

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

ACCESSING THE PARENTAL INFLUENCE TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION. A CASE OF KNUST PRESCHOOL

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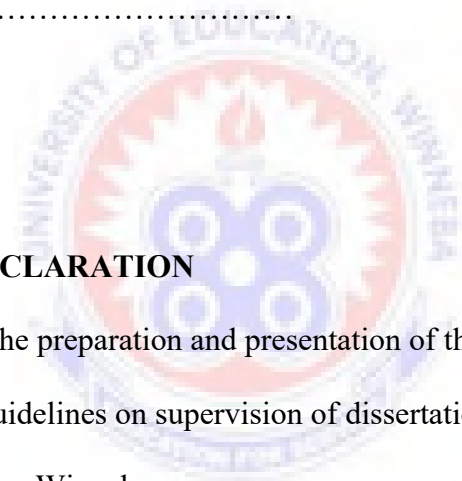
DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

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All praise is to the Almighty God, The Most Gracious and the Most Merciful for His gift of life and health, blessing, divine protection, mercy, strength and wisdom granted me till this day.

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DEDICATION

To my parents; Mr. and Mrs. Ayim-Ampofo and my brother; David Asiedu Ayim.



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ABSTRACT

Parental involvement is the most powerful influence in a child's education. It can have various effects on students, both academically and behaviourally. Initially, research on family involvement in education generally did not aim at differentiating between the effects of specific types of involvement on definite student outcomes. Therefore the study sought to assess the contribution of parents toward early childhood education using KNUST Pre-school. The target population for the study was made up of ten (10) teachers and two (2) parents from KNUST preschool. From the interview the study revealed that parents' education, the number of parents in the home, stability of home life, quality of child care, cultural differences, economic background and environment, teachers and environments, students' desire, individual differences, language development, the duration of breastfeeding and child nutrition were the factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST Pre-school. Again, government policy on free education, teaching and learning materials need to be made more readily available came out as the challenges of Early Childhood Education at KNUST Pre-school. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that there is the need for a robust educational and sensitization programme for the public about the important place of early childhood education in the educational development of the child.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the background to the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, and organization of the study

1.1 Background to the Study

Research findings suggest that parents' attitudes, along with their behaviour and activities with regard to their children's education, do affect academic achievement in a positive way (Aarons, Hurlburt, & Horwitz, 2011). There appears to be general agreement about the effects the family can have by being involved with their children's education. Students earn higher grades, enroll in higher education, and their attitudes towards school become more positive if the family, the community and school all work together (Barnyak, 2011). In addition, Baker (2016) claim that parental involvement in their children's education affects their school attendance; more students graduate and behaviour of students improve.

According to Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald and Squires, (2012), sample research evidence suggests that most parents want their children to succeed in school and in order for them to be good partners in their children's education, they yearn to obtain more information from schools. Likewise, most students at all school levels, whether at the Basic or High school level, want their families to be familiar and well-informed partners about schooling. The positive effects that parental involvement has on students' academic

achievement is undeniable. Therefore, it should be a top priority for parents and schools to establish and maintain a strong partnership between schools and homes.

The purpose of this study is to examine the contribution of parents towards early childhood education at KNUST Preschool, Kumasi. The parents are, for instance, asked about their expectations of their child's education; the relationship they have with the school and staff; and whether they monitor their children's schoolwork. In addition, the aim is to learn about the effects that this may have on academic achievement of the students selected for this study, if their parents are actively involved with their education. Since education is one of the key factors for the country's development, it goes without saying how important it is for Ghana that its students do well in school. Therefore, it will be interesting to study how parents in one school in Ghana are involved with their children's education. In addition, it will be intriguing to learn about parents' attitude towards their children's education, and education in general.

According to Belfield, Nores and Barnett (2006), parental involvement is the most powerful influence in a child's education. It can have various effects on students, both academically and behaviourally. Initially, research on family involvement in education generally did not aim at differentiating between the effects of specific types of involvement on definite student outcomes (Bodrova, & Leong, 2005). But rather, the connections between general measures of parental involvement with students' test scores and grades were analysed.

However, of recent, researchers studies have started on how different types of involvement connect to specific student outcomes. According to the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (Daily, Burkhauser, & Halle, 2011),

successful parental involvement may be defined as “the active, ongoing participation of a parent or primary caregiver in the education of his or her child”. At home, parents can demonstrate their involvement in different ways; such as by reading to their child, assisting with homework, and having regular discussions about school or school work with their child. In addition, it is important for parents to express their expectations of their child’s education.

Research has provided ample evidence that parental involvement affects competences in core subjects such as reading, mathematics and science, and in the behaviour of students, their school attendance and their attitude and adjustment to school (Sheldon, 2009). According to Jerry Trusty (Henderson & Berla, 2002), student perception of their parents’ involvement and expectations are also highly effective and influential in their education. Moreover, students who feel their parents’ support for their education and have good communication with them are more likely to continue their studies beyond High school.

Parental participation can increase goodwill and communication and help develop a sense of community within the school (Epstein, 2011). Parents must supervise their children at home and outside the school. She strongly supports that when parents pay more attention to their children's schooling, they will become more motivated and students’ achievement levels will tend to increase.

Parents should participate fully in early childhood development education in order to enhance better performance in their ECDE children’s activities and welfare (Harris & Goodall, 2007). According to Kimengi and Lumallas (2009), responsibility for learning is an aspect of parenting that places emphasis on activities in their home and community that

promote learning skills in the young child. Their observation goes hand in hand with Dewey's philosophy that in order to help children learn, the school should be an extension of the home so that experiences gained at home and school are related and continuous.

Henderson and Berla (2011) pointed out that parents' attitude towards education and achievement have a powerful impact on children's willingness to achieve. They further commented that parents are the most powerful role models that children have, and the more they are involved in their children's education, the higher their level of achievement. When parents show their interest and commitment to the success of their children they will be more motivated to do their best. However, most parents cannot relate their children's poor performance to their own lack of interest and commitment. The researcher has realized that in most public pre-schools and primary schools, many parents have compartmentalized their lives and do not show any interest and commitment in their children's education. The researcher therefore seeks the contribution of parents toward early childhood education in KNUST preschool.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children are not a new concept. Much research exists on the factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education for children without disabilities (Ransom, 2012). Fewer research studies have been conducted on the factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education for children with disabilities. The factors from both parents of children with and without disabilities found in the literature include cost, parental elements, teacher elements, operating hours, quality,

development, curriculum, safety, acceptance of children with disabilities, type of disability a child has, available transportation, provision of therapy, daily programming, practical considerations, friends' recommendations of the program, furnishings and display, and personal care routines (Obi, 2011). While research on the parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children has been conducted, still not enough is known about the impact of the differences in the selection process for parents of children with and parents of children without disabilities.

