

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**INFLUENCE OF PLAY MATERIAL ON TEACHING AND
LEARNING IN THE JOMORO MUNICIPALITY**



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**INFLUENCE OF PLAY MATERIAL ON TEACHING AND LEARNING IN
THE JOMORO MUNICIPALITY**

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of the requirement for the award of the degree of
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APRIL, 2022

DECLARATION

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I **Enock Bosomafi Eshun**, hereby declare that except for references to other people's work which have been dully cited, this dissertation is the product of my own effort and that it had neither in whole nor in part been presented elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

SUPERVISOR DECLARATION

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

Supervisor: **Prof. Hinneh Kusi**

Signature:

Date:

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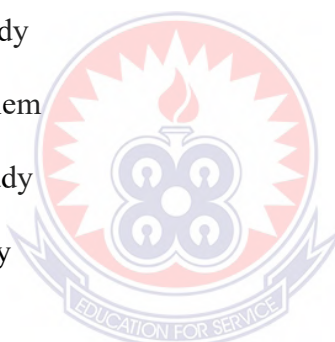
DEDICATION

To my parents who spent their entire life taken care of me and sponsoring my education.



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of Early Childhood Educators on the influence of play materials on teaching and learning as well as play as a teaching method in selected schools in two circuits in the Jomoro Municipality. The study adopted concurrent triangulation mixed methods approach. The target population of the study was 230 Early Childhood Educators in the Jomoro Municipality. This comprised 20 basic school heads, 20 school supervisors and 190 kindergarten teachers in the Jomoro Municipality. A sample of 120 participants was selected in this study: 100 kindergarten teachers, 10 basic school heads and 10 school supervisors. Purposive, simple random and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the participants. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically frequency counts, percentages and linear multiple regression were used to analyse the quantitative data. On the other hand, thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data. The findings showed that early childhood teachers in Jomoro Municipality have positive perception on the use of play as a teaching method. The findings discovered that availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation for teachers and regular supervision were the major measures that can be employed to positively shape the perception of teachers and help them of play to effect learning. The study recommended that through in-service training, headteachers should encourage early childhood teachers in Jomoro Municipality to continuously have positive perception towards play as a teaching method. This could help them to continuously use play as a teaching method in teaching kindergarten children in Jomoro Municipality. Personnel in charge of supervision at the Jomoro Municipal Education Directorate should educate kindergarten teachers on the use to use play as a teaching method. This could help them use it more often in their lesson delivery; hence, could help children have better understanding of lessons taught.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter includes an introduction to the research study. It contains the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the research, delimitations of the study and organization of the study

1.1 Background to the study

Children in literate and non-literate cultures play regardless of their strength, challenges, mental health, socioeconomic status and parenting. Play is a crucial component of an appropriate early childhood classroom. The past decade has seen an increase in research documenting the benefits of children learning through play. However, in the global world, the amount of play in American kindergarten classes for instance, remains on a steady decline (Eberle, 2011). Research in play has witnessed a rise in two seemingly contradictory trends. First, research increasingly shows that play expedites a variety of social, cognitive, motor, and linguistic improvements (Eberle 2011; Fisher 2011).

Social play allows children to become more creative and more adept at explaining meaning verbally, they are more successful at manipulating different symbol systems, and more confident when experimenting with new activities (Bjorklund & Gardiner 2011; Eberle 2011; Pellegini 2009). In school settings, teachers gently guide play, using play-based teaching and learning activities to promote curricular goals while maintaining the critically important aspects of play such as children's intrinsic

motivation to engage in play (Bordova, Germeroth, & Leong 2013; Eberle 2014; Fisher et al. 2011).

Second, and ironically, in spite of the many benefits of play recognized by academics, recent years have seen a steady decrease in the amount of time kindergarten classes devote to play (Brownson et al. 2010; Frost 2008; Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). Past research has well documented the challenges public school kindergarten teachers face in implementing play in their classes and the shift towards more academically focused kindergarten teaching. The early years of human life provide a unique opportunity for social and cognitive investment, but at the same time this is the most vulnerable period for all forms of stunting in development if holistic development is not nurtured. Froebel (1987) writing on children's play contends that, play is not only the children's natural occupation before constraints and formal schooling takes over but it also serves as a major means by which children use to communicate to themselves and to the world around. Children's play and teacher's involvement in play activities have received recognition and attention by philosophers and educationist for centuries (Froebel, 1987).

Article 31, of the Convention on The Rights of the Child and The African Charter on The Rights and Welfare of The Child, Article XIII, clearly require State parties to recognize and promote the right of children to engage in play (UNICEF, 2007). Research has shown that, at birth, a child's brain growth and development has reached 40%, and it rapidly grows and develops to 80% by the age of three (UNICEF, 2007). This implies that for the child to thrive and reach his or her full potential, it is crucial for teachers and caregivers to have proper knowledge and skills on how to harness

children' play behavior to enhance both stimulation and smooth adaptability in teaching and learning activities.

The activity of play in kindergarten is crucial to the development of children (Graue, 2009, Miller and Almon, 2009). With obligations to fulfill mandates such as "No Child Left Behind" (Lee, et. al., 2006) and pressure to meet state and national standards, teachers are continuously decreasing the amount of play-centered activities in kindergarten classrooms. However, it is important to incorporate play into the curriculum for the development of children. Miller & Almon (2009) discuss that, "the traditional kindergarten classroom that most adults remember from childhood-with plenty of space and time for unstructured play and discovery, art and music, practicing social skills, and learning to enjoy learning-has largely disappeared" (p.42).

Today, play materials seems to have taken a backseat in kindergarten to teacher-directed instruction based on the belief that the latter is more effective than the former in preparing children to perform well on standards-based assessments. Graue (2009) explained this by stating, "it seems expectations have evolved without a clear sense of purpose or of the needs of the children. The current focus on benchmarks and achievement has focused effort on what is tested rather than what is learned" (p. 30). This describes common practices seen in most kindergartens today (Ashiabi, 2007). In some kindergartens the focus is mainly on drilling students with information that they need to know to meet expectations, with little time for play. Because of the expectations and standards that must be met, many teachers do not allow time for play, or only allow time for play if all material for the day is covered (Graue, 2009). However, teachers may not take in consideration the benefits of play for the development of children.

Warner and Parker (2005) expressed that, "Play materials is healthy and in fact, essential for helping children reach important social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones as well as helping them manage stress and become resilient" (p. 2). Therefore, it is critical for teachers to understand the importance of play in improving stress management and social skills, as well as to feel empowered to integrate play based learning activities in their kindergarten instruction.

Ghana is among African countries that gave Early Childhood Development (ECD) program a minimum attention in the past three decades. During this period the children's early learning and stimulation was informal and unstructured. The absence of the formal Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs made children below eight years invisible in the country's education program, a situation that denied children the opportunity to thrive both academically and socially. In the year 2007, a policy document on Early Childhood Care and Development for Ghana was made operational. The document, forms part of the recommendations of the Government's White Paper on Educational Reforms, makes kindergarten education progressively part of the Universal Free and Compulsory Basic Education (Ghana News Agency May 31, 2005).

Under the policy, all Ghanaian children at the age of four are to receive two years compulsory Early Childhood Development (ECD) education before entering primary one. Early childhood is the period of a child's growth from conception to the first eight years. This was contained in a speech delivered by the then first Lady Mrs. Theresa Kufour when she was opening the International African Conference on Early Childhood Development in Accra on the theme: "Moving Early Childhood Development Forward in Africa" (GNA May 31,2005)

The most convenient way of assessing whether teaching in ECE is friendly and relevant to the child is through the teaching and learning strategies. Strategies and methods used by both teachers and pupils in teaching and learning are vital in promotion of self-mastery of skills and concepts especially at this tender age.

In a child-centered kindergarten, teachers incorporate play and play materials into the daily curriculum (Graue, 2009). Students have the opportunity to explore their learning environment by means of free-play, play materials as well as through teacher-initiated play. Free-play is play that is initiated by the child (Graue, 2009). Furthermore, free-play allows children to develop social relationships with other students, the opportunity to choose their own level of challenge, and the overall ability to make their own decisions (Ashiabi, 2007). Teacher-initiated play is where the teacher is involved in the interactions between students. The teacher is there to provide feedback, extend conversations, and bring in appropriate resources (Graue, 2009). With the focus on play-based learning, students continue to grow and develop appropriately as well as meet the expectations expected of them (Miller & Almon, 2009).

Early Childhood Education must support children to develop the ability to work and communicate their own impressions through creative processes with various forms of expression. The Ghanaian Pre-school curriculum is very flexible in terms of lesson content, coupled with the absence of external examinations to assess preschoolers' eligibility for primary school education (Ashiabi, 2007). Play has been described as a vehicle for learning especially in early childhood setting. This implies that for effective learning, play must be incorporated in ECE programs. Since teachers are key determinants of the experiences that children are exposed to, it is necessary to

ascertain whether they embrace the use of play as a teaching method in Ghanaian Kindergarten.

After making Kindergarten education compulsorily part of the formal school system in 2007, the Ministry of Education has continued to put emphasis on the use of child-centered teaching methods that includes use of play as a teaching approach in both indoor and outdoor learning activities. For most people, the fondest memories in school and outside of school were the times that they were involved in activities that incorporated play. One remembers kindergarten as a happy place one went, where one rarely sat at a table or desk. It was a place of creativity and fun. There was an abundant amount of art supplies, books, and an entire room with blocks, toys, and balls. Kindergarten was a place to interact with others and begin friendships.

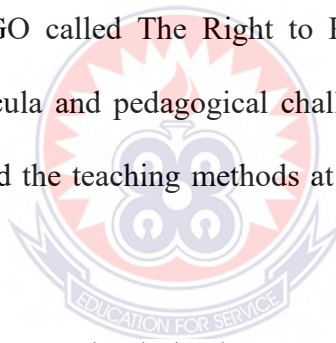
Play-based learning activities emphasize the importance of process and product. Contrary to what developmental theory suggests, the focus in contemporary kindergartens is put on the knowledge children may need in latter grades to succeed and not on the development of fundamental cognitive, psychological, social and emotional abilities for which their minds and bodies are adapted to develop at this time in their lives and that form the foundation to their happiness and success now and in the future (Eberle, 2011).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A study by Lyabwene (2010) in Tanzania indicated that issues of pre-primary school teachers' professional qualifications affected the quality of classroom interaction, hence, impacting on teaching and learning approaches significantly. The complaints are raised by different ECE stakeholders on the unaddressed pedagogical challenges,

especially teachers' tendency of using compulsive, direct and unfriendly teacher-centered teaching strategies (United Republic of Tanzania URT, 2008).

The case of Ghana is similar to that of Tanzania based on several reports from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) including Sabre Charitable Trust, US Agency for International Development (USAID), The Right to Play and many others. In spite of the government of Ghana's strong policy commitment to the kindergarten sector, it continues to face challenges of access and quality. The needs at this level are significant, whereas learning materials are in short supply: almost half of all kindergarten teachers have never received any formal training (Ministry of Education MoE, Ghana 2013 cited in Sabre Charitable Trust country report November 21, 2017). Also, another NGO called The Right to Play reports that early childhood educators still face curricula and pedagogical challenges and there is a discrepancy between the emphasis and the teaching methods at the kindergartens (Right To Play Ghana, 2016).



A visit to some kindergarten schools in the Jomoro Municipality by the researcher from 21st September, 2021 through to 5th October, 2021 indicates that, play materials seems to be on a lower side as far as teaching and learning is concerned. Five schools visited in the Municipality revealed that, most of the ECE educators seem not to have enough knowledge on using play as a teaching method.

Most of the educators in the Jomoro Municipality also seem not to have full control over play activities. What is common is that, young children are most often allowed to go out for free play with little or no guidance or supervision. There are debates in the literature (Graue, 2009; Ashiabi, 2007) that one factor that accounts for the limited use of play materials in the kindergarten is the kind of perception teachers hold

regarding play as a teaching methodology. There are some early childhood educators who believe that play as a teaching method is not effective. Some think otherwise (Eberle, 2011). It is therefore necessary to assess the views of kindergarten teachers in Jomoro Municipality on the Influence of play materials on teaching and learning.

1.3 The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of Early Childhood Educators on the influence of play materials on teaching and learning as well as play as a teaching method in the Jomoro Municipality.

1.4 Objectives of the study

Specifically, this study sought to:

1. Assess the view of early childhood education teachers on the use of play as a teaching method in Jomoro Municipality.
2. Find out the extent to which early childhood education teachers of Jomoro Municipality engaged the use of play materials in teaching and learning.
3. Identify factors that influence the early childhood education teachers' use of play materials in teaching and learning.
4. Evolve strategies aimed at positively influencing play materials on teaching and learning.

1.5 Research questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the views of early childhood education teachers on the use of play as a teaching method in Jomoro Municipality?

2. To what extent do early childhood education teachers of Jomoro Municipality engage the use of play materials in teaching and learning?
3. What factors influence Jomoro Municipality early childhood education teachers' use of play materials in teaching and learning?
4. What measures can be employed to positively influence play materials on teaching and learning.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Findings from this study will potentially improve the way kindergarten teachers employ the activities in their teaching. Additionally, this research will help Early Childhood Educators in the Jomoro Municipality to uncover their own views about influence of play materials on teaching and learning. The findings will also allow in-service and pre-service teachers to understand ways to include play in kindergarten settings. Again, the study will help to shed light on the state of affairs regarding the use of play as a pedagogical approach to teaching in ECE in the district. Last but not least, the findings will re-awaken the awareness of Early Childhood Teachers on the role of play in holistic development of children.

1.7 Delimitations

Even though the early childhood education is from birth to age eight, the researcher will focus particularly on kindergartens in the Jomoro Municipality between the ages of four and five. The researcher will primarily focus on the perception of KG teachers regarding play materials and its influence on teaching and learning and play as a teaching method and not on other methods.

