenge is the pressure to meet academic standards or assessment requirements that may not align with DAPs (Bredekamp & Copple, 2010; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995). Some policymakers or parents may expect young children to achieve academic milestones that are not developmentally appropriate, such as expecting young children to read before they are ready. This pressure can lead to a focus on rote learning or memorization, which may not align with DAPs that emphasize experiential learning, play, and exploration (Bredekamp & Copple, 2010; Stipek et al., 1995).

In addition, limited resources, including time, materials, and space, for implementing DAPs (Bredekamp & Copple, 2010). Early childhood educators may have large class sizes or limited access to materials or spaces that support DAPs, such as outdoor play areas. This can make it challenging for educators to plan and implement learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate and engaging for children.

Finally, implementing DAPs may require a shift in mindset and culture within early childhood settings (Bredekamp & Copple, 2010; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007). Educators may need to rethink their roles and relationships with children, moving from a directive or authoritarian approach to a more collaborative and supportive approach. This may require ongoing professional development and support from administrators and policymakers.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Findings of the Study

The results from the study revealed that preschool teachers are aware of, and have knowledge about developmentally appropriate practices. Developmentally appropriate practices such as ECE considers children's individual differences, ECE takes into consideration children's interest, ECE rests on the idea that children should select their own activities, ECE provides a variety of concrete learning materials in centres (writing centre, science centre, maths centre, etc.), ECE allows children to learn by actively exploring, relevant and interesting materials were all indicated by teachers they are knowledgeable in those best practices.

The results from the study also stated that even though pre-school teachers have knowledge about the early best practices however, they do not apply or implement them in the classroom. For example teachers in indicated that they do not emphasis all aspect of development in teaching, not promoting of positive climate for teaching and learning was also identified, teachers again indicated that they do not variety of teaching strategies and more importantly they do not provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allow for children to increasing responsibility.

The study revealed some identified challenges such as lack of parental support, inadequate teaching and learning materials, lack of curriculum materials, lack of

pupil's readiness, Inadequate school facilities, Inadequate government support, attitudes of school heads.

5.3 Conclusions

Developmentally appropriate practices have been recognized as an effective approach to promoting learning and development in young children. Despite this, concerns have been raised about the extent to which early childhood educators, particularly pre-school teachers understand and implement DAPs in their classrooms. The foregoing indicates that, there is a gap between theory and practice in teaching skills among pre-school teachers in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It is, therefore, imperative to engage teachers in critical reflection in action of what they know. This can be done by strengthening and facilitating professional development training to enhance the teacher's lesson delivery and provide an avenue for them to initiate discussions on what works or does not work for them in reality.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The sample size of the study was limited to only pre-school teachers in the Ga North District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana and as such, is not a representative of the total population of early childhood teachers in Ghana.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made.

1. It is, therefore, recommended that the Ministry of Education should provide teachers with comprehensive training and awareness about the use of DAP within a culturally-relevant context.
2. Again, the Ministry of Education should ensure the developmental goals and objectives in the curriculum reflect local values and inform approaches to

classroom practices. The curriculum should also reflect the customary practices, traditions and rituals that touch the lives of children in various cultural contexts and encourage the participation of children in the everyday life of their community.

3. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Early Childhood department, provide hands-on practice to in-service teachers so that they can translate child development principles to classroom practice. The model could include offering short courses with a multilevel approach which leads to a systematic professional development.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The following are some suggested areas that can be considered for further studies.

1. Similar studies should be conducted in other Metropolis in the entire Region (Greater Accra Region of Ghana), this is to help make a valid generalisation of the findings.
2. Further research can concentrate on the higher classes. For example lower and upper primary to examine teachers' knowledge about developmentally appropriate practices in ECEs.

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APPENDICES

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

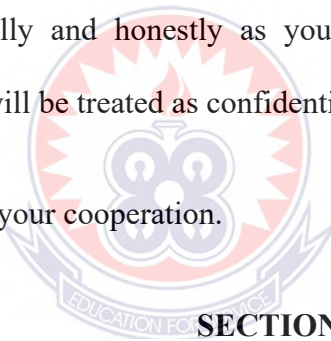
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Dear Respondent

The purpose of this study is to find out **PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS PERCEPTION ABOUT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING: A CASE STUDY OF GA NORTH DISTRICT IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION**. Please respond to the statements as truthfully and honestly as you can. Be assured that whatever information you provide will be treated as confidential.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.



SECTION A

Please, kindly tick [] the appropriate response

Demographic Data

1. Gender/Sex: Male [] Female []
2. Age
3. Teaching experience: Below 6 years [] 6-10 years [
Above 10 years []

SECTION B

**KNOWLEDGE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS HAVE ON
DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD SETTING IN THE GA NORTH DISTRICT IN THE GREATER
ACCRA REGION OF GHANA**

Instruction: In the tables below for each statement mark how much you agree with a tick [√] in the box to the right of each statement. The responses are on the scale **1-4**, where **1** = Strongly Disagree [**SD**], **2** = Disagree [**D**], **3** = Agree [**A**] and **4** = Strongly Agree [**SA**].

SN	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
1	ECE best practices takes into consideration children's individual differences				
2	ECE best practices takes into consideration children's in interest				
3	ECE best practices rest on the idea that children's to select their own activities				
4	ECE best practices provide a variety of concrete learning materials in centers (writing center, science center, math center, etc.)				
5	ECE best practices allow children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials.				
6	ECE best practices allow for children to learn by interacting and working cooperatively with other children				
7	ECE best practices allow teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions,				
8	ECE best practices allow children to establish rules for their classroom				
9	ECE best practices allow children to have stories read to them daily, individually or in groups.				

SECTION C

HOW PRESCHOOL TEACHERS IMPLEMENT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING IN THE GA NORTH DISTRICT IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION OF GHANA

Instruction: In the tables below for each statement mark how much you agree with a tick [✓] in the box to the right of each statement. The responses are on the scale **1-4**, where **1** = Strongly Disagree [**SD**], **2** = Disagree [**D**], **3** = Agree [**A**] and **4** = Strongly Agree [**SA**].

SN	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
1	I use all aspect of the development in teaching				
2	I promote a positive climate for teaching and learning				
3	I use a variety of teaching strategies				
4	I asses and evaluate children's learning progress primarily through observation, check lists, work samples as part of their classroom assessment				
5	I provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allow for children to increasing responsibility				
6	I use enough teaching and learning materials				

SECTION D

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING IN THE GA NORTH DISTRICT IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION OF GHANA

Instruction: In the tables below for each statement mark how much you agree with a tick [√] in the box to the right of each statement. The responses are on the scale **1-4**, where **1** = Strongly Disagree [**SD**], **2** = Disagree [**D**], **3** = Agree [**A**] and **4** = Strongly Agree [**SA**]

SN	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
1	Lack of parental support challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				
2	Inadequate teaching and learning materials challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				
3	Lack of Curriculum materials challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				
4	Lack of pupils' readiness challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				
5	Inadequate government support challenges the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				
6	Inadequate government support challenges the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices moral responsibility in my entire life in the society				

7	The attitudes of school heads challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				
8	Inadequate school facilities challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				
9	Teacher attitudes challenge the implementation to developmentally appropriate practices				