Though research concerning the availability of early childhood education programs does exist, most of this research centers on geography as the factor. A few studies regarding children with disabilities discuss limited program availability because of other factors such as acceptance of children with disabilities, professional pre-selection of programming, and the lack of information about available programs (Obi, 2011). This study sought contribution of parents toward early childhood education using KNUST preschool.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assessing the contribution of parents toward early childhood education using KNUST Pre-school in Kumasi Metropolitan Educational Directorate as Case study. Under this broad objective, the specific objectives of the study are to

1. Find out the factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST Pre-school.
2. Find out challenges of Early Childhood Education at KNUST Pre-school.
3. Find out the strategies to improve Early Childhood Education at KNUST Pre-school.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study

1. What are the factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST preschool?
2. What are challenges of early childhood education at KNUST preschool?
3. What are the strategies to improve early childhood education at KNUST preschool?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study will assist parents and management of educational institutions to develop good, childhood education policy to enhance performance as well. Parental involvement is also important for students' social and emotional development. The study will also assist students who have parents that are involved in their education have been shown to have a higher motivation to achieve in school and a higher level of school engagement. Thus, parental involvement can affect the student's academic achievement through the impact on the development of the student's attitude and engagement with school, as well as a student's perception of their potential. The study also support general agreement among policy makers and educators regarding the important role that early experiences play in children's development, there is considerable controversy as to how policies should be translated into early childhood practices.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

There is the potential for bias responses from respondents because of the fear of divulging vital information about the operation of their institutions. To resolve these limitations and limit its effects on the validity of the study, random sampling is employed to ensure that respondents are Ghanaians from different backgrounds and ethnicities. The

study also assures respondents of anonymity and confidentiality in their provision of responses so that they do not feel restrained or afraid to provide necessary data.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This research focused on assessing the contribution of parents toward early childhood education using KNUST preschool. The study covers Teachers and Headmasters of Kumasi Metropolitan Educational Directorate. Geographically, the study focused on one school in the Kumasi Metropolitan Educational Directorate namely KNUST Pre-school.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is organized in five major chapters. Chapter one deals with the Background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, significance of the study, delimitation, limitations and organization of the study. Chapter two is devoted to a review of literature on what other researchers and authorities on the subject have written. Chapter three also deals with methodology of the study. Chapter four analyzes the data collected and discusses the finding of the study. Chapter five is the summary of major findings, conclusions, recommendation and implications of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature in an attempt to position the study in an appropriate conceptual and theoretical framework. The chapter discusses findings of related researches obtained from relevant articles, textbooks, journals,

speeches, web sites and other credible sources of information to this study. This chapter also presents the works that have been done by other researchers which were considered relevant for the subject of study.

2.1 The concept of early childhood education

In Finland one of the earliest references to the definition of early childhood education was evidently made by our first early childhood education professor Ojala (2001) in his article 'Early Childhood Education as a Science'. The article focuses on early childhood education as a science and practical activity.

According to Ojala (2001a), in Finland, at the end of the 1970s, the theory of early childhood education was just emerging. He asked, whether it was possible to design one single theory or was there a need for several ones. Ojala concluded that one theory will suffice, but he pointed out that this theory should be constantly assessed and developed further. This theory should first of all be a pedagogical theory. In his book (1978b) Ojala writes that early childhood education as a science studies the process of education before the school age.

Ojala (2001) maintained that early childhood education is also a practice, it is a form the concept of early childhood education is best of all known. Early childhood education is an activity that takes place before the school age. In this case preschool is a part of early childhood education. The aim of early childhood education is a versatile development of child's personality. Besides education and teaching, early childhood education also includes basic care. Early childhood education should help a child to be ready and mature for a smooth transfer to school. Osanyin, (2012.) underlines that in education the theory should serve the practice and practice should serve the theory.

On the basis of the aforementioned definitions of early childhood education, I have formulated (Härkönen, 2002a) a two dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education and a two dimensional model of the concept of preschool.

2.1.1 Early childhood education as a practice

The abovementioned first Finnish early childhood education Professor Mikko Ojala has written an early childhood education textbook (Ojala, 2006) that was later reprinted (Ojala, 2006). In these books Ojala (2006) defines early childhood education as an interactive process in the sphere of life at home, day care and preschool that is purposefully aimed at an all-encompassing personality development of between the age from 0 to 6 years. Care, education and teaching in early childhood education are integrated into one functional entity.

Though Ojala in his books concentrates on developing the theory of early childhood education, in his definition he treats the early childhood education only as a practice. In this definition preschool belongs to early childhood education too. With the issues mentioned above, I have proceeded into the one dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education and the one dimensional model of the concept of preschool (Härkönen, 2002a). It is interesting to notice that at the end of the seventies Ojala (2001) clearly spoke of early childhood education as a practice and science, but in the eighties, at least in reference to his definition quoted in my study, he speaks of early childhood education only as a practice, even though he himself has devoted much attention to the scientific dimension of the concept.

2.1.2 Early childhood education as a science, practice and a subject

The Finnish pedagogical literature of the eighties treats as well the issues of early childhood education. Among others there are such well-known researches as Lahdes (2010), Press, & Hayes, (2000) and, specifically in the field of early childhood education, Huttunen (2010). In their studies from (Duncan, & Magnuson, 2013) and others refer to the abovementioned books and state that early childhood education has traditionally been approached on a three-dimensional basis of practice, subject and research area.

The definition just mentioned does not specify early childhood education as a science, but notably as a research area. The concept of a subject is clear in itself. But the definition does clearly enough point out the contents of practice. Since it is the issue of traditionality, I perceive it to cover care, education and teaching as in earlier definitions. The text written by Sooter, (2013) does not reveal the interrelationships of the three dimensions of the early childhood education concept. But since the authors criticise a certain looseness inherent to the traditional tri-partite division, I will now represent these dimensions detached from each other. According to Sooter, (2013) preschool is perceived as a part of early childhood education.

In my study (Härkönen, 2002a) I have formulated the traditional three dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education and the traditional three dimensional model of the concept of preschool. At the end of the nineties Sooter, (2013) had themselves proposed a definition of early childhood education that they called 'modern'. From the point of view of modern and scientific early childhood education the traditional tri-partite division was no longer valid, they insisted. Early childhood education as a subject and an

area of teaching cannot be separated from scientific research, they all form one whole. The development of the subject and academic education should be based on scientific research.

In their definition the authors did not specify their attitude towards practice, but an analysis of the whole book clarifies that there is an early childhood education practice that in its turn includes basic care and education. The concept of teaching has come to be replaced by the concept of learning. Preschool is still a part of early childhood education. I have processed the abovementioned into the modern three dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education and the modern three dimensional model of the concept of preschool (Härkönen, 2002a).