1.8 Organization of the rest of the chapters

The study was developed and put into five major chapters with specific subheadings. The first chapter dwells on the introduction of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, operational definition of terms and the organization of the study. The second chapter is devoted to review of related literature. this was done using strands derived from the main research questions and put under two main themes namely the theoretical and empirical framework. Chapter three looked at the methodology. This included the research design, population, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, pre-testing of instruments, reliability and validity of the instruments, procedure for data collection and procedure for analyzing of data were outlined. The four chapter takes a critical look at the analysis and discussion of data using qualitative and quantitative techniques whiles a summary of findings, conclusions, suggestions and recommendations were provided in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

A literature review describes the systematic processes of searching for scholarly works (Ridley, 2012), critical review of scholarly works (Hart, 2018), and discussion of published information (Hart, 2018). Typically, a literature review has an operational structure incorporating description and thesis synthesis. The literature review essentially explains the whole process of the analysis, including acting as a guide for analyzing research data and explaining research findings (Hart, 2018). Data pieces for this review were gathered from journals, abstracts, internet, books, and works on parental involvement in education. In this chapter, therefore, previous research works are critically reviewed, analysed and synthesized to provide a broader context of knowledge sharing. There still exists the need to gather literature in a comprehensive format to make clear the various theories and philosophies that underpin play in early childhood development.

The literature is reviewed under the following topics:

- a. Theoretical framework
- b. Education
- c. Early Childhood Education
- d. Classification of early childhood programs
- e. Teaching
- f. Teaching methods
- g. Types of play
- h. Play as a teaching method

- i. Play in early childhood
 - j. View of early childhood education teachers on the use of play as a teaching method factors that influence the early childhood education teachers' use of play material in teaching and learning.
 - k. Strategies aimed at positively influencing play material on teaching and learning.
1. Summary of Literature and Gaps

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theory is defined as a set of interrelated concepts, assumptions and generalizations that systematically describes and explains behaviour (Ndurumo, 2007). Therefore, a theory attempts to fit relevant facts into a logical explanation and also serves as a framework for collecting more information. Philosophers of science have argued that one of the most important functions of theoretical framework is that it guides observation. In other words, observation statements cannot be made without using the language of some theory, and in turn, these theories determine what is investigated. Thus, the framework plays an important role by guiding the kinds of questions that we can ask, the nature of evidence that is to be collected, the methodologies that are appropriate for collecting this evidence, the strategies available for analyzing the data and finally, interpretations that we make from this analysis.

This study adopted the Personal Investment Theory by Maehr's 1986. According to Maehr's (1986) Personal Investment Theory, a person's Perception towards particular behavior determines the way he or she invests his or her time, talent and energy. The theory contends that the meaning of the activity, for example the meaning of play or use of play to a teacher, basically determines his or her Perception towards

people, situations, objects and actions related to the play. The theory further suggests that a person may have a recognized talent or ability in performing a task but may not be interested to exhibit the behavior if the practice is not encouraged by his or her reference group. Thus, when a teacher's play behavior or other related play activities are favored or appreciated by social group(s) for instance, school management, other teachers or parents, the teacher is likely to choose to exhibit the behavior more frequently. Consequently, frequency in a behavior will render to increased investment of his or her additional time, energy and skills in the behavior. In this view the school management may influence a teacher's use of play as a teaching method.

Explaining whether extrinsic rewards control a person's behavior in a particular situation Maher (1986) argues that, some people when assured of the means to obtain the rewards, will strive to maximize their chances to get them and in this manner exhibit the rewarding behavior. In the context of this study, when a teacher is assured of enjoying a variety of motivational packages from the school management, he or she will reciprocate by spending more time, energy and skills in play related teaching and learning activities. In addition, some teachers may opt to use play as a teaching method if they perceive that the actions and the outcome will render them recognition. This theory is relevant in establishing how the motivating school environment influences use of play as a teaching method in kindergarten settings.

The theory further proposes that a person's subjective judgment of his or her ability to perform a task effectively tends to influence the individual's choice to exhibit or inhibit a behavior. When a teacher believes in his or her competence and knowledge in Early Childhood teaching practices, he or she will increase his or her investment of skills, energy and talents in use of play as a child-centered teaching and learning

approach. The theory suggests that a knowledgeable and skilled person in any area of specialty tends to exhibit a professional behavior in autonomous and assertive manner regardless of existence of some impeding factors (Boulet, 2015). This premise offers a basis for explore the views of Early Childhood Educators on the influence of play material on teaching and learning as well as play as a teaching method in selected schools in two circuits in the Jomoro Municipality.

2.1.1 Education

According to Taylor and Buku, (2003), education involves the process of imparting knowledge, values and skills to bring about a change in the behaviour of the individual. Tilabi, (2008) defines education as the process by which people acquire knowledge, skills, habits, values, attitudes and moral behaviour. Considering what those we are supposed to be teaching need, and what might be going on for them, is one of the main things that makes ‘education’ different to indoctrination. Indoctrination involves knowingly encouraging people to believe something regardless of the evidence (Snook 1972; Peterson, 2007). It also entails a lack of respect for their human rights. Education can be described as the ‘wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the chance to share in life’ (Smith 2015). The process of education flows from a basic orientation of respect – respect for truth, others and themselves, and the world. In Ghana the formal educational process begins from early childhood to tertiary level with varying teaching methods.

2.1.2 Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) is the organized practice of educating young children in the early stages of life (birth to age eight), according to National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Epstein (2007), the age range spans from birth to age eight (thus from Nursery to Basic three) (Groark, et al., 2008). In support, UNESCO International Bureau of Education (2006) acknowledges that children who benefited from ECE are between the ages from birth to eight (8) years old. It is a time of remarkable brain development that lays the very foundation for subsequent learning in the development of human life. According to the Global Monetary Report (2007), ECE includes nursery, kindergarten and the first three years of primary education. Other frequently used terms include pre-school, early years, kindergarten, playgroup, nursery, pre-grade one, preparatory year, 'zero year' etc. (International Bureau of Education, 2006).

According to the Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (RBEDA), early childhood education refers to a holistic and integrated approach to health, nutrition, protection, and education needs and services (Regional Bureau for Education in Africa, 2010). The Working Group on Early Childhood Development which brings all the key stakeholders including international partners, governments, NGOs, experts and academics officially term early childhood education as Early Childhood Development (ECD).

In Australia, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services for children below school age are usually referred to as either childcare, children's services or early childhood services. ECEC therefore includes the range of formal care and education services for children under school age and in the early years of school. According to

the World Bank (2001), early child development includes services designed for the physical and intellectual growth of children in their early years (ages 0-6). These services incorporate day care, pre-school, home visits by trained professionals, health and nutrition services, and parental education. Bowman (2000) states that:

“Early childhood education does not refer to a single entity; rather, the term covers a variety of programmes for young children between birth and age 8. These programmes take place in children's own homes and in public schools, private pre-schools, and child-care homes and centers. Each of these settings may have quite different characteristics (adult/child ratios, group sizes, age ranges, cultural practices, and adult training and teaching styles) that in turn affect what and how children learn.” (page 12)

Based on the statement above, it can be argued that, Early Childhood Education is seen as the kind of education which is geared towards total development of young children regardless of their location and socio economic background. However, the above can be achieved if professionals who handle these children use varied teaching strategies with emphasis on play to impart knowledge to the child.

The UNESCO (2007) indicates that the majority of children in early childhood education are between the ages of three and six years. In Ghana, pre-school education refers to the type of education given to children from ages Zero (0) to five (5) years, after which they enroll in the formal primary school (Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002)

2.1.3 Classification of Early Childhood Education

The primary purpose of traditional pre-schools and nursery schools is to provide early education experiences to 3- and 4-year-olds. These programs are often part-day and part-week, although with increasing numbers of parents working. They are serving children for longer hours and providing wrap around (full-day) care (Magnuson,

Meyers, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2004). Early childhood education has been categorized at various levels usually using parameters such as the age and developmental growth of the child. In Ghana, Pre-school education falls under various levels namely, crèche which is for children aged 0 to 2 years, Day Care (2 to 3 years), Nursery for 3 to 4 years and Kindergarten for children aged between 4 and 5 years (Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002).

According to Melhuish (2005), Daycare refers to childcare by someone other than the parent and most research is concerned with the years 0–5. To Bowman (1993), Day-care programs and half-day pre-schools have different philosophical and programmatic roots, and different factors have been stressed in research on these programs. Daycare research, emanating from social welfare (principally medicine and social work) tends to be concerned with factors affecting the welfare of poor and vulnerable children and families. Nursery school or pre-school education, rooted in developmental psychology, is more often focused on social or emotional and cognitive development.

Aside formalized early childhood facilities, there are other informal childcare programs that children may receive prior to school entry. These include care provided by family childcare providers, babysitters, or relatives. Informal childcare is widely used for children under age three but it is still common for 3 and 4-year-olds as well (Magnuson et al, 2004). In most countries, schools may be classified under sources of funding and ownership, thus public owned and funded schools, private; but public funded schools (often religious schools) and private owned and funded schools (Dronkers & Robert, 2003) are all available.

Early childhood education takes many forms globally depending on the beliefs of the educator or parent. The challenges of early childhood education arose when developmental psychologists and individual experts in the field of early childhood interestingly felt the need to emphasize the uniqueness of zero to eight-year-old children and the urgent need to provide them with learning experiences that were appropriate to their level of development (Developmentally Appropriate Practices) (Bredekamp 1987) cited in NAEYC 2009.

This growing interest in providing educational experiences for early childhood children promoted the establishment of the first nursery school in New Harmony, Indiana in the United States in 1820. Since then, the growth of early childhood education program has been given greater attention. According to some writers in the field of early childhood education, scientific evidence accumulated during the first decade has also demonstrated the importance of the early years of the child life and the developmental costs of inadequate care. It found out that the quality care and interaction provided to the child during the early years enhances his or her psychological, cognitive and social development (Mallory and New 1994)

Jean Jacques Rousseau, was a great educator who believed in natural way of educating children. He therefore called for the child's nature to be identified in order to educate him or her accordingly. Dr. Maria Montessori was also a great educator who influenced early childhood education. She devised special teaching techniques which early childhood teachers or caregivers should use in dealing with children between three and six years. Her method was to develop a child's own natural desire to learn and perform the task involved. As such, rewards and punishments should be eliminated and tasks must rather be provided to the child as the teacher serves as a

guide. Again, she emphasized the development of the child's sensory and muscular responses in order for the child to develop understanding of the learning concepts through the senses and also to develop their muscles in activity learning (Bredekamp1987) cited in NAEYC 2009.

It should, however, be borne in mind that all these cannot be achieved in a vacuum but should come through the efforts of competent and well trained caregivers and teachers. Teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin. It should be noted that learning takes place in the appropriate learning atmosphere where social, intellectual, physical and emotional logistics of the school are put right. This calls for the application of pedagogical skills of the teachers and caregivers. On a more serious note, the kind of training required by these educators goes beyond, to some extent, those of the traditional program. At the early childhood stage, children need special and holistic care in order to develop to an expected end (The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) of Australian Department of Education, 2018)

2.1.4 Teaching

Teaching is the process of attending to people's needs, experiences and feelings, and making specific interventions to help them learn particular things. In education, teaching is the concerted sharing of knowledge and experience, which is usually organized within a discipline and, more generally, the provision of stimulus to the psychological and intellectual growth of a person by another person or artifact. Teaching is an activity aimed at bringing about meaningful learning through a method that is morally and pedagogically acceptable. It involves a teacher, a learner, content in form of knowledge, facts, information and skills to be imparted, a deliberate

intention on the part of the learners to learn, and finally a method that respects the learners' cognitive integrity and freedom of choice (Layne, 2012.)

There are two fundamentally different ways of understanding teaching. The first sees teaching as an instructor-centered activity in which knowledge is transmitted from someone who has acquired that knowledge to novice learners: teaching as knowledge transmission. The second sees teaching as a learner-centered activity in which the instructor ensures that learning is made possible for novice learners and supports, guides, and encourages them in their active and independent creation of new knowledge: teaching as assisted knowledge creation (Layne 2012).

2.1.5 Teaching methods

The term 'teaching method' commonly refers to the general principles, pedagogy and management strategies used for classroom instruction. The teacher's choice of teaching method depends on what fits his/her educational philosophy, classroom demographic, subject area(s) and school mission statement. According to Wikipedia (2007) a teaching method comprises the principles and methods used by teachers to enable student learning. These strategies are determined partly on subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature of the learner. For a particular teaching method to be appropriate and efficient it has to be in relation with the characteristic of the learner and the type of learning it is supposed to bring about. According to Westwood (2008), the approaches for teaching can be broadly classified into teacher-centered and student/child-centered. In Teacher-centered Approach to Learning, Teachers are the main authority figure in this model. Students are viewed as "empty vessels" whose primary role is to passively receive information (via lectures and direct instruction) with an end goal of testing and assessment. It is the primary role of teachers to pass

knowledge and information onto their students. In this model, teaching and assessment are viewed as two separate entities. Student learning is measured through objectively scored tests and assessments (Featherstone, 2011). In Student/ Child-Centered Approach to Learning, while teachers are an authority figure in this model, teachers and students play an equally active role in the learning process. The teacher's primary role is to coach and facilitate student learning and overall comprehension of materials. Student learning is measured through both formal and informal forms of assessment, including group projects, student portfolios, and class participation. Teaching and assessments are connected; student learning is continuously measured during teacher instruction. Commonly used teaching methods may include class participation, play, demonstration, recitation, memorization, or combinations of these.

2.2 Types of Play (Parten's Six Types of Play)

Types of Play connote a theory and classification of children's participation in play developed by Mildred Parten Newhall in her 1929 dissertation. Parten observed American preschool age 2 to 5 children at free play. Play for young children assumes many different forms. Parten (1932) was one of the early researchers studying children at play. She focused on the social interactions between children during play activities. Parten's categories of play are not hierarchical. Depending on the circumstances, children may engage in any of the different types of play. Parten does note, however, that in her research with two- to five-year-olds, "participation in the most social types of groups occurs most frequently among the older children" (p. 259). The six types of play identified by Parten are discussed below:

2.2.1 Unoccupied play

When the child is not playing, just observing. A child may be standing in one spot or performing random movement. (Parten, 1932). To some extent, unoccupied play refers to activity when a child is not playing at all. The child may be engaged in seemingly random movements, with no objective. It is reasonable to assert that; teachers view this kind of as having nothing significant to offer the young child's development. Despite appearances, this is definitely play and setting the stage for future play exploration.