At the turn of the millennium a newer version of the modern interpretation of the three dimensions of early childhood education has appeared. Elicker, Wen, Kwon, & Sprague, (2013) in their book shortly mention that there is a tri-partite division in early childhood education: practice, subject and field of research and science. The authors speak of “academic early childhood education”, when referring to early childhood education as a part of pedagogics. The concept of a subject is clear in itself. What comes to the contents of early childhood education as practice is not quite easy to perceive. It is a problematic presentation, because the book is a compilation of articles. This makes it necessary to study the whole book. It does mention basic care, inter-action between development, growing up and education, as well as inter-action between learning and teaching. The issue of preschool is not separately studied in this book. However, the book refers to early childhood education as an education for children under school age and a progressing field of science studying. In modelling I have derived preschool directly from the corresponding early childhood education definition, placing it as a part of early childhood education.

The abovementioned aspects I have presented as the newest three dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education and the newest three dimensional model of the concept of preschool (Härkönen, 2002a). A kind of description of the three dimensions of early childhood education is also given by Brotherus, Hytönen and Krokfors (1999), even though it is confined to preschool age children and thus to preschool. At times the book handles preschool in relation to early childhood education, and at other times – in relation to primary education. Pedagogics, applied pedagogics and didactics as a science are treated as the scientific starting lines for preschool. Especially an age period didactics are scrutinized in relation to the science of didactics. The book also refers to preschool as an administrative term. The administrative factor brings about a fourth dimension of the concept of early childhood education. The contents of preschool are looked at in the context of teacher training. The book sees preschool, first and foremost, as a practice, didactic activity, didactic practice. Preschool clearly includes a care, education and teaching, studying and learning. In this connection the term ‘studying’ is new for preschool. These developments I have elaborated into the didactic model of the concept of preschool (Härkönen, 2002a).

The latest definition of early childhood education in Finland was brought forth by Elicker, Wen, Kwon, & Sprague, (2013) “Developing Preschool” (in Finnish). As the title hints, the study is devoted to preschool only, as a part of early childhood education. Hakkarainen builds on, among other things, the Vygotsky’s theory of the proximal one of development and the significance of an adult’s guidance. A preschool age child is on the verge between the play and reality: learning is based on playing and the interest to inquire. Learning tasks should be planned with these principles in mind, then learning will mean

development for a child. Hakkarainen's (2002) book does not allow to shape the models of early childhood education or preschool concepts along the lines possible on the basis of definitions from the earlier mentioned books. I have though worked out a corresponding model in accordance with the inner principles of the developing preschool (Härkönen, 2002a). Elicker, Wen, Kwon, & Sprague, (2013) has departed rather from child developmental psychology than from pedagogics. He does speak of didactics, but this too is clothed into the cape of developing child developmental psychology. His scientific approach resembles a mixture of child developmental psychology and pedagogics, or, rather – didactics. The book describes also the practice of preschool, so it could be used as a course book in teacher training, for example.

2.1.2 The three dimensions and their different combinations

As a result of the analysis three dimensions of the concept of early childhood education have been found. They are a practice, science and subject. They are used in different forms of combinations in the texts.

Geens, and Vandebroek, (2013). Opined that in all the aforementioned definitions of early childhood education the concept of early childhood education has in one sense meant a practice. The concept of '**practice**' in itself seems to be clear enough, but its contents vary in different definitions. At first, practice covered care, education and teaching. Then there was a tendency to stress the inter-action type character of relations between adults and children in care, education and teaching. The concept of teaching has become the concept of learning. In the latest definition the practice of early childhood education is described by using the words care, development and growing up in inter-action

with education, at the same time learning is seen as being in inter-action relation to teaching (Geens, & Vandenbroeck, 2014).

According to Gillies, (2015) these definitions care has been preserved in early childhood education practice, though often referred to as a basic care. Many texts do not ponder over these concepts. Yet the analysis of the concepts of care and basic care would open up extremely important pedagogical horizons, because the contents of these concepts may partially differ. The concept of education has been flanked by the concepts of development and growing up. The concept of teaching is sided by the concept of learning (Gerber, Whitebook & Weinstein, 2007). There is a tendency to look at the phenomenon of early childhood education practice not only from the point of view of a nurse, an educator and a teacher, but even more from the point of view of the one being taken care of, being educated and being taught. While outlining the point of view more precisely it has gradually shifted closer and closer to the child (Ginter, Haveman, and Wolfe, 2000).

In the case of early childhood education practice attention is also drawn to the inter-active character of education. Usually this means inter-action between adults and children. This brings along the process character of the phenomenon under observation and the wholeness of the phenomenon comprising several parts. The texts may well refer to 'wholesomeness', but it has not been further elaborated theoretically. In pedagogical literature, though, it is possible to find references to the inter-activity of care, education and teaching. This type of approach would be valuable for the development of systems theory education thinking Gerber (Whitebook & Weinstein, 2007).

In all but one of the early childhood education definitions mentioned here the early childhood education concepts have for one thing included; the notion of science. The

concept of 'science' in itself seems clear, but its contents vary in different definitions. In the beginning there is the expression "early childhood education as a science that includes theory and research", then 'early childhood education as a research area' and then "scientific early childhood education, including research". Finally the academic character of early childhood education is underlined, stating in this way that the issue in question is "academic early childhood education, including early childhood education as a science and a field of research" Gerber, Whitebook, and Weinstein, 2007).

The scientific dimension of early childhood education is well recognised in early childhood education definitions, but the conceptual expression varies greatly. The concepts of science, research, field of science, field of research and academicity are often vague and misty. The concept of 'field' is rather implicit. One may ask, what does this refer to? Early childhood education as a subject in itself is clear, but it is absent from certain early childhood education definitions (Duncan, & Magnuson, 2013). The '**subject**' dimension was developed in the eighties. In the texts there are expressions like "early childhood education as a subject" and "early childhood education as a subject and a field of teaching". The concept of 'field' is prone to interpretations as to what it is referred.

It may be said that over the period of thirty years the early childhood education definitions carried by Finnish early childhood education textbooks specify the following three dimensions of the concept of early childhood education: practice, science and subject. In the early childhood education definitions they appear in different combinations of one, two or three meaningful dimensions. At first the concept of early childhood education had two dimensions namely science and practice. Then it had only one dimension - practice.

Finally it obtained three meaningful dimensions: practice, science and subject. All the time there have been changes in the details of meaning (Elicker, Wen, Kwon, & Sprague, 2013).

2.1.3 The problems related to defining an early childhood education

Nakpodia, (2011), stated that there has been a need to define the concept of early childhood education again and again. The concept of early childhood education has continuously acquired new facets of meaning. Social policy acts on day care, educational policy acts concerning early childhood education and the changes in educational standards together with changes in theoretical and philosophical approaches to children, education, learning and knowledge have in their turn had an impact, making the implications of the concept of early childhood more diversified.

An analysis of the concept of early childhood education shows that the meaningful content of the concept has always been an issue and the new definitions have failed to bring about final clarity. From the point of view of science and research it would be, though, important to know, what is the phenomenon and its corresponding concept. If it is not known exactly, what the concept of early childhood education covers all in all, then the object of research will remain obscure (Gunnar, Van Ryzin & Phillips, 2010).

So, somewhere is still a weak point, but where? There is the question of inter-action between different things: how do practice, a subject and a science influence each other. An issue constantly raised in teacher training, for example, concerns “the eternal contradiction between practice and theory”. The vague concept definitions in their part maintain this confusion (Hanushek, and Kimko, 2000).

Lately attention has been focused on interpretations and concept systems. What does all that mean and how are they related to the aforementioned categories? What do the great philosophers/pedagogues teach us about early childhood education, as we read their works? The problems mentioned here can be attributed to the concept of preschool as well. The interpretations, concept systems and thinking are also closely connected to preschool (Harmon, Oosterbeek, and Walker, 2003).

2.1.4 The fourth dimension of early childhood education

My new and main opinion is that there is a certain dimension, belonging to the concept of early childhood education that has never before been included into the definition of early childhood education. I think that the fourth dimension is *early childhood education thinking* (Härkönen, 2002a) (Fig.1). It covers the ideas about early childhood education, knowledge, opinions, visions and observations. They can be intellectual or estimation. Meaningful notions can be exposed in arguments, questions, prohibitions, orders, references, attitudes of faith or doubt, positions, descriptions, interpretations, stories etc., having something to do with early childhood education. Meanings are complemented with interpretations. (Harmon, Oosterbeek, and Walker, 2003).

Early childhood education thinking is not only an educational philosophy, as one might often think. Here it is a view that a person thinks while working and caring of practical things, one thinks while taking care of a child or children, educating and teaching them. A researcher thinks while researching, a subject planner and the one putting it into practice think while engaged in their work. Beside that a human can think without an implementation of these thoughts in practice. Therefore anybody can think about early

childhood education and its dimensions and produce or cause different cultural implications (Harmon, Oosterbeek, and Walker, 2003)..

The great philosophers/pedagogues have created the new early childhood education pedagogies. The great personalities who have had a very strong influence on early childhood education are (Harmon, Oosterbeek, and Walker, 2003) and many others. Either personally or through somebody else's intermediary they have communicated their pedagogical thinking to posterity. It covers philosophy, but also pedagogical thinking, based on philosophy. It is therefore possible to create on this basis real kindergartens and schools, where nurses, educators and teachers in their practical work in their turn think, while planning, putting into practice and evaluating education. Thinking work has been done and is still done by babies, little children, pupils, parents and all people, having something to say about a phenomenon called early childhood education. The content of thinking of both philosophers/pedagogues (Härkönen, 2002) as well as any other person may be the object of scientific research.

The product of thinking is transmitted further in time. By thinking a person can create something new. By its inner significance thinking comes before practice. Planning and scientific activity open up new horizons in the process of developing early childhood education. Early childhood thinking is an extremely significant dimension of early childhood education. Thinking is a human property in all doing. Everything said so far concerns also preschool as a part of early childhood education (Härkönen, 2002a).

2.1.5 The systems theory model of the concept of early childhood education and its application

The starting point here is Nakpodia, (2011)) opinion that each and every concept is a system. Thus, the concept of early childhood education is a system. In this article the four dimensions of the early childhood education concept have been specified: practice, subject, science and thinking. All the four dimensions are also systems concepts. In relation to the early childhood education system they are its part-systems. Part-systems are inter-active between themselves and as a whole. Part-systems form combinations of one, two, three or four factors. The numerous inter-relations between different combinations can also be analysed.

Scientific research can separately be directed at whatever part-system and, naturally, to their sub-systems, revealing the character of part-systems. Scientific research can be extended to the combinations, formed by part-systems, linkages between them, entities, parts and infinite number of different forms of combinations and relations between them.

Sooter, (2013) formulated the systems theory four dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education. The very same principles can be detected while formulating the concept of preschool as a part of early childhood education (Härkönen, 2002a). Scientific research of early childhood education is a necessary and demanding task. It is also necessary to study the practice of early childhood education by observing it or participating in it. It should be equally important to study early childhood education as a subject, even though this has been done not so often. Now we understand that early childhood education thinking can be an object of scientific research. Early childhood

education thinking is in ample ways related to practice, a science and subject, to each of them, their combinations or the whole. This kind of research has been quite popular lately. There has been a striving towards studying teachers', parents' and children's understanding of different educational phenomena. The systems theory four dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education can be used to outline the research of different other things, related to early childhood education. One of such things both in practice and in teacher training is the study of curricula. In my paper I have described the systems theory type relation between an early childhood education curriculum and the four dimensional early childhood education concept. A similar setting takes shape from a preschool curriculum. Another example of the application of systems theory model of early childhood education is the relation of the early childhood education administration and the preschool administration to the areas, referred to in the concept of early childhood education and the preschool concept. This in its turn creates premises for the studies of leadership (Härkönen, 2002a.). The system theory based modelling exposes with a great degree of accuracy the substance of concepts and the different relations between various concepts. This allows the intellectual preciseness outlining the phenomena and facilitating the activities purposeful for science.

2.1.6 The systems theory definition of early childhood education

In the light of my studies (Härkönen, 2002a) I define early childhood education through the analysis of the concept of early childhood education in the following way: early childhood education means early childhood practice, early childhood education science, early childhood education subject and early childhood thinking as a wholesome system.

The above part-systems provoke another question: in what order would it be appropriate to mention them. As an alternative to what has already been proposed, here is another variation I put forward to give a thought to: the concept of early childhood education means early childhood education thinking, early childhood education practice, early childhood education subject and early childhood education science as a system.

As a researcher I study early childhood education, well, what is being researched? Research is then directed at the systems theory early childhood education entity as outlined by the early childhood education concept, its systems parts or combination systems, built by whatever numerous parts or wholes. This definition suggests a view that it is possible to research a phenomenon or an apprehension of a phenomenon. Finally it should be said that all the phenomena under research are placed within a certain context. In my research I have acquitted this with the term 'life' (Duncan, & Magnuson, 2013).

Discourse

Concept analysis is an awesome enterprise. However, it is necessary for the development of science, practice, the teaching subject and thinking. Ginter, Haveman, and Wolfe, (2000) are of the opinion that basic concepts should be rather outlined through concept analysis than empirical studies. (Duncan, & Magnuson, 2013) while pondering about what makes behaviour social, concludes that “in issues of this kind there should not be even a hint to ‘let us wait until we see’, what experimental research will reveal to us; the task lies in finding out the meaningful content of the concepts that we use”.