2.2.4 Parallel Play

Playing even in the middle of a group, while remaining engrossed in one's own activity. To Parten, (1932) this is when the child plays separately from others but close to them and mimicking their actions.

This type of play is seen as transitory stage from a socially immature solitary and onlooker type of play, to a more socially mature associative and cooperative type of play. This type of play to some extent is perceived by teachers as negatively impacting on the child's social and emotional development. Despite having little social contact with her playmates, children who parallel play actually learn quite a bit from one another like taking turns and other social niceties, because even though it appears they are not paying attention to each other, they truly are and often mimic the other ones behaviour. As such this type of play is viewed as an important bridge to the later stages of play. (Parten, 1932)

2.2.5 Associative Play

When the child is interested in the people playing but not in coordinating their activities with those people, or when there is no organized activity at all. There is a

substantial amount of interaction involved, but the activities are not in sync. For example, children playing with trucks may ask each other question, share ideas and carry on conversation about the play materials. Some benefits of this type of play is tolerance, humility, and spirit of forgiveness (Parten, 1932). Teachers who indicated general positive attitude towards this kind of play seems to allot more time for play in schools. Their role first and foremost is to be a partner, teachers learn with the children and share in their experiences. Early childhood education teachers support learning by providing activities and materials that children find engaging. Nurturing a child encompasses all aspects of development thus social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.

2.2.6 Cooperative play

This occurs when a child is interested both in people playing and in the activity they are doing. In cooperative play, the activity is organized, and participants have assigned roles. There is also increased self-identification with a group, and a group identity may emerge. This is relatively uncommon in the preschool and kindergarten years, because it requires more social maturity and more advance organization skills. Examples includes, football, ampe, cards, oware and ludo. In as much as novice teachers see this type of play as a great deal of preparation, it can be argued that, when teachers plan well, cooperative play can be executed without any stress. Some benefits of this type of play are respect, accepting other people's views, leadership roles, and responsible behaviour (Santrock, 2007).

According to Parten (1932), as children became older, improving their communication skills, and as opportunities for peer interaction become more common, the nonsocial (solitary and parallel) types of play become less common and

the social (associative and cooperative) types of play become more common. Modern scholars agree that Parten's theory has contributed substantially to our understanding of play, and while alternative classification schemes have been proposed, Parten's stages of play are still widely used. However, there is disagreement on whether there is indeed a sequence of play stages that children go through. For example, whether toddlers are really unable to play cooperatively, and whether solitary play in older children is less common or a sign of maturity. Alternative explanations in the literature suggests that, types of play may be influenced by other circumstances such as how well the child knows or are familiar with one another, knowledge in the use of the play material, and age (Santrock, 2007).

2.3 Play in Early Childhood

Our thinking about play has been influenced over the years by the work of many educationalists, psychologists, researchers and practitioners, and much has been written about how young children learn and how adults can support this learning.

In the opening chapter of her book "Early Childhood Education", Tina Bruce traces this history of research from Rousseau and Kant in the 18th century, the 19th century practitioners like Froebel, Montessori and Steiner, and on through to 20th century thinkers like Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner. At this point in time our knowledge base is being challenged further by the work of Howard Gardner, Ferre Laevers, Loris Malaguzzi, Chris Athey and others. What has emerged from all of this thinking is a set of common principles to which all early years' practitioners can sign up.

Froebel argues that play is children's natural occupation before cultural restraints and formal schooling takes over. Play is the first means of development of the human mind. It is the first effort to make acquaintance with the outward world, to correct

original experiences, to reinforce facts and to exercise the powers of body and mind (Froebel, 1987).

Bruner (1975) argues that play serves as a vehicle for social, emotional and cognitive development. This implies that the negative emotional and serious consequences of errors and setbacks are reduced in play. In play, children talk freely, explore freely and when one is mistaken, he or she is freely corrected causing no ill feelings on both mistaken and on the part of the corrector. By discussing and questioning in such a friendly atmosphere, they develop a critical outlook on issues, which is in itself, prerequisite for academic autonomy. Erikson (1963) agrees with the idea that children use play to make up from defeat, suffering and frustration. Play has a therapeutic value in that, it takes away the attention from the objective worries about self and focuses on an interesting objective pursuit (Bruner, 1975).

In addition, emotional development is supported as children develop self-esteem through play by becoming more skilled with regulation of distress and learning to identify emotional states of others (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Lindsey & Colwell, 2003; Normandeau & Guay, 1998). Through conflicts and resolutions embedded in social play, children learn to handle internal and external conflicts in an appropriate manner. Furthermore, play has the potential to strengthen empathy and feeling towards others through perspective taking. As children gain experience imagining what others are thinking and feeling, they become more skilled in expressing empathy and compassion towards others (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2001).

Developmental theorists Piaget and Vygotsky provide frameworks for considering the cognitive implications of play for development. While Piaget describes play as practice for strengthening of skills and existing schema (i.e. assimilation), Vygotsky

ascribes a more central role of play as a mechanism for building cognitive structures, such as symbolic representation of thought. Building upon these theories, there are many ways in which engaging in play facilitates the development of cognitive skills. For instance, through fantasy play children begin using symbols. Symbolic representation is the fundamental cognitive skill underlying literacy, writing, mathematics, and other complex skills essential for functioning in modern cultures. Through social play, particularly fantasy play, children develop theory of mind, the understanding that others experience unique thoughts (Astington & Jenkins, 1995; Watson, Linkie-Nixon, Wilson, & Capage, 1999). Contemporary researchers have extended these theoretical considerations to address the role of play in literacy development (Owocki, 1999; Roskos & Neuman, 1998), attachment to caregivers (Kerns & Barth, 1995; Schiffman, 2003), social competence in a variety of settings (Connolly & Doyle, 1984), and assessment of functioning (Casby, 2003). Furthermore, when children demonstrate pro-social inclusive behaviors, classrooms become environmentally conducive to overall learning (Wentzel, 1991).

Although teachers seem to acknowledge the role of play in developing skills, they seem unsure of how to utilize play in an instructional manner (Saracho & Spodek, 1998). Despite a plethora of research suggesting positive outcomes associated with opportunities to engage in social play and negative out-comes associated with peer rejection, there is often a hands-off policy during recess and free-play time in school. Teachers tend to underestimate the prevalence of bullying and do not appear to recognize their potential role as preventing violence and promoting pro-social skill development (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). When teachers do attempt to implement strategies supporting friendships among children in their classrooms, often indirect strategies such as providing free time for play, allowing children to choose with

whom they would like to play, and making informal comment on the play between friends are used (Buysee, Goldman, & Skinner, 2003). Overall, there appears lacking a curriculum or integrated strategy to weave teaching of pro-social interactions into the entire school day.

2.4 Play as a teaching method

Play is a medium for learning and an important stimulant which accelerates children's intellectual growth. This implies that play can have a significant role in teaching in Kindergarten setting. Vygotsky (1978) supports this thinking when he asserts: "In play, a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior, in play it is as though he were a bit taller than himself" (p. 102). This statement means that play can awaken children to think at a higher level. In addition, it is an important and effective medium of teaching in Kindergarten setting.

While writing on relevance of play in teaching and enabling children's learning, commented that teachers' support in children play activities is an extremely important developmental practice as it enhances smooth teaching and facilitates children's learning at their own pace. Ng'asike (2004), purports that teachers in pre-primary schools should focus on investing in play as an appropriate and natural opportunity to reinforce and introduce new concepts to children. That is the more reason why the researcher sought to establish whether kindergarten teachers in Jomoro Municipality invested in use of play in facilitating teaching and children's learning processes.

2.5 The view of Early Childhood teachers on the use of Play as a teaching method

The early childhood curriculum has seen a dramatic decrease in the amount of play that is incorporated into classroom instruction and in the amount of time used by

teachers on play in schools today. Meisels and Shonkoff (2006), described some factors that caused play to decrease in the kindergarten classroom when they stated,

“The spirit of Froebel's philosophy remained intact until the 1970s, when the educational value of early childhood programs began to be recognized. Several factors sparked this shift: Sputnik, rejection of the principles of progressive education, emerging research on cognitive growth in infants and young children, such intervention programs for poor young children as Head Start, and the growing importance of quality early education to the middle class. (p.296).”

These factors focused on the academic dimensions of child development. Early childhood education teachers view the curriculum as a shifted from a play-based curriculum to a curriculum focused on formal teaching and meeting standards. The standards movement of the 1990s reinforced the focus of academic success. Collectively agreeing with this, Miller and Almon (2009) summed up this alarming trend in kindergarten: Too few Africans are aware of the radical changes in kindergarten practice in the last ten to twenty years. Children now spend far more time being instructed and tested in literacy and numeracy than they do learning through play and exploration, exercising their bodies, and using their imaginations. Many kindergartens use highly prescriptive curricula linked to standardized tests. An increasing number of teachers must follow scripts from which they may not deviate. Many children struggle to live up to the academic standards that are developmentally appropriate. At the same time that we have increased academic pressure in children's lives through inappropriate standards, we have managed to undermine their primary tool for dealing with stress- freely chosen, child-directed, intrinsically motivating play. (p.15).

Kindergarten classrooms are beginning to resemble first-grade classrooms with their emphasis on formal reading and mathematics instruction rather than a focus on the

development of social skills and play (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). The focus on academics has increased and led to the emergence of academic kindergartens, where, “5-year-olds are more likely to encounter skill-and-drill exercises and nightly homework more than unstructured, imaginative playtime” (Currwood, 2007). Many ECE teachers are feeling the pressure to teach essential literacy and numeracy skills rather than using instructional time to play. “Kindergarten is now first grade, and first grade is now second grade. It used to be normal for first graders to still be learning to read. Now, the handful of kindergartners who aren’t reading by the end of the year are considered behind or low achievers” (Curwood 2007 p.30). If we go back one decade, only 15 percent of kindergartners were reading, if we go back thirty years, there were only 5 percent of kindergartners reading, and now nearly 90 percent of kindergartners are reading at the end of kindergarten (Currwood, 2007). The latest research indicates that on a typical day in an all-day kindergarten children spend four to six times more time in literacy and numeracy instruction and preparing for tests than in free time or 'choice time' (Miller & Almon, 2009).

High-stakes testing and test preparation are the driving force behind moving play out of early childhood education. Today, in Ghana, to succeed one must be well-trained in academics and ready to join the work force. However, Pink (2006), states, “People have to be able to do something that's hard to automate and that delivers on the growing demand for nonmaterial things like stories and design. Typically, these are things we associate with the right side of the brain, with artistic and empathetic and playful sorts of abilities. (p. 123).” Society wants children to perform well on academics and standardized tests. The belief that didactic, teacher-centered instruction and worksheets are effective strategies to promote successful performance on

standardized tests has resulted in the exodus of play from not only the classroom but from the school entirely (Miller & Almon, 2009).

Yet, this neglects the development of the right side of the brain, which is important for performing tasks that require creativity, empathy and behavioral flexibility. Ghana is now a nation that is driven by assessments, not creativity and this has affected early childhood educators' view on using play as a teaching method.

2.6 Factors influencing (underpinning) Early Childhood Education teachers in using play material for teaching and learning

There are several factors influencing (underpinning) early childhood education teachers in using play for teaching and learning. This research focuses on five of them which includes: availability of play materials, teacher's experience, and teacher's training status, type of school and play, and teachers' motivation.

On *availability of play material*, it is an undeniable fact that, educational facilities and instructional material are essential because they make teaching more effective and meaningful, increase learner's motivation and concentration span and simplify concept taught. Lack of instructional materials negatively affects the learning process. This is highly detrimental especially to children in early childhood settings who need a variety of materials to reinforce or capture new experiences. Jones (1972) cited in Waithaka (2009), defines play resources in an early childhood school setting as anything natural or artificial, real or imaginative, visual or invisible, big or small, structured or unstructured, props or loose parts, which a child or a teacher or groups uses for teaching, fantasy, recreation, encourage creativity or can be used to enrich their play.

Children in the nursery schools have limited experience and less developed abilities to cope with abstract ideas. Saunders (2019), when stressing the importance of using variety of instructional materials observed that:

“People receive experience through all the five senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight). If you can appeal to more than one sense at a time your message is likely to be understood and accepted more permanently. Different materials appeal to different people. When you plan your work, don't concentrate on memory work alone, but on hearing, seeing, touching, doing and making” (p 271).

Applied to early childhood learning, this argument is relevant because much of the children's knowledge is attained by coming into contact with objects and situations which always give them a new experience. Teachers have to allow children to participate freely in activities of their own choice and also have to organize instructional materials at free choice activity corners. Omwondho (1984) observes that educational materials provided for teachers and pupils with psychological and physical comfort. Similarly, Sifuna (1974) pointed out that instructional materials in a teaching environment were a major determinant of failure or success in the teaching or learning process. It is therefore important to enrich children's experience with numerous objects in order to give them opportunities to manipulate them.

Another important factor is *teacher's experience*. Different scholars have different opinions on whether the numbers of teaching years have an influence on teacher's attitude and self-efficacy (Branyon, 2002; Ndegwa, 2005). A study by Aiken (2003) on whether experience influences teacher's attitude towards arithmetic revealed that experienced teachers had more positive attitude towards the subject than the less experienced teachers. Good and Brophy's (2005) opinion on the effect of experience on behavior asserted that people confident of their abilities will seek challenge while those who lack confidence will avoid it. However, another study by Whitebook

(2003), cited in Kinuthia (2009) gave contradicting conclusions. It suggested that the number of years of experience is not a good indicator of quantifying teacher's attitude or behavior in using or disusing a particular teaching approach. A person's past success or failure determines his/her future response to the same task or activity (Sifuna, 1974). In this study, it was expected that teachers who had experienced positive results in the use of play as a teaching method would reinforce the play use behavior during teaching and learning sessions.