Generally speaking, the goal is that in science the terminology should be exact and uniform. Members of the scientific community should try to speak a common language

and that common language should be as set as possible. In the case of new branches of science like pedagogics the settling down of the concepts is just at its initial stage Ginter, Haveman, and Wolfe, (2000). The early childhood education science as a part of pedagogics truly has only a short history in Finland at least. This helps to understand why this article devotes so much space to very numerous variations in the meaning of the concept of early childhood education. Ginter, Haveman, and Wolfe, (2000) give a valuable advice: “Concepts should only be changed if it is really to be expected that the new concept is better than the older one. Thus, concepts should not be invented for the joy of it, neither for the sake of a change in practising science nor showing the sharp wits of a researcher.” In early childhood education new concepts have appeared like mushrooms after rain. Therefore, this advice is good for all researchers, myself included. As the author of this article I formulate a new concept – early childhood education thinking. Beside that I introduce a new approach to early childhood education– the systems theory that has never been used before. These are big scale decisions. This article is based on scientific research (Härkönen, 2002), where previously used concepts were thoroughly analysed from the point of view of the definitions used by their authors, and where problematic issues were critically pointed out. I have written a manuscript (Härkönen, 2002), dealing with the systems theory in early childhood education and carrying international scientific references to what the systems theory really means. There is information available on systems theory thinking and modelling (Glava, & Glava, (2015). Well-known representatives of the systems theory include Buckley, Bunge, Chang-Gen (1990), Luhmann, Rapoport (1968), Wertheimer etc. In Finland the systems theory has won a certain position in psychology, family psychology and pedagogics.

While speaking about the international aspect, it is worthwhile mentioning that even if the study was focused on the early childhood education concepts formulated by Finnish researchers, their papers and definitions were drawn up with a consideration given to all internationally known theories and theoreticians over a long span of time. In the books that I have studied for my research, the theories focusing on the development of the human being and the child have been elaborated by such personalities as Glava, & Glava, (2015). More specifically the pedagogical views were expressed by (Laevers, 2005: Hanushek, and Kimko, 2000 : Harmon, Oosterbeek, and Walker, 2003). The cause of developing Finnish early childhood education has innumerable ties with the international community. Nevertheless, we have still very much to do in order to better know and apply internationally aired ideas and nurture our own visions.

2.2 Parents in the Education of Children

It is an undeniable fact that parents are the ones who brought the children in life, it is simply their married. They are the ones who reproduce the human kind in a given society, as in this way they contribute to the development of the human history. Parents or family as a whole, are one of the direct holder of educational work. (Duncan, & Magnuson, 2013). The term parent should be comprehended as a set of notions such as:

1. Firstly, their planning and decision to children birth and the overall nativity rate.
2. Secondly, their care and contribution towards rising their children.’
3. Thirdly, the parents actions and activities towards an overall parental achievement of a priori set goals.

The family as a cell acts only with love and respect and it dominates the understanding, affection, sacrifice and childcare. (Ibhaze, (2016). So, in this way builds family

environment, in which we live, laugh, play and develop children. (Ighalo, S. O. (2015) The contemporary concept over their role and contribution in this regard, in a way rejects the so called single direction of influence of the parents over their children development, replacing it with an intense interaction of three factors such as; the child, the parent and the wider social environment. This interaction is constantly being seen as a mutual influence and process moving from the parent to the child and the other way around, which as such triggers a variety of factors which in one way or another may impact the children's development and education, in both, positive as well as negative sense. The parents take a crucial stand, when it comes to their children's development and education as whole, as the parents themselves are the ones to take care on the overall children physical and intellectual development, till the point they get independent and ready to face the challenges of the society they live in Parents are aware of the work on the development of children, but at the same time they need pedagogical information on the right to education of their children. (Mojsovsja Koteva Tatjana, 2006) Just for these reasons, the pedagogues and psychologists as well as other researchers, emphasize in an argumentative way, the role of the parents in their overall children's development, focusing the development of their personality in the family and wider. It has been said that the so-called "children's development climate", more frequently has been seen from the perspective of three interacting factors or dimensions such as;

1. Parental happiness or pleasure to their children's achievement;
2. Needs and the stress that imposes the parental role in the process;
3. The feeling regarding the parental competences towards their children overall development

The education for life in a given family commences with the first days of the child's live. It is consisting mainly of acquiring experience which is usually affected by constant learning. (Lakinska, 2006)

In this regard the parents as well as the family as whole, play the role of the direct leaders as well as supporters of the implementation of the education of their children. As this is one of the core factors of influence, it can be seen as the fundamental one which with no doubt has a greater influence on the overall development and creation of the human personality. When parents involve themselves in the education process of their children, usually the outcome can be qualified as a positive and encouraging one. In this regard, they are usually connected and act under their own parental attitudes, which are transmitted through their demonstration of mutual confidentiality regarding the children's capabilities and their overall learning capacity which leads them towards succeeding over the learning, education as a complex process. Therefore, parents should get involved in supporting their children in doing their homework, as in this way they offer their parental support as one of the key strategies leading towards a successful education of their children at school. Educational level of children in the family depends more on the level of the parent's education, so this factor strongly affects family relationships and the successful development of children. (Ibhaze, 2016)

In order to have good results at school, the parental control over the child needs to be permanent. On the other hand, in order to have success within the educational activity we are performing with the child, we need to be familiar with the rules which are connected to the children physical development and furthermore, a special focus must be put on the child's psychological development as well. In the family are functioning elements, which

are: love, marriage, the care and happiness, elements related to the functioning of life and the future. Ighalo (2015) Children have two main educators in their lives – their parents and their teachers. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends nursery or starts school and remain a major influence on their children’s learning through school and beyond. The, mother is always closer to children. (Beqja Hamit, 2002) Parents are their children’s strongest role model and greatest influence. Children always adopt parent’s values and types of behavior. (Kasapi & Gjylmsere, 2013) However, if parents are a positive influence in their children’s everyday lives, and most importantly in their everyday education, their children’s future will be more beautiful and more successful. (Ighalo, 2015).

2.2.1 The mother as an educator

The family provides children protection, in that suggestively, that makes parents responsible for their development and to make their children grow into a total personality. (Laevers, (2005) argued that the role of the woman or the mother as an educator represents a crucial resource to the development of the individual identity, which from researchers is seen even as more important as the very marital status of the parents and the occupation of the parents themselves. It seems that the feeling of being a mother, to the woman is more powerful than being a father of a given child for the husband. Always in accordance to the biological as well as physiological relation of mother to the child, represents the first and reasonable part or segment of the child’s development. The reason is that the mother assures the child’s life, as she is the one who brings the child in this world, and further on she raises them from being little towards reaching a total independency in mature life.

The mother's function in this regard, has a very important role which as such may be divided into two parts or directions: The first one is related to the child's defense, while the other one to the child's overall development. Mother's protection as a function embeds several types of actions or types of roles. The first type is connected to the physical protection of the child, which means that the child must be provided healthcare and hygienic conditions, so that he/she could have a healthy life in a warm home environment in every sense of the word, including the ambiance where the child lives, which must be well enlighten, a healthy place which offers the child to be showered, feed up and taken care of in general. The second type is the Psychological protection, which can be reflected through the child's emotional security and psychological protection, especially in moments when the child feels it when the mother is next to him/her.

Another group of activities in this regard, are the maternal functions regarding the child's development involving the physical development, the intellectual development as well as the emotional development of the child. (Press, & Hayes, 2000). Each child who grows up and is educated in the presence of mother, is expected to reach an appropriate physical, psychological as well as social development. In this regard, these children have a much better appearance, they look happier and they enjoy childhood in general. They are communicative and as such they are ready to cooperate. (Glava, & Glava, 2015)

For this reason, mother's love and care to the child, is full and complete, and as such is often accepted by other members of the very family. This type of cultivated love and affection can qualify as a major condition for appropriate development of children in a given family. The children experience the physical as well as psychological influence of the mother, and as such they are taken as model affects their further development during

their emotional stage of development of their moral values as whole (Laevers, (2005). This element of the child's identification, is embedded it in his/her personality for years throughout his/her total lifespan. It is planted in their character as well as temperament, and as such it is reflected through his/ her attitudes and thoughts in interaction or behavior compartment with the society in general. Almost all cultures have developed arrangements which enable mothers to provide for basic child care while maintaining other duties that are instrumental to family well – being. (Glava, & Glava, 2015) However, depending on the economic, social as well as emotional limitations, mothers, nowadays have a variety of opportunities to be able to reach or make real their motherly role, which helps the child's overall development and enables mothers to enjoy the fact of being mother. The modern experiences, show quite frequent derailments from this path of action, which can be illustrated with the fact of single mothers, mothers coming from unemployed background, and under age mother etc (Laevers, (2005).

3. The Father as an educator

The father in a family is a very important factor, concerning the organization of an acceptable and appropriately functional development of a house hold, with a specific accent on the children. Helping fathers as the 'best fathers they can be' is therefore of enormous importance to children. A good father must be a good parent and a good husband. This person is extremely important factor in the organization of the family life as a whole, which are the basic ground towards a happily and joyful family for all the members of a respective family. Many young fathers want to do things better than how they have experienced in their lives. (Claudia & Eberhard Muhlan. 2008). His presence in the family has a particular

importance in leading the family members, i.e. the children towards a feeling of safety in their life reigning on the overall family members as a compact union of members.

In these circumstances of safety, the children are the ones who benefit mostly. However, the so called subjective experiencing of the parents by their children varies in different ways and family models, and as such the father's relevance in a family is much more different from the one that is performed by mothers. As a result of the gender prejudices in terms of the duties to be performed in their family, especially regarding their approach and contribution towards their children's education, it turns out that mothers are more prepared to undertake their role in their children's education, rather than their fathers'. Fathers make a powerful difference in defining expectation and challenging children to do their best. (Laevers, (2005)) As such, the children learn their responsibilities and role in the family, when they themselves grow up and become parents, and mature to play the father's role in this regard. Given this theory, there has been done much research, which proves that the relationship between father and child becomes stronger. This relationship does not result from neither of the other two relations i.e. the one between father and child nor the mother and child. (Alabi, and Ijaiya, 2014)

In order to have a successfully brought up and well educated children in one family, parents are crucial and they must be careful to show elements which play a key role in raising, bringing up and educating their children(Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014);

Firstly, while the parent's principal role in the family is the education and the bringing up of their children, the main obligation of their children is to study harder and properly. For this aim, they need to be well instructed on how to study, based upon rules and principles of an appropriate learning and studying. This approach would open to them

the doors of the world of a behaviorist attitude towards work, making possible for them to get to know better the relevance of working as one of the main behaviorist elements of the human kind (Amadi, 2013).

Secondly, the development of the child is in fact an overall child's personality formation. The parents as educators must be able to recognize the basic features of their child, interests, temperament and especially the child's emotional features regarding the child's character.

Thirdly, the child's personality formation results mostly upon child's socialization in general. The socialization process as such, represents the most important one of all other processes involved in formation as a child. Thus, the child commences socialize within a given society since the early stage of his/her childhood at parents' home, within parental atmosphere and the relationship between family members in general. In this milieu, the child makes the first steps in the society, manifesting the basic features of behavior, which are the fundamentals for further social development and integration of the child in a given society. (Amali, Bello & Okafor, 2012).

2.3 The effects of parental guidance on early childhood education

International Policy documents, such as the OECD stating strong reports (2012) and UNICEF innocent report card 8, describe participation of parents in young children's education as a fundamental right and obligation. The role of parental participation in the nurturing of a child's education and overall development is one of the core indicators of later achievement. Through parental participation, children get to understand and appreciate the importance of a solid education (Taniesha, 2010). According to Harvard

Family Research Project (Taguma, and Litjens, 2013), children whose parents participate actively in their education through various activities in early years, have an advantage.

The early years are important because it is the period during which children acquire the basic skills that serve as the foundation for later learning. Moreover, these years are the time when parents' beliefs about their children's abilities are shaped and when children's own academic self-concepts begin to form (Taguma, and Litjens, 2013).

Educators have frequently pointed out the role of family and home environment in determining school progress and that the earlier in a child's educational process parental participation that can lead to good parental encouragement ,guidance, communication ,collaborating with the community begins, the more powerful the effects on child's holistic development (Desforjes & Abouchaar, 2003). In South Africa, parents have been given the mandate through the South African School's Act 84 of 1996 to be involved in their children's education (South African Act,2006). Section 6.1 of the Act provides that parents should take an active role in their children's schoolwork and make it possible for the children to complete assigned homework. Parents should in accordance with Section 6.2 attend meetings that the governing body convenes (Duku, 2006). It is at these meetings that parents have opportunities to understand their roles. Parents are also given opportunities to participate in various portfolios such as serving on school committees. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) also legislates that parents and wider community have an important role to play in curriculum management. The NCS further identifies the benefits of community and parental involvement to include improved school performance, reduced drop-out rates, a decrease in disciplinary problems and generally, a more positive attitude towards the school (Lemmer, 2007).

Parental participation can increase goodwill and communication and help develop a sense of community within the school (Epstein, 2011). Parents must supervise their children at home and outside the school. She strongly supports that when parents pay more attention to their children's schooling, they will become more motivated and students achievement levels will tend to increase. Parents should participate fully in early childhood development education in order to enhance better performance in their ECDE children's activities and welfare (Harris & Goodall, 2007). According to Kimengi and Lumallas (2009), responsibility for learning is an aspect of parenting that places emphasis on activities in their home and community that promote learning skills in the young child. Their observation goes hand in hand with Dewey's philosophy that in order to help children learn, the school should be an extension of the home so that experiences gained at home and school are related and continuous.

Henderson and Berla (2011) pointed out that parents attitude towards education and achievement have a powerful impact on children's willingness to achieve. They further commented that parents are the most powerful role models that children have, and the more they are involved in their children's education, the higher their level of achievement. When parents show their interest and commitment to the success of their children they will be more motivated to do their best. However, most parents cannot relate their children's poor performance to their own lack of interest and commitment. The researcher has realized that in most public pre-schools and primary schools, many parents have compartmentalized their lives and do not show any interest and commitment in their children's education.