Adding to the above, *teachers training status* is yet another factor underpinning early childhood educator's perception on the use of play as a teaching method. A trained teacher will avoid a method like the "jug" and "mug" where the teacher is the "jug" who fills the knowledge to a passive child who is the "mug". The danger of such a method is the perpetuation of a situation where the school is full of teaching and no learning is taking place. Training as an educational process enhances learning and reinforcement of the existing knowledge and most significantly it enables time to think and consider what new options help to improve the effectiveness at work.

The ECE school teachers are entrusted with massive responsibility on helping children to grow physically, emotionally and socially. ECE school teachers should undergo training so that they can be occupied with the skills required to cope with the demands of the young children. Training will also ensure provision, expansion and improvement of quality and relevant education. Through the training, teachers will develop professional attitudes, skills and knowledge to adapt the learning environment. A study conducted by Lyabwene (2010) in Tanzania on the relationship between ECE school education policy and actual practice, revealed that a teacher's

professional qualifications appear to influence the quality of classroom interaction more than physical setting and resources.

Much of teacher's self-esteem and behaviors come from competencies. Self-competency is not given by others, but it comes from knowing that one can do certain things. It is belief in oneself and his/her competence (Evans, 1965). Judge (1998), in his core-self evaluations model argued that one's self-disposition towards job performance is determined by general self-efficacy, which is a belief in one's own competence in performing a behavior.

Teachers who have undergone ECE training are more enlightened on such important educational issues like the curriculum of the ECE program, philosophy of education, sociology of education and educational psychology. Despite the importance of teachers undergoing training, the minimum academic requirements to train as an ECE school teacher in Ghana is WASSCE, and that of professional qualification is Certificate or Diploma in Early Childhood Education. These minimum academic qualifications are likely to affect the ECE teachers, particularly their ability and confidence to articulate child centered issues which are relevant in teaching and learning in ECE schools. A study by Makoti (2005) indicated that one of the constraints of Early Childhood Care and Education in Kenya, is the method of recruitment to training. Further, the way the ECE school teachers are supported and evaluated by the public during and after training holds back the progress of the program. Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga (2002) further argued that teachers working in ECE should have sufficient academic background to give them the intellectual and personal moral strength to articulate issues related to their profession.

Last but not least is *the type of school and play*. Work place environment affects how individuals feel about their jobs and can influence their working habits. Work environment has much of profound impact on job performance as does the salary. Similarly, the type of school environment whether public or private school, influences teacher's teaching habits and their general teaching performance. Global studies indicate that the type of school influences teacher's attitude towards teaching (Ezewu, 1983; Kinuthia, 2009). According to Good and Brophy (1990), a school's physical and social environment as well as type of school's management constitute what they referred to as teaching and learning situation. The teaching and learning situation affects a person's attitude towards task performance and task design. The pressure from school management and socio-economic context of the school, influence teachers and compel them to behave in a particular manner. Ajzen (1974) claimed that human behavior is rational and always under his/her conscious control depending on the way he perceives his environment. Similarly, Hackett (1996) analyzing Herzberg's (1959) Motivation Hygiene Theory, concurs with the theorist's major argument that, individual's behavior and his ultimately job performance is influenced by the context of environment and person's relationship to the context. Okumbe (1998) stated that educational managers should provide environments which will enhance ECE teachers to use their skills autonomously for the betterment of their institutions.

To conclude, *Teacher's Motivation* is the last factor under discussion. Motivation as a process initiates, guides and maintains goal oriented behavior. Basically, motivation is what causes us to act. It involves social and cognitive forces that activate a particular behavior of the individual in his/her everyday life. Studies have indicated that motivational factors such as supervisory practices and other working conditions do

influence an individual's morale and performance towards a particular task (Strage, 1993; Franser, 1989). Hackett (1996) and Cole (1997) while writing on motivation theories, concur with the basic argument in the Herzberg's (1959) Motivation Hygiene Theory that, a person's attitude and job performance are determined by two major factors which he referred to as motivator's and satisfier's. Motivators include such aspects as personal achievement, recognition and responsibilities, while satisfiers entailed aspects such as supervisory practices and other working conditions. The mentioned aspects tend to influence the manner and quality of the job.

Mamoria and Gankar (2001) writing on Mayo's (1982) Human Relation Theory, agreed with his basic premise that it is important for managements to understand the needs of workers and social aspect of work performance and that failure or success of the organization is directly related to the extent to which an individual is motivated.

2.7. Create play-based learning centers

This is an easy way to sneak play into the child's daily routine. Whether traditional play centers (sand, dramatic play, blocks, etc.) or a collection of bins on a shelf, having play materials available is the first step to adding more play into our routine.

If we don't yet have centers, we can start with a few bins and add things like puppets, blocks, puzzles, and games. Switch the contents often and connect them to classroom learning. For instance, one might have:

1. Puppets for characters in a book we read together
2. Blocks with task cards relating to what we are learning in math such as build a castle that has 6 triangles.

3. A matching game of science concepts such as matching the animal with their habitat.

It has become clearer that, learning Centre's plays a vital role in the child's development. Teachers who view such activities as time wasting need a change in mindset as well as training in designing and setting up learning Centre's for Puppets, block areas and science Centre's. Teachers can plan learning Centre activities and make it part of the daily schedule. This will enable children to visit the Centre of their choice to learn.

2.7.1 Use Manipulatives

Young children are concrete learners who learn by doing. This is why play is such a powerful tool. Instead of using pencil and paper to teach new concepts, use manipulatives. They don't have to be fancy teacher-store items either.

Manipulatives aren't just for mathematics. They can equally be used as:

- a. Cars to practice blending sounds,
- b. Slinkies for stretching out new words
- c. Letter tiles for spelling
- d. Legos for letter formation
- e. Art materials for just about everything.

According to John Amos Comenius, children retain longer when concrete materials are used in teaching. By implication, teachers need to plan activities and provide the necessary materials for children to manipulate. The use of manipulatives helps children to understand and recall facts without struggling. It is very important for early childhood teachers to involve manipulatives in their teaching.

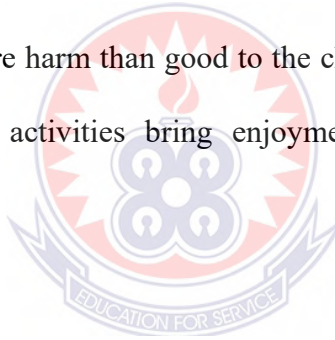
2.7.2 Play Games

The early childhood classroom must be full of games and activities which involve the use of games. We can use games to practice and review concepts. They don't have to be complicated or even competitive.

Young Children love:

- a. Guessing games
- b. Eye spy
- c. Hide-and-seek type games
- d. Solving puzzles together and so on.

It can be argued that, early childhood teachers who frown at using play games in class are by a way causing more harm than good to the children. This stem to the fact that, not only do the above activities bring enjoyment, they also help in the total development of children.



2.7.3 Take Play Breaks

Children naturally have short attention span. We know they need breaks, and recess is often too short. After a bit of hard learning, we need to reward our children with a play break. Pull out the learning centers and let them have a few minutes to relax and re-energize for your next lesson. This period helps children to refresh their system and get them prepared for the next lesson or activity for the day.

2.7.4 Take Your Learning Outside

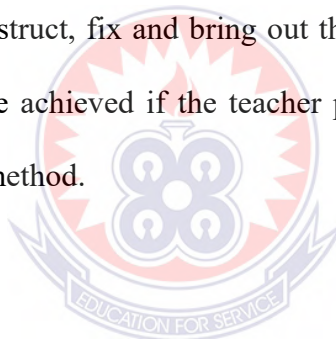
There is lots of learning that can be done outside, no matter the weather.

One can engage pupils to do the following outside the classroom:

- a. Created their own sculptures to represent the characters in a book,

- b. Practiced writing words in the sand and mud,
- c. Collected seeds, flowers, and grasses and sorted them, measured them and divided them into fair shares
- d. Found shapes in the playground structures
- e. Gone hunting for letters and words.

Teaching in the kindergarten requires a good amount of commitment by the teacher. It must be appreciated that, whenever children go outside the classroom for learning, the fun alone is overwhelming. Teachers need to realize that, a great deal of change from the classroom to outside the classroom promote active learning. Children need to be given the opportunity to go for field trips/nature walk, etc to enable them explore, ask questions, dismantle, construct, fix and bring out their own findings about the world around them. This can be achieved if the teacher plan, and prepare the instructions using play as a teaching method.



2.7.5 Act it Out

Instead of having students retell a story – act it out!

One can also help children act out:

- a. Scientific processes,
- b. Mathematical operations
- c. Concepts such as fractions, patterns, and ordinal numbers
- d. Letter formation
- e. Sentence structure
- f. Social problem solving
- g. Whatever else we can come up with.

Understandably, using drama in class brings a lot of benefits to children. It enables children gain wonderful skills that they can carry through life and put to use in many areas. Not only does it instill creativity and self-expression as well as nourishing the imagination, it can teach a child to think outside the box which is a great skill for future endeavors. Early childhood teachers need to be reminded of the fact that, drama is a versatile hobby and in the main, it should bring fun and enjoyment to the child's life. Children's love to be chosen to be actors and they will be fully engaged in learning. It is however the duty of the teacher to create a congenial atmosphere within the class setting for children to act out various roles in the form of drama to promote effective and useful outcomes in the life of the children entrusted into their care.

2.7.6 Play with Your Pupils

When teachers plan their lessons with play as a teaching method, the best way for its success is by participating in the play activity by themselves. When pupils are playing, don't be shy – join in. Playing together builds bonds with pupils and creates a classroom community of shared learning and fun. As a participant in the play, a teacher has the ability to scaffold the child's learning and to stretch them and challenge them and help them to grow.

2.7.7 Make Learning an Adventure

Imagine two introductions to a lesson. The first: "Today, we are going to learn about African animals." The second: "Today we are going to go on an adventure! We are going to take the school bus to a place halfway around the world. While we are there, we are going to meet some weird and wonderful creatures that live in this amazing place. Are you ready to begin our journey?" In the first lesson, the teacher might show some photographs of each animal and talk about each one. In the second

lesson, the students actually pretend to get on a car, and get to the Zoo and view the photos of animals placed around the classroom in the role of explorers in a new land. Both lessons will teach the same content, but one feels like playing. The best part – to the students, a journey to a new place in their imagination is almost the same as being there, and they will remember the lesson months later.

2.7.8 Create Parent Buy-In

Parents love their children and want them to learn and so do educators of early childhood. If parents (or administration) are giving you a hard time about play in the classroom, try to show them all the learning that is happening. Through our classroom blog we would often include a photograph of playful learning in action and explain exactly what the students are learning and how we are assessing their learning through play. If there is no blogging in the school, we can do same in our weekly newsletter. This will go a long way towards gaining support for play in the classroom. No matter what, we don't have to give up. The power of playful learning is worth fighting for.

2.8 Summary of Literature and Gaps

Play in Kindergarten education is vital in the total/ holistic development of the child. Kindergarten was meant to be a place where children are nurtured to grow and develop their full potentials using play as initiated by Froebel (1902) the father of kindergarten. Play aids children in developing social, emotional, and physical skills (Ashiabi, 2007; Brownson et. al, 2010; Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2008; Hadley, 2002; Rieber et al., 1998). Today, there are two main types of kindergartens, play-based and didactic. In play-based kindergartens, children have the opportunity to learn through play and exploration, whereas in the didactic kindergarten, the children learn through drills and worksheets. The decrease in the amount of time spent playing

seems to be driven by the need to meet standards and how to perform well on standardized assessments (Ashiabi, 2007; Brownson et. al., 2010; Graue, 2009; Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2008; Hadley, 2002; Rieber et al., 1998). Aside this, the Kindergarten educators' perception on using play as a teaching method has been influenced by factors such as availability of play materials, teacher's experience, teacher's training status, type of school and play, and teachers' motivation. Some strategies needed to positively influence teacher's perception include but not limited to the following- Creating play-based learning centers, Use of Manipulative, Play Games, Taking Play Breaks, Educators Take their Learning Outside, acting play out, Play with Pupils, Making Learning an Adventure, and Creating Parent Buy-In.

It is important to note that, two major key areas that literature could have touched but failed to do is Technology and play, and Parental or Family involvement in play? Technology is a main competitor of play in children's lives today (Carlsson-Paige, 2008). Children spend an average of 2 hours per day using computers, iPads, and iPhones and watching television as well as playing computer games. One major problem with "screen time" is that it is a symbolic representation of the real world and not direct experience with people and materials. The more time children are watching screens, the less opportunities they have for play and interaction with nurturing adults both of which are critical to healthy development and learning. Research also indicates that, screen time has a negative impact on attention and self-regulation for young children (TRUCE 2012). Academic expectations has been pushed down and early acquisition of skills and content knowledge have left little room for play in early childhood classroom. Many classrooms have replaced play with structured, teacher-directed activities leaving little time to nurture children exploration and creativity.

It is reasonable to also assert that, the critical role of the teacher during play was also not stressed in the literature. Teachers must embrace play and learn to use play as a valuable tool for children's learning. The roles of the early childhood education teacher must include facilitation, engagement, and appropriate individualization for each child developmental milestone. Planning for play must be intentional. Focus must be on creating opportunities for higher level thinking by incorporating time, space and materials for play.

Similarly, administrators, parents and families need to appreciate the essential function of play in every child's development. This can be achieved by securing a prominent place in their curriculum planning for play; teachers will encourage their colleagues, administrators and families to support their effort in promoting play. Implicitly, educating parent on the value of play, building parental understanding and securing parental support for play in the curriculum must be stressed.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter attempted to look at the theoretical framework, Education, Early Childhood Education, Classification of early childhood programs, teaching, Teaching methods, Types of play, Play as a teaching method, Play in early childhood, View of early childhood education teachers on the use of play as a teaching method factors that influence the early childhood education teachers' use of play material in teaching and learning., Strategies aimed at positively influencing play material on teaching and learning.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the method used to carry out the study. It includes the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, instrumentation, validation of research instruments, reliability of instrument, data collection procedure, ethical considerations and method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Henn, Weinstein and Foard (2006) indicate that a paradigm is ‘a set of assumptions about how the issue of concern to the researcher should be studied’ (p.10). There are many research paradigms, each of which has an epistemological foundation. The most common paradigms identified in research literature are, however, the positivist, interpretive (Henn et al, 2006) and critical paradigms (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The positivist paradigm is located within the normative studies and is linked to the objectionist epistemological perspective. It argues that social reality exists ‘out there’ and is independent of the observer. Esterberg, (2002) believes that ‘the aim of the positivist researchers is to discover a set of laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human behavior’ (p.10).