2.4 Parental perceived challenges of early childhood education

All children have physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs. Physical needs include food, clothing, shelter and medical care. Basic social and emotional needs include a consistent and predictable relationship with an attentive and caring adult who has high social and moral expectations, strong peer acceptance and freedom from exploitation and discrimination in their communities (Weissbourd, 1996 as cited in White & Isenberg (2003). Minimal cognitive needs include the ability to communicate thoughts and feelings, to engage in constructive problem solving and to experience success both at school and in the community (Case, Griffin, & Kelly, 2001; Weissbourd, 1996 as cited in White & Isenberg, 2003).

Children who grew up with their basic physical and material needs met are likely to trust themselves and their community, possess a zest for life, and build on inner resourcefulness to participate in society regardless of the obstacles they face. They are also more likely to develop a sense of confidence and competence in family, school and community endeavours as a result of repeated successful coping experiences (White & Isenberg, 2003). On the other hand, children who grow up without having basic needs met are at a clear disadvantage for a healthy start in life (White & Isenberg, 2003). Many of these children exhibit particular behavioural and developmental characteristics such as developmental disabilities, medical fragility, poor school performance), making them vulnerable to being able to function effectively as learners (White & Isenberg, 2003)

In poor countries, a large share of the population is excluded from the education system already at an early age and well before completion of the compulsory schooling cycle. Exclusion from the school system encompasses in 42 varying combinations failure

to enroll, late entry, intermittent and irregular attendance, high retention rates and eventually early drop out (UNESCO, 2006).

Although there is worldwide increase in pre-school education, access and quality in developing countries cannot be equaled to the developed nations. This is evident with statistics from the National Centre on Quality Teaching and Learning (2012) showing that Sub-Saharan Africa showed the lowest gross enrollment ratios of 18th in 2009 where children from privileged backgrounds were four times more likely to receive preprimary education than poor children.

According to the National Centre on Quality Teaching and Learning (2012), the principal challenge to ECEC programmes is an effective and well-targeted intervention, lack of adequate funding, limited local and national administration capacity and low social demand for quality ECCE Services. Inadequate ECCE services, the low quality or lack of infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, poor curricula which are not well adapted to the needs of children coupled with the lack of qualified teachers are some of the challenges bedeviling pre-school education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The provision and access to quality early childhood Education Services faces myriad of challenges worldwide. In Central and Eastern European Countries and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS), only a fraction of children between ages three to six years old in urban areas have access to ECEC services especially in the poorest countries (Global Partnership for Education, 2012). According to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in 2009, 46% of the world's children were enrolled in pre-school education as compared to 33% in 1999. Although there is worldwide increase in pre-school education, access and quality in developing countries cannot be equaled to the developed

nations. This is evident with statistics from the GPE showing that Sub-Saharan Africa had the lowest gross enrollment ratios of 18% in 2009. However, children from privileged backgrounds were four times more likely to receive pre-school education than poor children.

A UNESCO (2006) study in Romania noted that the challenges of entry into early childhood facilities were the lack of correct individual documentation like birth certificates, poverty, social and political strife and transportation. Other reasons were the fear of abduction and child trafficking which prevented some families from having the confidence to place their young children within early childhood educational institutions. Parental fears for children's welfare and safety in anticipation of prejudice on the part of the staff of institutions and non-Roma pupils and their parents was also a factor that limited access to pre-school. Subsequently, the fears within some families that their children were not competent in the official language of instruction in the early childhood educational setting and the use of buses as part of Roma desegregation programmes, made access to early childhood education difficult and or compromised for some families.

How well early childhood professionals meet children's essential needs strongly influences how successful they will be as learners and as future citizens (White & Parker, 2003). Giving people a good start at a young age is therefore the key role of a Nursery or Pre-school Teacher who plays a vital role in children's social, personal, physical and emotional development.

Family characteristics also mediate the effects of care and education programmes on children's development (Laevers, 2005). Family factors associated with children's school readiness are parental aspirations and expectation for achievement, parental

strategies for controlling child behavior, maternal teaching style (affective and contingent), linguistic orientation, beliefs about the causes of child success and failure in school, children's home environment (Laevers, 2005).

2.5 Strategies to improve early childhood education

Coaching in child care settings is a common approach to increasing the quality of care and providing professional development to early childhood educators. The Head Start Performance Standards require coaching (within educator professional development) and define certain aspects of what coaching should entail. A growing body of research suggests that on-site coaching, when combined with professional development, can contribute to improvements in the quality of teaching and gains in children's learning, especially when it is focused on teaching practices that support growth in key domains of school readiness such as language, early math, and social-emotional development. While research on specific coaching models that are effective within child care settings is less prevalent, the field is beginning to work towards identifying the effective elements of coaching systems for child care, which are typically incorporated in the state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).

Based on recommendations from national policy organizations such as Child Trends, NAEYC, and OPRE, elements of a statewide coaching system include:

- professional standards, competencies, and role definitions for coaches,
- a career pathway and system for credentialing coaches,
- a system of ongoing training support for coaches,
- state advisory body that provided oversight for coaching initiatives, and
- state data system for tracking and monitoring coaching.

The research clearly indicates that a strong professional development system impacts early childhood educator's instructional practice and under some conditions, improves child outcomes. There is an abundance of information that could inform next steps in enhancing the professional development and supports to early childhood educators. The key features synthesized on features of effective professional development and coaching models, plus the lessons learned from state and local models identify next steps to develop a robust statewide professional development (coaching) system.

Other steps that can be considered:

- Conduct a gap analysis of your state's current Personal Development and coaching system. Identify the current opportunities for all programs, teachers and administrators for professional development and coaching. Consider developing a matrix or framework to identify the types of PD you are interested in and then engage key PD providers in mapping current offerings. See, for example, the report, "Mapping Current Professional Preparation and Professional Development Opportunities for New Jersey's Early Learning Workforce" for an approach your state could design.
- Develop a state early childhood education professional development plan. Engage a cross-sector leadership team to develop a 3–5-year plan to consider the highest priorities, most cost-effective, and most salient strategies, with specific goals for each sector that are targeted to the program and community collaborative performance profiles. See *Primetime for Coaching: Improving Instructional Coaching in Early Childhood Education* for guidance for policymakers on coaching models; see the New America new multi-media guide that offers resources for policymakers on implementing *Transforming the Workforce* report.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the method used to conduct empirical investigation into the contribution of parents toward early childhood education using KNUST preschool. The chapter describes the research design, the population, sample and sampling techniques, the study instrument used, pretesting of the instrument and how the data was collected and analysed.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed the qualitative approach. This approach embodies many research approaches such as historical research, phenomenological study, ethnographic study, and case study. These approaches may share similarities or features but differ in goals (Kusi, 2012). Qualitative research explores a social or human problem by building a complex holistic picture, analyzing words rather than numbers, and providing detailed information on the views of the participants in their natural settings (Creswell, 1998). As Silverman (2005) states, qualitative research examines the details found in the precise particulars of such matters as peoples' understanding and interactions and stress the socially constructed nature of reality; the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied. The researcher has close contact with the participants due to personal observation and face-to-face interviews.