Therefore, based on the two perspectives of the two main paradigms, the philosophical approach underpinning this study is the ideologist of both the interpretivist and the positivist, which is pragmatism as philosophical approach for this research. The nature of this research problem, the purpose, research objectives and research questions raised as well as the research methodology was the reason for

picking pragmatism philosophical approach. Bryman (2004) noted that when these two approaches (qualitative and quantitative) are combined, they help in supporting each other.

Pragmatism as a worldview arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions such as those in post positivism. There is a specific concern with applications, that is, what works as well as a solution to problems (Patton, 2007). Instead of focusing on methods, researchers emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem. As a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies, its importance is in focusing attention upon a research problem in social science research and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about that problem. Pragmatism is typically associated with mixed-methods research (Creswell, 2014).

Also as stated in the above, Creswell (2014), was of the view that pragmatism embraces features associated with both positivism- post-positivism and constructivism worldviews. However, Hammond and Wellington, (2013) state that both pragmatism and transformative-emancipatory paradigms reject “the dogmatic either-or choice between constructivism and post-positivism and the search for practical answers to questions that intrigue the investigator”.

3.2 Research approach

Research approach is essential as it enables the researcher to focus and look at in-depth of the problem and make a decision on how to solve the problem, naming, and approaching the research topic (Saunders et al., 2012). In doing research the approach may be qualitative or quantitative or both. The former involves collecting data that is mainly in the form of words, and the latter involves data which is either in the form or can be expressed in numbers. It is often assumed that quantitative approaches draw on

positivist ontologies whereas qualitative approaches are more associated with interpretive. A quantitative research is based on a positivist philosophy which tends to be based on deductive theorizing, where a number of propositions are generated for testing, with empirical verification then sought (Creswell, 2003). According to Creswell, a considerable data are often required as a positivist study would favor the use of quantitative method to analyze large-scale phenomena. Inherent in this overall approach to research is the view that it is possible to measure social behavior independent of context and that social phenomena are ‘things’ that can be viewed objectively.

Qualitative research emphasizes on subjective interpretation (Bryman, 2001) and facilitates effective and in-depth understanding of the research topic (Best & Kahn, 2006). The qualitative research method provides a deeper understanding, knowledge and insight into a particular phenomenon, by providing answers to questions of how rather than what? (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Qualitative research design, on the other hand, involves explaining ‘things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). In other words, Qualitative method of research involves the use of non-numerical data collection techniques like interviews and observation, together with other data analysis procedures such as data categorization and content analysis (Saunders et al., 2012). Arguing strongly against Qualitative research design, Eldabi et al. (2002) intimated that the process of collecting qualitative data and the analysis of qualitative data could be tedious and complicated; to this end, there is an extent to which qualitative data could be generalized outside the boundaries of the research. However, Qualitative

research design helps a researcher to overcome the issue of insufficient or hidden data that mostly come up in a pure quantitative study. Qualitative research design therefore help a researcher to acquire the convoluted details about phenomena such as the feelings, thought processes, and even the emotions that are often challenging if not impossible to come by when one uses quantitative methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Saunders et al. (2012) and many other scholars in social science have intimated that using either quantitative or qualitative approach alone in a study, could be problematic and narrow the scope of the study. Therefore, this study considers the mixed strategy research design or triangulation as most appropriate in this study.

Horn (2009) has termed the combination of qualitative and quantitative research (Mixed strategy) as triangulation. The mixed strategy or triangulation involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative research designs in a research work and the combinations can be done either together (parallel) or sequentially (one after the other) (Saunders et al., 2012). In the words of Hussey and Hussey (2009: 85), mixed strategy or triangulation involves” the use of multiple sources of data, different research methods and/or more than one researcher to investigate the same phenomenon in a study”.

Saunders et al. (2012) hold that it is a means of doing away with the challenges associated with either qualitative or quantitative research designs. With mixed strategy research design, researchers base their claim to knowledge on the pragmatism philosophy, which allows researcher to choose any method(s) to achieve the goal of the study.

Bryman and Bell (2011) have also enunciated that a researcher when selecting the research design should consider factors like the level of generalization and the level of depth of analysis. Therefore the study adopts the “Mixed strategy” research design or triangulation where both qualitative and quantitative research strategies were used in the collection and assaying of research data. Associating with the position of Stoop and Berg (2003) that a study which adopts the ‘mixed strategy’ often has the potency of having a deeper insight into the benefits and pitfalls of the implementation process of an information system, this study found it more apt to employ the mixed strategy. Hence, in using the ‘mixed strategy’ or triangulation, this study collected data with the aid of both close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interview guide. Further when it gets to the data analysis stage, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were compared and analyzed together. The fundamental premise for choosing mixed strategy research design is that it allowed the study the chance to use both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understanding the research problems better than using either approaches alone.

3.3 Research design

The study employed concurrent triangulation design to investigate the influence of play materials on teaching and learning as well as play as a teaching method in selected schools in two circuits in the Jomoro Municipality. The purpose of this design was to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic (Muijs, 2004) to best analyze the research problem.

Also, triangulation is thus defined as measuring the same concept using two or more methods. Indicators of the concept are first collected in each method, and the underlying or latent concept is measured within each method (Johnson &

Christiansen, 2012). The measurements taken within each method are then correlated. The goal is that of a more accurate measure; that is, triangulations will achieve a better estimate of the error inherent in any measurement both within and between the methods. According to Gay, (2000) the mixed-methods design goes beyond the limitations of a single approach because it integrates both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The rationale behind this design is that the researcher values equally the two forms of data and treats them as such. Data is thereby merged, and the results of analyses are used simultaneously to understand the research questions through the comparison of findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis. Cresswell, (2008) stated that during interpretation, this design helps the researcher “to directly compare and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings” in order to elaborate valid and well-substantiated conclusions about the problem under study. Again, quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently and later compared with the aim of determining convergence, differences and combinations. It sampled the views and opinions of respondents the influence of play materials on teaching and learning as well as play as a teaching method in selected schools in two circuits in the Jomoro Municipality

3.4 Population

A population can be defined as a group of individuals or people with the same characteristics and in whom the researcher is interested in (Kusi, 2012). To Sugiyono (2012), a population is set or collection of all elements possessing one or more attributes of interest. The population of this study comprised all Early Childhood Educators in the Jomoro Municipality of the Western Region. The accessible populations of the study were all the teachers in Kindergarten one and two in the Jomoro Municipality. The target population for the study was an estimated number of

120 comprising 10 basic school heads, 10 school supervisors and 100 teachers teaching in the kindergartens in the Jomoro Municipality.

3.5 Sample and Sampling techniques

Babbie (2004) defines a sample as a small subset of a larger population whose selection is based on the knowledge of the elements of a population and the research purpose. As stated above, the target Population was 230. Using the Sample Size Estimation Suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size for the study was 120 participants. Purposive Sampling was used to sample 100 teachers, 10 head teachers and 10 school supervisors for the study. This was to ensure adequate representation of participants thereby getting more reliable results. Also, 120 participants are not too many for the researcher to work with in terms of time and resources. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. It is very useful in situations when the researcher needs to reach a targeted sample quickly and because the researcher feels the population has useful information he needs.

3.6 Instrumentation

According to Kankam and Weiler (2010), research instruments are tools researchers use to help them find information. To Seidu (2007), instruments are documents that researchers use for data collection. The researcher for the purpose of this study used questionnaire to elicit information from the teachers, and interviews to elicit information from head teachers and school supervisors in line with the research objectives. It will include both open-ended and closed-ended items. Best and Kahn (2005) indicates that both kind of items can be used in the questionnaire.

Sekyere (2012) defines questionnaire as a set of written questions answered by a large number of people that is used to provide information. This data gathering tool gives the respondents freedom to express whatever they perceive about using play as a teaching method in teaching. The questionnaires had two sections A and B. Section A of the questionnaire asked about demographics details such as class taught, age range of teacher, gender, educational and professional qualification and year of teaching experience.

Section B of the questionnaire was made up of five parts built on the key themes raised in the research question. The open-ended questions provided the greater depth of response. Therefore, the respondents revealed what they really knew about each item they were required to respond to and possibly the reason for their response.

In the case of the close-ended items, the structure contained a five-point closed-ended type items: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5), Agree (A) =4), Neutral (N=3) Disagree (D) =2), and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1). The items were built to reflect on the key themes raised in the research questions. The instructions and the questions in the questionnaire were clear and easy to follow. Questionnaire was used because, the study is a survey. Also, the target respondents were literate and could read, understand and provide accurate response. Again, the large number of participants requires the use of questionnaire.

Interview guide

Interview is an approach in which specific questions to be asked and the order of the questions are predetermined and set by the researcher and posed to the interviewees in the same way but there is room for probing and elaboration (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Semi-structured interview guide used to gather in-depth qualitative data from

the ten (10) female heads of the selected schools. This is because interviews have the greatest potential to release more in-depth information, provide opportunity to observe non-verbal behavior of respondents, gives opportunities for clearing up misunderstandings, as well as it could be adjusted to meet many diverse situations (Kvale, 2009). The data collected through interview were based on the objectives of the study.

Validity of the Instruments

The instruments (questionnaire and interview guide) used for the collection of data were validated to determine their accuracy. The validity of the instrument refers to whether it measured what it was supposed to measure and not something else (Schumacher & Mcmillan, 1993). Therefore, validity refers to the results of the test, not the test itself (Nwana, 1996).

Attempts were made to achieve face validity and content validity. For face validity, the instruments were given to experts in research to read through to offer constructive criticisms, since validation is based on experts' advice (Best and Khan, 1993). Appropriate modifications were made by the experts and the supervisor to ensure clarity and ambiguity free statements/items in the questionnaire and interview guide.

Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability is the measure of the degree to which a research instrument consistently measures whatever it is measuring in repeated trials (Newman, 1996). Reliability of the research instrument is the consistency of the instrument producing similar results given the same conditions on different occasions. In other words, reliability is the degree of a research instrument (for example questionnaire or interview schedule) to measure a subject or variable on different occasions and all occasions consistently

give the same or similar result (Amonoo, 2010). The reliability of the instrument for this study was established through pre-testing.

3.7 Pre -testing of Instrument

The questionnaire and interview guide were first pre-tested among teachers in public basic schools in Influence of Play Material on Teaching and Learning in the Municipality who were not part of the actual study. This enabled the researcher to gather the relevant data to answer the research questions and to achieve the objectives of the study. The responses helped to improve upon certain items, to remove some ambiguous ones. Borg and Gall, (1989) state that a new test instrument should be field-tested with a population similar to that from which the sample of the study would be taken. This helped to ascertain their reliability and validity and to cross-check the effectiveness of the content and structure of the instrument.

3.8 Data collection procedures

The questionnaires were personally administered to the teachers. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and procedure for responding to the questionnaire to the study participants. The participants were assured of the necessary confidentiality. The administration of the questionnaire was done upon obtaining permission from the Municipal Director of Education, Jomoro Municipality for the researcher to have access to the schools.

The interview process with teacher began with familiarity visits at the time the researcher sent introductory letter from UEW to the schools involved. The interview was done in their offices and some under trees in the cool of the day. All interviews scheduled were conducted and recorded as well. Notes were taken to supplement the recording in case of any lost or lapses in the recording. Each interview took

approximately 45 minutes while responding to questionnaires took approximately 50 minutes to complete.

3.9 Data analysis

Yin (2011), states that, before interpretation takes place, data should be displayed and presented. Responses that were collected from the respondents to each set of items in the questionnaire were tallied in order to get the number of respondents that answer each set of the items. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS. For data presentation, descriptive statistics was employed where averages, frequencies and percentages computed for the quantitative data some of which was displayed by means of tables and statistical diagrams. For the interview (qualitative), data was presented in narratives as verbatim quotes.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

For ethical reasons a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Early Childhood Education, and Management of UEW, Winneba was obtained to introduce the researcher during the data collection, after establishing the necessary contacts with the respondents. This formalized the research process as pointed out by Seidu (2006), that the negotiation of entry to educational setting usually is conducted through formal channel.

The study adhered to all codes of ethics including plagiarism, confidentiality, secrecy, informed consent, data protection and respect for the rights of participants. With this, an introductory letter was taken from the University and presented to the authorities of the schools concerned. Also, participants were briefed and assured that the research will be used for solely academic purposes. In like manner, verbal consent was sought from the participants to indicate their willingness of participation before the

questionnaires were given to them. Moreover, names were not sought in this study to adhere to the principle of anonymity and confidentiality. Recorded interviews were password protected. In addition, all academic sources consulted such as books, articles, journals, newspapers and websites were duly cited and referenced.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and discussion of results. The presentation is under two sections: Sections A and B. Section A presents the background information of students. Section B deals the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and discussion of results.

4.1 Section A: Background Information of Participants

Statements 1-4 on the questionnaires were used to gather data on the background information of kindergarten teachers, heads and school supervisors. Table 1, 2 and 3 respectively present the results after the analysis.

Table 1: BIO DATA OF RESPONDENTS

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	25	25
	Female	75	75
Age (in years)	25 and below	10	10
	26-30	32	32
	31-35	28	28
	36-40	16	16
	41 and above	14	14
Teaching Experience	1-10	30	30
	11-20	25	25
	21-30	24	24
	31-40	15	15
	41 and above	6	6
Years in Current school	1-10	48	48
	11-20	32	32
	21-30	15	15
	31-40	5	5
	41 and above	0	0

Source: Field data, 2022

Total Number of Teachers=100

Results from Table 1 show that majority 75 (75%) of the kindergarten teachers were females as compared to their male counterparts who were 25, (25%). This result implies that male and female kindergarten teachers were proportionally represented. This result implies that there were more females kindergarten teachers assigned to kindergartens in the Jomoro Municipality. The results also revealed that majority of the teachers at the kindergarten were between 26-30 years (32%), followed by 31-35 years (28%), 36-40 years (16%), 41 and above (14%) and 25 and below (10%). These results suggest that kindergarten teachers selected cut across all ages with majority been in their youthful stage. This result suggests that if these youths are guided on how to effectively use play as a teaching method in the Jomoro Municipality, it would help improve children's understanding of concept thought. Likewise, these results imply that most of the teachers were in their youthful stage and therefore should the conditions and relevant components of teaching at the kindergarten be addressed, then, the youthful exuberance of these teachers could be tapped for the development of the teaching profession.

The results in Table 1 further show that majority (30%) of the teachers had 1-10 years of teaching experience, followed by 11-20 years (25%), 21-30 years (24%), 31-40 years (15%) and 41 and above (6%). These results imply that kindergarten teachers had long and short teaching experiences. The results from Table 1 also show that majority of them had stayed in their current schools between 1-10 years (48%), as compared to 11-20 years (32%), 21-30 years (15%), and 31-40 years (5). This result could suggest that these teachers have gained some form of experience in their current schools and therefore were likely to help gather data to address the research questions.

Table 2: BIO DATA OF HEAD TEACHERS

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	4	40
	Female	6	60
Age (in years)	25 and below	-	-
	26-30	2	20
	31-35	3	30
	36-40	4	40
	41 and above	1	10
Teaching Experience	1-10	2	20
	11-20	5	50
	21-30	2	20
	31-40	1	10
	41 and above	-	-
Years in Current school	1-10	4	40
	11-20	5	50
	21-30	1	10
	31-40	-	-
	41 and above	-	-

Source: Field work, 2022

Total Number of Head teachers=10

Results from Table 2 show that majority 6 (60%) of the heads were females as compared to males 4 (40%). The results correspond with the results on the gender of teachers used in this study. The results suggest that male and female headteachers were given almost a fair representation in this study. This results infer that the more female teachers in the Jomoro Municipality, the higher the likelihood of having more female heads. The results could imply that these female heads were likely to find it difficult to control their male teachers during instructional supervision.

The results further show that majority (40%) of the heads were between 36-40 years, followed by 31-35 years (30%), 26-30 years (20%) and 41 and above (10%). The results imply that though majority of the heads were in their youthful stage, they have been able to climb higher on the educational ladder and this has implicitly resulted in

their headship positions. The results could infer that if these heads are given the needed support in their headship, it would help improve teaching and learning in the Jomoro Municipality.

The results from Table 2 further show that half (50%) of the heads had 11-20 years of teaching experience, followed by 1-10 years (20%), 21-30 years (20%) and 31-40 years (10%). The results also show that half (50%) of them had been in their current schools between 11-20 years as compared to 1-10 years (40%), and 21-30 years (10%). It is worth nothing that though selection of supervision position (head teacher) in Ghana is based on professional background and rank in Ghana Education Service (GES), which is also determined by the length of service and not necessary the academic qualification, the crop of head teachers in the Jomoro Municipality could be highly commendable for their working experiences. These results therefore advocate that, in the near future, leadership management position would not be a major issue to border about in the Jomoro Municipality.

Table 3: Background Information of School Supervisors

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	6	60
	Female	4	40
Age (in years)	25 and below	1	10
	26-30	2	20
	31-35	3	30
	36-40	2	20
	41 and above	2	20
Working Experience	1-10	4	40
	11-20	3	30
	21-30	2	20
	31-40	1	10
	41 and above	-	-
Years in Current school	1-10	6	60
	11-20	4	40
	21-30	-	-
	31-40	-	-
	41 and above	-	-

Source: Field work, 2022

Total Number of School Supervisors=10

Results from Table 3 show that majority 6 (60%) of the school supervisors were males as compared to males 4 (40%). The results recommend that both male and female teachers have been given the opportunity to supervise public basic schools in the Jomoro Municipality. The results further show that majority of the supervisors were between the ages of 31-35 years (30%), as compared to 26-30 years (20%), 36-40 years (20%), 41 and above (20%) and 26-30 years (10%). The results also show that majority (40%) of the school supervisors had 1-10 years working experience, followed by 11-20 years (30%), 21-30 years (20%) and 31-40 years (10%). Again, the results from Table 3 show that majority of the school supervisors had spent 1-10 years in their current schools (60%) as compared to 11-20 years (40%).

4.2 Section B: Results and Discussions

4.2.1 Research Question 1: What are the views of early childhood education teachers on the use of play as a teaching method in Jomoro Municipality?

Research question one (1) sought to find out the views of early childhood teachers on the use of play as a teaching method in Jomoro Municipality. Statements 1-5 on the questionnaires for kindergarten teachers were used to address this question. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the use of play as a Teaching

Method			
Statements	Means	Standard Deviations	
1. Teachers use play as a teaching method because it helps the children to understand lessons easily	4.42	.32	
2. Teachers don't use play in teaching because of lack of teaching and learning materials	3.80	.28	
3. Some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don't use it when teaching	3.38	.76	
4. Using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson they don't use it at all	3.30	.79	
5. Teachers use play and this makes children to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process	3.85	.25	
Source: Field data, 2022		N=100	

The results from Table 4 show that majority (M=4.42, SD=.32) of the teachers appear to believe that “teachers used play as a teaching method because it helps the children to understand lessons easily”, followed by “teachers use play and this makes children to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process” (M=3.85, SD=.25), “teachers do not use play in teaching because of lack of teaching and learning materials” (M=3.80, SD=.28), “using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson they don't use it at all” (M=3.38, SD=.76), and “some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don't use it when teaching” (M=3.30, SD=.79).

The results support the findings of Ashiabi (2005). Ashiabi through a literature review evaluated the value of play in regards to its ability to foster socio-emotional developmental progress. He claimed play to be the perfect venue for the development of socio-emotional readiness and overall success in school and life. Play enhanced the

children's ability to role-play, reflect before acting, the ability to show empathy, and their emotional understanding and self-regulation. Cooperation, negotiation, problem solving, group work and getting along are also stimulated in children's play even without adult intervention. Both student-initiated and teacher-guided play is important to children's development. Ashiabi (2005) stated early childhood educators have a role in making play a developmental and learning experience for young children.

These results imply that kindergarten teachers appear to believe that for children to have a better understanding of concepts taught, then, they have to use play as a teaching method. This result infers that when kindergarten teachers allow children to have a feel of the teaching and learning materials, permit them to manipulate the learning materials, children are given the opportunity to freely interact with their peers and many others during learning, it could help them have better understanding of the lesson taught. This result could also suggest that anytime teachers at the kindergarten fail to use play as a teaching method, it could negatively influence children's understanding of lessons taught.

Further, the results could imply that kindergarten children grasp lessons taught by their teachers when they use more of play as a teaching method. The results suppose that these teachers would have positive behaviour towards the use of play teaching method as confirmed by the Personal Investment Theory (Maher, 1986) used in this study. Thus, early childhood teachers in the Jomoro Municipality would invest their time, talents and energies when it comes to the use of play teaching method. From these results it could be concluded that early childhood teachers in Jomoro Municipality have positive perception on the use of play as a teaching method.

These findings are in consonance with the findings of Bredekamp (2016) and Ng'asike (2004). According to Bredekamp teachers' support in children play activities is an extremely important developmental practice as it enhances smooth teaching and facilitates children's learning at their own pace. Ng'asike (2004) purports that teachers in pre-primary schools should focus on investing in play as an appropriate and natural opportunity to reinforce and introduce new concepts to children.

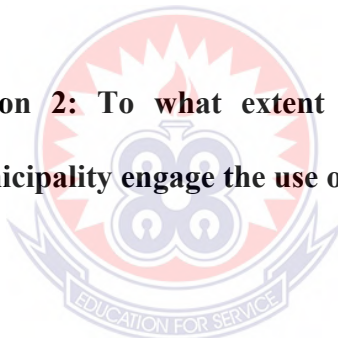
These findings are contrary to the findings of some other studies. For example, there are debates in the literature (Graue, 2009; Ashiabi, 2007) that one factor that accounts for the limited use of play in the kindergarten is the kind of perception teachers hold regarding play as a teaching methodology. There are some early childhood educators who believe that play as a teaching method is not effective. Some think otherwise (Eberle, 2011).

These findings correspond with the findings of other earlier studies. For example, Warner and Parker (2005) expressed that, "play is healthy and in fact, essential for helping children reach important social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones as well as helping them manage stress and become resilient" (p. 2). Therefore, it is critical for teachers to understand the importance of play in improving stress management and social skills, as well as to feel empowered to integrate play based learning activities in their kindergarten instruction.

However, these findings contradict findings of other studies. Although teachers seem to acknowledge the role of play in developing skills, they seem unsure of how to utilize play in an instructional manner (Saracho & Spodek, 1998). Despite a plethora of research suggesting positive outcomes associated with opportunities to engage in

social play and negative out-comes associated with peer rejection, there is often a hands-off policy during recess and free-play time in school. Teachers tend to underestimate the prevalence of bullying and do not appear to recognize their potential roles as preventing violence and promoting pro-social skill development (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). When teachers do attempt to implement strategies supporting friendships among children in their classrooms, often indirect strategies such as providing free time for play, allowing children to choose with whom they would like to play, and making informal comment on the play between friends are used (Buysee, Goldman & Skinner, 2003). It was concluded that there was lack of curriculum or integrated strategy to weave teaching of pro-social interactions into the entire school day.

4.2.2 Research Question 2: To what extent do early childhood education teachers of Jomoro Municipality engage the use of play materials in teaching and learning?



Research question two (2) sought to find out the extent to which early childhood teachers' perception influences their use of play as a teaching method. Statements 6-10 on the questionnaires for school heads were used to gather data to address this question. Linear multiple regression was used to analyse the quantitative data. The quantitative data results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Linear Multiple Regression Model Summary on how Early Childhood Teachers' Perception Influences the Use of Play as a Teaching Method

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.974	.949	.945	.899

Source: Field data, 2022

Linear Multiple Regression test results from Table 5 revealed that 94.9% of the variance in play as a teaching method was collectively explained by the indicator (early childhood teachers) which was found to be statistically significant [$F(3, 47) = 289.125, p = .000$] at 0.05 alpha level. The results suggest that the model performed well with about 5.1% shrinkage in the variance which was explained by the population. The results further suggest that, the sample was a good representation of the population. The shrinkage could be as a result of the differences in the characteristics of the sample and the population.

Table 6: Coefficients Result of Linear Multiple Regression

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
ECEP	-10.323	1.119		-9.225	.000
UPTM	.470	.010	.975	46.397	.000

Source: Field data, 2022 (p>0.05).

KEY: ECEP=Early Childhood Educators' Perception

UPTM=Use of Play as a Teaching Method

The results from Table 6 show that early childhood teachers contributed significantly to the use of play as a teaching method ($\beta = .975, p = .000$) at 0.05 alpha level. This result suggests that the perception kindergarten teachers have could in a way influence

their use of play as a teaching method. The results could also imply that if kindergarten teachers have positive perception towards play as a teaching method they were likely to use it more. However, the more kindergarten teachers have negative perception towards the use of play as a teaching method, the less they were likely to use it. These results infer that early childhood teachers' perception significantly influenced their use of play as a teaching method.

The results confirm that of Fogle et al. (2006). Fogle et al. correlated the data reported in the Parent Play Belief Scale (PPBS) and the Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS). The authors concluded that parents' positive attitudes towards play were related to children's social competence. The researchers found a correlation between the PPBS and children's positive peer play behaviour. Fogle et al, concluded that children whose parents had a greater knowledge of the need for play also had high levels of social competence. Parents' beliefs about play appeared to be worthy of consideration. Some parents may not be aware of the importance of play in building social competence. Parents with high academic focus scores on their PPBS showed a negative correlation to their reported level of educational achievement. This indicated that parents with less education valued academics highly for their children. Further, Fogle et al, found a correlation between parents' positive beliefs about play and their children's social competence. Both parents and early childhood educators can feel confident that important social skills are being learned through play. This study delivered quantitative evidence correlating positive parent views of play with their children's social competence.

Also, interview guide data from research questions two (2) based on direct quotes and explanations used were analysed. For instance, one school supervisor said:

In my attempt to go round the school to supervise kindergarten teachers' method of teaching, I realised that some teachers have positive perception of play and as a result take the initiative to use play as a teaching method [SS: 2].

Another participant said something similar:

From my experience as a school supervisor for the past ten years, I have realised that the perception teachers have towards play as a teaching method is the only way that can guarantee their use of it [SS: 8].

Similarly, a third participant said:

“I strongly believe that when teachers have positive perception to the use of play, it could encourage them to use it during teaching and learning process” [SS: 5].

These comments connote that the kind of perception a teacher has towards play could influence its use as a teaching method. These comments advocate that if kindergarten teachers have positive perception towards play, they would use it as a method of teaching. However, if they have negative perception, it could adversely influence its use as a teaching method.

Interestingly, these findings confirm Personal Investment Theory by Maehr (1986). The theory proposes that a person's subjective judgment of his or her ability to perform a task effectively tends to influence the individual's choice to exhibit or inhibit behaviour. When a teacher believes in his or her competence and knowledge in early childhood teaching practices, he or she would increase his or her investment of skills, energy and talents in use of play as a child-centered teaching and learning approach. The theory suggests that a knowledgeable and skilled person in any area of specialty tends to exhibit a professional behaviour in autonomous and assertive manner regardless of existence of some impeding factors.

Moreover, developmental theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky posit that teachers' positive perception towards play as a teaching method contributes to the cognitive implication of play for development (Schiffman, 2003). While Piaget describes play as practice for strengthening of skills and existing schema (i.e. assimilation), Vygotsky ascribes a more central role of play as a mechanism for building cognitive structures, such as symbolic representation of thought (Astington & Jenkins, 1995). Building upon these theories, there are many ways in which engaging in play by early childhood teachers facilitate the development of cognitive skills. For instance, through fantasy play children begin using symbols.

Furthermore, Owocki (1999) posited that symbolic representation is the fundamental cognitive skill underlying literacy, writing, mathematics, and other complex skills essential for functioning in modern cultures. Through social play used by early childhood teachers, particularly fantasy play, children develop theory of mind, the understanding that others experience unique thoughts (Astington & Jenkins, 1995; Watson, Linkie-Nixon, Wilson, & Capage, 1999). Contemporary researchers have extended these theoretical considerations to address the role of play in literacy development (Owocki, 1999; Roskos & Neuman, 1998; Kerns & Barth, 1995; Schiffman, 2003), social competence in a variety of settings (Connolly & Doyle, 1984), and assessment of functioning (Casby, 2003). Additionally, when children demonstrate pro-social inclusive behaviours, classrooms become environmentally conducive to overall learning (Wentzel, 1991). Based on the quantitative and qualitative results it was concluded that kindergarten teachers' perception positively influenced their use of play as a teaching method.

4.2.3 Research Question 3: What factors influence Jomoro Municipality early childhood education teachers' use of play materials in teaching and learning?

Research question three (3) sought to identify factors that influence early childhood educators on the use of play as a teaching method. Statements 11-15 on the questionnaires for kindergarten teachers were used to address this question. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data. The quantitative data results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Results on Factors that Influence the Early Childhood Educators use of play as a Teaching Method

Statements	Strongly Agree		Undecided F(%)	Strongly Disagree		Rank
	F(%)	F(%)		F(%)	F(%)	
11. Availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching	70(70)	10(10)	-	10(10)	10(10)	1st
12. My experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching	53(53)	30(30)	7(7)	10(10)	-	3rd
13. My training background sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching	7(7)	10(10)	-	45(45)	38(38)	5th
14. The kind of motivation teachers receive as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching	62(62)	10(10)	-	8(8)	20(20)	2nd
15. Teachers perception sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching	40(40)	28(28)	10(10)	7(7)	15(15)	4th

Source: Field work, 2022

N= 100 *Percentages are in parentheses

Results from Table 7 show that majority 70 (70%) of the kindergarten teachers strongly agreed to the statement that “availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching”, followed by the “kind of motivation teachers received as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching” (62%), “my experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching” (53%), “teachers perception sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching” (40%), and “my training background sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching” (7%).

The results correspond with that of Marek and Cavallo (1997). Marek and Cavallo posited that theory surrounding play is of a constructivist nature. Constructivist learning theory means learners must actively construct their own knowledge using their previous experiences. This theory of learning challenged the accepted belief in behaviorist theory, which focused more often on rote memorization and retrieval of facts (Marek & Cavallo, 1997). The theory of cognitive development became accessible to the general public with the help of Piaget (2002). Likewise, Piaget claimed that adaptation is the way in which human beings adjust to their environments. He used adaptation to explain cognition. Adaptation is composed of two mental processes in which he termed assimilation and accommodation.

On the contrary, the results show that less than half (38%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement that “my training background sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching”, as compared to the “kind of motivation teachers receive as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching” (20%), “teachers perception sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching” (15%), “availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching”

(10%) and “my experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching” (0%).

These results propose that whenever there is play materials in the school, kindergarten teachers were likely to have used play as a teaching method. This result could also suggest that, the absence of play materials in the school could negatively influence kindergarten teachers’ use of play as a teaching method. The result could also mean that the presence of play materials such as card boards, paper cut out, charts, books, magazines and solid shapes and so on is likely to influence kindergarten teachers’ use of play as a teaching method.

Also, question 3 on the interview guide for the school supervisors (early childhood education coordinators) was to gather data to answer this question. Also, regarding research question three (3), themes, direct quotes and explanations were used to analyse the qualitative data. For instance, one school supervisor said:

“I am expected to run a number of tests within the term and this does not permit me to use play as a teaching method” [SS: 4].

One participant emphatically said:

Nowadays the teachers’ performance is on the kind of results the children will produce. As a result we are under pressure to meet certain standard and this does not permit us to use play as a teaching method [SS: 1].

Another participant said:

Gone were the days the government supplies teaching and learning materials to basic school. Nowadays, hardly do the government supply the schools with teaching aids and I think that is the main reasons why some kindergarten teachers do not want to use play as a teaching method [SS: 6].

Another participant said something similar:

From my personal observations, there is ineffective instructional supervision by headteachers in basic schools in this municipal. As a

results majority of the teachers are not doing what is expected of them. One of them is the use of play as a teaching method. So, if headteachers are able to intensify their instructional supervision it could make kindergarten teachers play as a teaching method [SS: 3].

Similarly, one participant said:

Headteachers nowadays do not organise in-service training for teachers and I think is one of the contributory factors to their unwillingness to use play as a teaching method [SS: 10].

These comments suggest that though school supervisors were of different views, they implicitly believed that availability of teaching aids, regular school supervision and in-service training were some of the factors that could influence the perception of kindergarten teachers in their use of play as a teaching method. From these results it can be concluded that among other factors, availability of play materials, test assessment, the kind of motivation teachers receive and their teaching experiences were the most influential factors to kindergarten teachers' use of play as a teaching method.

These findings run parallel with the findings of several reports from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) including Sabre Charitable Trust, US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Right to Play and many others. One report stated that in spite of the government of Ghana's strong policy commitment to the kindergarten sector, it continues to face challenges of access and quality. The needs at this level are significant, whereas learning materials are in short supply, almost half of all kindergarten teachers have never received any formal training (Ministry of Education MoE , Ghana 2013) cited in (Sabre Charitable Trust country report November 21, 2017). Also, an NGO called the Right to Play reports that early childhood educators still face curricula and pedagogical challenges and there is a

discrepancy between the emphasis and the teaching methods at the kindergartens (Right to Play Ghana, 2016).

Also, findings of Meisels and Shonkoff (2000) show that kindergarten classrooms are beginning to resemble first-grade classrooms with their emphasis on formal reading and mathematics instruction rather than a focus on the development of social skills and play. The focus on academics has increased and led to the emergence of academic kindergartens, where, “5-year-olds are more likely to encounter skill-and-drill exercises and nightly homework more than unstructured, imaginative playtime” (Currwood, 2007).

Further, Curwood (2007) found that many ECE teachers are feeling the pressure to teach essential literacy and numeracy skills rather than using instructional time to play. “Kindergarten is now first grade, and first grade is now second grade. It used to be normal for first graders to still be learning to read. Now, the handful of kindergartners who aren’t reading by the end of the year are considered left behind or as low achievers” (p. 30). If one goes back one decade, only 15 percent of kindergartners were reading, if one goes back thirty years, there were only 5 percent of kindergartners reading, and now nearly 90 percent of kindergartners are reading at the end of kindergarten (Currwood, 2007). Research also indicates that on a typical day in an all-day kindergarten children spend four to six times more time in literacy and numeracy instruction and preparing for tests than in free time or ‘choice time’ of play (Miller & Almon, 2009).

Additionally, according to Maehar’s (1986) Personal Investment Theory, a person may have a recognised talent or ability in performing a task but may not be interested to exhibit the behaviour if the practice is not encouraged by his or her reference

group. Thus, when a teacher's play behaviour or other related play activities are favored or appreciated by social group(s) for instance, school management, other teachers or parents, the teacher is likely to choose to exhibit the behaviour more frequently. Consequently, frequency in behaviour will render to increased investment of his or her additional time, energy and skills in the behaviour. In this view the school management may influence a teacher's use of play as a teaching method.

However, these findings depart from the findings of Lyabwene (2010). Lyabwene (2010) conducted a study in Tanzania and found that issues of pre-primary school teachers' professional qualifications affected the quality of classroom interaction, hence, impacting on teaching and learning approaches significantly. The complaints are raised by different ECE stakeholders on the unaddressed pedagogical challenges, especially teachers' tendency of using compulsive, direct and unfriendly teacher-centered teaching strategies (United Republic of Tanzania URT, 2008).

4.2.4 Research Question 4: What measures can be employed to positively influence play materials on teaching and learning?

Research question four (4) sought to suggest strategies that can positively influence the early childhood teachers and help them of play to effect learning. Statements 16-20 on the questionnaires for kindergarten teachers and heads of schools were used to address this question. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data.

Table 8: Measures to be employed to positively Shape the Perception of Teachers and help them of play for Effective Learning (Data from Teachers)

Statements	Strongly Agree F(%)	Agree F(%)	Undecided F(%)	Strongly Disagree F(%)	Disagree F(%)	Rank
16 Regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	53(53) *	30(30)	-	4(4)	13(13)	5th
17 Provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	71(71)	29(29)	-	-	-	1st
18 Motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching	70(70)	30(30)	-	-	-	2nd
19 Having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	56(56)	15(15)	15(15)	4(4)	10(10)	4th
20 Organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	62(62)	30(30)	-	-	20(20)	3rd

Source: Field data, 2022

N=100

*Percentages are in parentheses

Results from Table 8 show that majority 71 (71%) of the teachers strongly agreed to the statement that “provision of adequate TLMS can shape perceptions and help teachers use play as a method of teaching”, followed by “motivating teachers as a means of using play as a method of teaching” (70%), “organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (62%), “having positive perception on play can help shape perception on the use of play as a

method of teaching” (41%) and “regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (65%).

These findings confirm that of Maher (1986). Explaining whether extrinsic rewards control a person’s behaviour in a particular situation Maher (1986) argues that, some people when assured of the means to obtain the rewards, would strive to maximise their chances to get them and in this manner exhibit the rewarding behaviour. In the context of this study, when a teacher is assured of enjoying a variety of motivational packages from the school management, he or she would reciprocate by spending more time, energy and skills in play related teaching and learning activities. In addition, some teachers may opt to use play as a teaching method if they perceive that the actions and the outcome would render them recognition. This theory therefore is relevant in establishing how the motivating school environment influences use of play as a teaching method in kindergarten settings.

On the other hand, 20% of the teachers strongly disagreed to the statement that “organising regular in-service training for teachers can help shape perception on the teachers’ use play as a method of teaching”, followed by “regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (13%), “having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (10%), “provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (0%) and “motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching” (0%).

These results put forward that to change the perception and encourage kindergarten teachers to use more of play as a teaching method, there is the need for the availability of teaching and learning materials. The results infer that if the school lacks teaching and learning materials, there is the likelihood that kindergarten teachers would not use

play as a teaching method. The results could also submit that, if the headteacher is unable to supply teaching and learning materials to kindergarten teachers and the teachers are also unable to improvise these TLMs, there is the likelihood that kindergarten would use other teaching methods aside play.

Table 9: Results from Head teachers on Measures to be Employed to Positively

Shape the Perception of Teachers and help them of Play to Effect

Learning

	Statements	Strongly Agree F(%)	Agree F(%)	Undecided F(%)	Strongly Disagree F(%)	Disagree F(%)	Rank
16	Regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	5(50)	4(40)	1(10)	-	-	2nd
17	Provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	5(50)	3(30)	-	1(10)	1(10)	3rd
18	Motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching	2(20)	1(10)	1(10)	2(20)	4(40)	5th
19	Having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	4(40)	2(20)	-	2(20)	2(20)	4th



20	Organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	6(60)	30(30)	-	1(10)	-	1st
Source: Field work, 2022		N=10					

Results from Table 9 show that majority 6 (60%) of the headteachers strongly agreed to the statement that “organising regular in-service training for teachers can help shape teachers’ perception on the use play as a method of teaching”, as compared to provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching (50%), regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching (50%), having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching (40%), and motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching (20%).

Both Vygotsky and Piaget saw the need for play in young children (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1967). Each lived to study how knowledge is formed, drawing from their research and interactions with children. Each wrote volumes of literature and at least one book on play. They both understood the importance of social learning, constructing knowledge and children’s innate ability to play. Piaget and Vygotsky contributed the theory behind much research to follow on play in the elementary classroom (Fromberg, 2002; Van Hoorn, 2003).

On the other hand, 40% of the headteachers strongly disagree to the statement “motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching”, as compared to “having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (20%), “provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a

method of teaching” (10%), “regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (0%), and “organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching” (0%).

This result implies that if headteachers are able to organise in-service training for kindergarten teachers, it would help shape their perceptions and influence them to have better understanding of play as a teaching method; hence, use it during teaching. This result could also connote that perhaps as it stands now, kindergarten teachers are not aware of the importance of play as a teaching method; therefore, they should be enlightened through in-service training organised for them. The results also infer that headteachers did not believe that motivating teachers could serve as a strategy for them in using play as a teaching method.

Also, question 4 on the interview guide for the school supervisors (early childhood education coordinators) was to gather qualitative data to answer this question. Themes, direct quotes and explanations were used to analyse the qualitative data. For instance, one school supervisor said:

I personally interviewed some teachers to find out the reason why they have not been using play as a teaching method and their response was that there is no teaching and learning materials that could enhance the use of play [SS: 1].

Another participant said something different:

If supervision by heads of schools and school supervisors are intensified, I think the use of play as a teaching method would be frequently used by teachers [SS: 4].

One participant emphatically said:

One’s teaching experience can also influence his/her choice of teaching method. For example, teachers who are well experience most of the time use teaching methods that helps children to learn better [SS: 2].

A third participant also said:

If the government is able to supply basic schools with the needed teaching and learning materialist can motivate kindergarten teachers to use play as a teaching method [SS: 10].

Another participant said:

Kindergarten teachers need to be given in-service training on the need to use play as a teaching method. When this is done it would pave way to the use of play since they now understand its importance in the teaching and learning process [SS: 7].

Comments from the qualitative data imply that among other measures, provision of teaching aids, regular school supervision and in-service training were some of the strategies that can positively influence the perception of early childhood teachers on the use of play to effect learning. Based on the quantitative and the qualitative results it was concluded that availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation for teachers and regular supervision were the major measures that can be employed to positively shape the perception of teachers on the use of play to effect learning.

These findings are in agreement with the findings of Ng'asike (2004). Ng'asike found that instructional resources are key to teaching in pre-primary schools and teachers need to have sufficient indoor and outdoor play materials. Also, Ng'asike (2004) commented that pre-primary school teachers tend to actively engage play materials in their teaching when the teaching and learning environment is conducive. In addition, a study by Sifuna as cited in Ng'asike (2004) revealed that parents and community support for putting adequate facilities, providing extra books and teaching materials were important not only in raising the standard of teaching and learning but also boosted teachers' morale in teaching activities.

A similar study by Jacoby (2003) identified a problem that dramatic play had disappeared from her preschool's classrooms. She realised that the teachers in her preschool lacked the knowledge of the importance of play. Therefore, in-service training should be organised for them update their knowledge so as to improve their teaching practices. Jacoby desired to know what the attitudes and beliefs about play in preschool were for the teachers in her school. The goal in this study was for the teacher's to increase their knowledge of the importance of play, to extend the amount of play time and to be facilitators in the classroom.

Another study by Whitebook as cited in Kinuthia (2009) gave contradicting conclusions. It suggested that the number of years of experience is not a good indicator of quantifying teacher's attitude or behaviour in using or disusing a particular teaching approach. A person's past success or failure determines his/her future response to the same task or activity. In this study, it was expected that teachers who had experienced positive results in the use of play as a teaching method would reinforce the play use behaviour during teaching and learning sessions. A study conducted by Lyabwene (2010) in Tanzania on the relationship between ECE school education policy and actual practice, revealed that a teacher's professional qualifications appear to influence the quality of classroom interaction more than physical setting and resources.

4.2.5 General Implications of the Findings for Early Childhood Education

Based on the findings, there is the need for teachers, school supervisors and other stake holders to collaborate to minimized the challenges of early childhood education in terms of policies, practices and implementation as far as using play as a teaching method is concerned.

The benefits of play are maximized when teachers facilitate play as integral part of children learning. Teacher's support is seen as a necessary component of developmentally appropriate practices. Teacher intervention during play take on many possibilities from assisting with problem solving, questioning, redirecting undesired behaviours and enticing children to play themes. Teachers must also teach play skills to children who have difficulty entering into play scenario. Curriculum content for young children is often presented and/or reinforce in the context of play, as teachers introduce play themes, provide materials, and help children expand on their ideas. By helping children when planning roles, encouraging children to talk to peers, posing open ended questions and becoming involved in the play, the teacher extends and enhance learning. For example, one role of the teacher is developing an understanding of the specific skills and knowledge children develop. The teacher by being present in the child's learning environment and on the eye level during the play activity, teacher interactions increase the frequency, duration, and complexity of children's play, with increased levels of linguistic and cognitive competence (McAfee & Leong, 2010). Another implication for the teacher is that, when planning for play, the teacher should determine specific goals and outcomes they want the children to achieve. Teachers should also individualize for children keeping in mind their current level of cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development. By implication, play and learning should be integrated throughout the day. The Facilitation will be very effective if complemented by a carefully planned classroom environment, prepared environment with learning centres will undoubtedly help children to have enough time and space for play. The last implication to the teacher is that, they must be intentional in their planning to use play as a teaching method. This includes using their knowledge of growth and development to determine what is age and stage

appropriate, individually appropriate and culturally appropriate for each child in the classroom. Play serves several functions in contributing to children social and emotional development when they assume new roles that require new social skills and take the perceptiveness of their peers. They negotiate roles, share space and materials, express different points of view, resolve disputes and persuade their peers to assume certain roles (Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman & Gregory, 2009).

The early childhood teacher is the facilitator of play in the classroom. The teacher facilitates play by providing appropriate indoor and outdoor play environments. Safety is, of course, the primary concern. Age and developmental levels must be carefully considered in the design and selection of materials. Guidelines for selecting safe and appropriate equipment for outdoor play environments are available in the new minimum standards for operating a pre-school in Ghana. Globally, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Handbook for Public Playground Safety and the Playground Safety Manual by Jambor and Palmer (1991) are all in use. Similar guidelines are also available for indoor settings (Torelli & Durrett, 1996; Caples, 1996; Ard & Pitts, 1990). Once appropriate environments and materials are in place, regular safety checks and maintenance are needed to ensure that the equipment is sound and safe for continued play.

Teachers also facilitate play by working with children to develop rules for safe indoor and outdoor play. Discussion about the appropriate use of materials, the safe number of participants on each piece of equipment, taking turns, sharing, and cleaning up provides the children with information to begin their play activities. These discussions need to be ongoing because some children may need frequent reminders about rules and because new situations may arise (e.g., new equipment).

By providing play materials related to thematic instruction, early childhood teachers can establish links between the children's indoor and outdoor play and their program's curriculum. Thematic props for dramatic play can be placed in the dramatic play center or stored in prop boxes and taken outside to extend the dramatic play to a new setting. An art center in the outdoor play environment may encourage children to explore the possibilities of using leaves, twigs, pebbles, and sand in their three-dimensional art productions. Painting easels and water tables may also be moved outside periodically for children's use during outdoor play periods. Finally, a collection of books stored in a wagon to be taken outside during play time may offer some children a needed alternative to more active play.

As facilitators of children's play, teachers should closely observe children during play periods not only for assessment purposes, as stated earlier, but also to facilitate appropriate social interactions and motor behaviors. It is important that children be the decision-makers during play, choosing what and where to play, choosing roles for each player, and choosing how play will proceed. Occasionally, however, some children will need adult assistance in joining a play group, modifying behavior, or negotiating a disagreement. Careful observation will help the teacher to decide when to offer assistance and what form that assistance should take.

The implication of the findings on stakeholders in education is that, sound policies, provision of play materials, motivation of teachers and allowing for teacher professional development in forms of granting study leave, organizing in-service training and workshops for teachers in the kindergarten will go a long way to enable them make good use of play all the time in their teaching expedition. Curriculum

developers should make frantic efforts to make the curriculum flexible by indicating appropriate use of play in each of the contents to be covered.

Finally, the school supervisors must be well equipped to enable them regularly monitor, supervise and evaluate the efforts of the teachers as far as play as a teaching method in the kindergarten is concerned.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary, gave conclusions and made recommendations based on the findings of this study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of Early Childhood Educators on the influence of play materials on teaching and learning as well as play as a teaching method in selected schools in two circuits in the Jomoro Municipality.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Assess the view of early childhood education teachers on the use of play as a teaching method in Jomoro Municipality.
2. Find out the extent to which early childhood education teachers of Jomoro Municipality engaged the use of play materials in teaching and learning.
3. Identify factors that influence the early childhood education teachers' use of play materials in teaching and learning.
4. Evolve strategies aimed at positively influencing play materials on teaching and learning.

The study was a cross-sectional descriptive design using concurrent triangulation mixed methods approach. The target population of the study was 230 Early Childhood Educators in the Jomoro Municipality. This comprised 20 basic school heads, 20 school supervisors and 190 kindergarten teachers in the Jomoro Municipality. A sample of 144 participants was selected in this study: 124 kindergarten teachers, 10 basic school heads and 10 school supervisors. Purposive,

simple random and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the participants. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically frequency counts, percentages and linear multiple regression were used to analyse the quantitative data. On the other hand, thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings showed that early childhood teachers in Jomoro Municipality have positive perception on the use of play as a teaching method. The findings indicated that kindergarten teachers' perception positively influenced their use of play as a teaching method.

Based on the research question one, it was revealed that among other factors, availability of play materials, test assessment, the kind of motivation teachers receive as a teacher influence the use of play as a method of teaching and the teaching experience were the most influential factors to kindergarten teachers' use of play as a teaching method

The findings with regard to research question two and three it was discovered that availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation for teachers and regular supervision were the major measures that can be employed to positively shape the perception of teachers and help them of play to effect learning.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on these findings the following conclusions have been drawn: To commence with, early childhood teachers in Jomoro Municipality have good intentions on the use of play as a teaching method. This suggests that kindergarten teachers in Jomoro Municipality have positive perception towards the use of play as a teaching method. Also, kindergarten teachers' could use play as a teaching method depending on their perception towards play. This result suggests that one way or the other, their perception could either positively or negatively influence their use of play as a teaching method. Moreover, some factors contributed to kindergarten teachers in Jomoro Municipality use of play as a teaching method. These factors included: availability of play materials, test assessment, the kind of motivation teachers receive and their teaching experiences. Again, there are some measures that could be adopted to promote the use of play as a teaching method so as to effect learning. These measures included: availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation for teachers and regular supervision.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn the following recommendations are made:

1. Through in-service training, headteachers should encourage early childhood teachers in Jomoro Municipality to continuously have positive perception towards play as a teaching method. This could help them to continuously use play as a teaching method in teaching kindergarten children in Jomoro Municipality.

2. Personnel in charge of supervision at the Jomoro Municipal Education Directorate should educate kindergarten teachers on the use to use play as a teaching method. This could help them use it more often in their lesson delivery; hence, could help children have better understanding of lessons taught.
3. Through capitation grant, the government of Ghana should supply play materials to basic schools. Also, personnel for supervision in the Municipal should organise in-service training for teachers on how to improvise teaching aids in place of the sophisticated ones. This could help make teaching aids available all the time; hence, promoting the use of play as a teaching method.
4. Head teachers should intensify instructional supervision so as to ensure that kindergarten teachers frequently use play as a teaching method. Also, head teachers and human resource managers at the education office should assign teachers who have long years of teaching experience to kindergarten classes. This would encourage them to use more of play as a teaching method.

5.4 Suggestion for Future Studies

Future studies could research into the following topics:

1. Examining the use of play as a teaching method among kindergarten teachers in the Western Region, Ghana.
2. Challenges that confront kindergarten teachers in their use of play as a teaching method: a case of kindergarten teachers in the Jomoro Municipality.
3. The influence of curriculum in the use of play as a teaching method among kindergarten teachers in the Jomoro Municipality.



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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Dear Sir/Madam:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on the topic: **Influence of play material on teaching and learning in selected schools in two circuits in the Jomoro Municipality: teachers' views.**

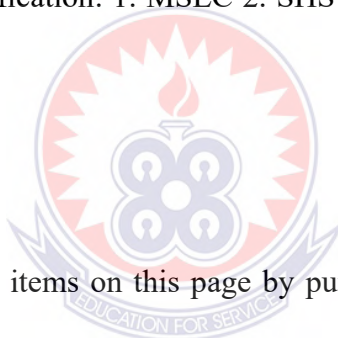
The researcher is a student of the University of Education Winneba, conducting this study as part of the requirements for the award of Master of Education in Early Childhood Education.

Your contribution towards completion of this questionnaire will be highly appreciated and the information provided will be used for academic purposes only. The information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality it deserves. This questionnaire has two sections: Section A and B. Please, answer all the statements in this questionnaire. Thank you.

SECTION A

Background Information

1. Gender: 1. Male [] 2. Female []
2. Class you teach. 1. KG1 2. KG 2
3. Age (in years): 1. 25 and below [] 2. 26-30 [] 3. 31-35 [] 4. 36-40 [] 5. 41 and above []
4. Teaching Experience (in years): 1. 1-10 [] 2. 11-20 [] 3. 21-30 [] 4. 31-40 [] 41 and above []
5. Years in the current school: 1. 1-10 [] 2. 11-20 [] 3. 21-30 [] 4. 31-40 [] 41 and above []
6. Educational Qualification: 1. MSLC 2. SHS 3. Teachers Cert “A” 4. Diploma 5. Degree



SECTION B

Please, respond to all the items on this page by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate space provided using the following scale: 5-Strongly Agree (SA), 4-Agree (A), 3-Undecided (UD),

2- Disagree (D), 1- Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/No.	Items	SA	A	U	SD	D
A. View of early childhood education teachers on the use of play as a teaching method in Jomoro Municipality.						
1.	Teachers use play as a teaching method because it helps the children to understand lessons easily					
2.	Some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don't use it when teaching					
3.	Using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson they don't use it at all					

4.	Teachers use play because it makes children to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process					
B. Extent to which early childhood education teachers of Jomoro Municipality engaged the use of play material in teaching and learning. (questions for school heads and ECE Coordinator)						
6.	They use guided play most of the time					
7.	They use guided play only when there is adequate TLMs					
8.	They use guided play when they realize the children are willing to play					
9.	They don't use guided play most of the time					
10.	They use guided play when teaching specific lessons in some subjects					
C. factors that influence the early childhood education teachers' use of play material in teaching and learning (Teachers)						
11.	Availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching					
12.	My experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching					
13.	My training background influences the use of play as a method of teaching					
14.	The kind of motivation I receive as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching					
15.	My perception that play is the most effective method for children influences my use of play as a method of teaching					
Measures to be employed to positively influence the use of play material on teaching and learning.						

16.	Regular supervision will help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					
17.	Provision of adequate TLMs will help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					
18.	Motivating teachers would help us use guided play as a method of teaching					
19.	Having positive perception on guided play would help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					
20.	Organizing regular in-service training will help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview questions:

- a. Why will you not want to use play materials as a teaching technique?
- b. What challenges other than those stated above confront you in using play as a teaching method?
- c. What method of teaching other than play do you prefer most?
- d. To what extent do early childhood teachers use play material in teaching and learning?
- e. Measures to be employed to positively influence the use of play material on teaching and learning?



APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

b1



UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
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FES/DECE/S.6

15th November, 2021

The Municipal Director of Education
P.O. Box 24
Jomoro-Half Assini

Dear Sir/Madam

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

We write to introduce to you **Mr. Enock Bosomafi Eshun** with index number 200050262 who is an M. Ed student in the above department. He was admitted in 2019/2020 academic year and has successfully completed his course work and is to embark on his thesis on the topic: *"Influence of play materials on teaching and learning in selected schools in two circuits in Jomoro Municipality: Teachers' view."*

Mr. Bosomafi is to collect data for his thesis, and we would be most grateful if he could be given the needed assistance.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Samuel Oppong Frimpong, Ph. D
Ag. Head of Department



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