In this study, the researcher adopted plans and procedures that span from broad assumption to specific methods of data collection and analysis as stipulated by Creswell (2005). In this case, therefore, the researcher adopted a qualitative research design. This design is associated with the constructivist or interpretationist approaches. The interpretationists believe reality to be socially constructed and only knowable from multiple and subjective points of view where the knower and the known are seen as inseparable (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Pérez-Prado, 2003). Rocco et al. (2003) maintained that inductive logic and qualitative methods are generally employed with the goal of understanding a particular phenomenon within its social context.

Qualitative research shares its philosophical underpinnings with naturalistic paradigms, which describe and explain a person's experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Naturalistic philosophers believe that reality is multiple, interrelated and determined within context (Horsburgh, 2003; Thorne, 2000) and attempts to measure it can only be limited to human comprehension (Rolfe, 2006). According to Cole (2006), central to good qualitative research is whether the research participants' subjective meanings, actions and social contexts as understood by them are illuminated. Cole (2006) asserts that perhaps the thing that dichotomizes the data in a qualitative study from those generated in a quantitative designed study is a set of assumptions, principles, and values about truth and reality. He maintains that qualitative researchers are more concerned about uncovering knowledge about how people feel and think in the circumstances in which they find themselves, than making judgments about whether those thoughts and feelings are valid.

3.2 Population

Polit and Hunglar (1995) consider population as an entire aggregation of cases that meet a designated set of criteria. It is the target group that a researcher is interested in obtaining information from and drawing conclusions. The target population for the study was made up of ten (10) teachers and two (2) parents from KNUST preschool. The target population was relevant to the study because they were the group from which information was obtained on contribution of parents toward early childhood education at KNUST preschool in the Kumasi Metropolis.

The target population for the research comprised of parents and teachers of KNUST in the Kumasi Metropolis. Ideally, the researcher should have used the entire target population in Metropolis to enhance generalization of the outcome of the study. However, Best and Kahn (1998) state that to study a large population to arrive at generalization would be impracticable, if not impossible. As a result, the researcher deemed it appropriate to make the study more manageable and practicable by using an unbiased sample of population.

3.3 Sample and Sampling procedures

Sampling is a technique used for selecting a given number of subjects from a target population as a representative of the population in research (Gall & Borg, 2007). To determine an appropriate sample size for the study, an updated list of all the staff of the KNUST preschool in the Kumasi Metropolis was obtained from the head teachers of the schools. The entire population of the study was made up of 15 teachers and 145 parents from the KNUST pre-school.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select two (2) parents and simple random sampling were used to 10 teachers in the KNUST preschool in the Kumasi Metropolis for the study. The objective of sampling for survey research is to produce a sample that is representative of the population under investigation and from which generalizations can be drawn. The teachers who participated in the study were randomly selected. Specifically, the lottery method was used for the selection. In the school, all the names of all teachers were written on pieces of paper folded and put in a box. After shaking it well, the required number of participants was randomly selected.

3.4 Data Source

The researcher used both primary and secondary data for the study. The primary data gathered was used for analysis and the secondary data gathered allowed the work to be based on academic perspective. Interview guide was to collect primary data for the study. The secondary data were obtained from books, encyclopedias, published and unpublished materials and also from the University library and various text books.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

Unstructured interview guide was considered most appropriate for the study. The unstructured interview was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore the factors affecting early childhood education, challenges, and strategies to improve early childhood education in KNUST preschool).

The interview was based on answering the research questions. This type of interview is non-coordinated and it is an adaptable strategy. It is easier going than the structured and semi-structured interview guide. There is no compelling reason to take after a definite interview guide. Each interview is distinctive. Interviewees are urged to talk transparently, honestly and give however much detail as could reasonably be expected. It is flexible and affords the researcher the opportunity to investigate underlying motives (David, & Sutton, 2004).

However, the unstructured interview guide is likely to produce inaccurate results (Bernstein as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2015). That is, allowing the participants the free opportunity could lead to incomplete and misleading results, as participants are likely to act on their feelings and give a more verbose information that may be unnecessary and leave out very crucial information.

3.6.1 Validity

Every effort was made to minimize bias through the establishment of rapport between researcher and participant, practiced inquiry techniques, consistent coding, and careful recording of the data (Cohen et al., 2003). With the small sample, it was not feasible to generalize the data; however, some evidence is viable to share concerning play in early childhood classrooms. Investigator triangulation was used to confirm authenticity and plausibility, which are essential factors that support truthfulness in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003).

3.6.2 Reliability

According to Cohen et al. (2003), the qualitative approach is characterized as the fit between that which the researcher gathers and reality, as well as the dependability of the data. With this design, participants had the opportunity to use their own words to describe their personal practices in their classroom. The educators also had the opportunity to describe in detail their personal beliefs. In this study, the notes, interviews, and documents that were used for compiling the information were checked and contrasted by the researcher and the participants for dependability (Golafshani, 2003). The semistructured interview questions allowed for some uniformity in response that supported the coding and categorization as these materialized.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Before going to the field to collect data, the researcher required introductory letter from the Department of Educational Leadership, University of Education, Winneba, Kumasi Campus. On arrival in the schools, the researcher first introduced herself to the headmaster/headmistress and then handed over to him/her a copy of the introductory letter obtained from the Department of Educational Leadership. This was followed by a brief explanation about the purpose of the visit. Respondents were briefed on the objective of the research on the contribution of parents toward early childhood education, using KNUST preschool in Kumasi metropolitan educational directorate. After the introduction of the researcher to the staff, the selected respondents were assembled and the purpose of the study was explained to them.

I collected the contact numbers of all the ten teachers and so before the elapse of the one-week duration, I called them on phone to ascertain their readiness to partake in the study, of which all of them consented to provide the information I sought for my study. When the time was due for the collection of data, I called them once again to establish whether they would be available for the administration of the interview or not, of which all of those who were considered for the study gave me the assurance to come. I therefore went to the heads personally and booked an appointment with them and based on their schedules, different dates were set for the interview to be done; and within eight working days, the entire interview process was completed for transcription and analysis and subsequent discussion to be done.

In all, ten teachers and two parents were interviewed. This was to enable me have ample time with the interviewees so as to generate a very verbose and detailed data shrouded with parental influence towards early childhood education. In two weeks' time, I had completed the analysis and discussion of the information emanating from the interview, and so based on the results of the interview.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis is a method in which raw data are systemized to obtain useful information. There are a variety of ways to approach data analysis. It is important to pay attention when it is collected, and to seriously consider the data and the conclusions. Included in the analysis of the data are interpretation, summary, and integration (Weiss, 1994).

This study used a small sample size. According to Creswell (2007), a hybrid approach that uses a computer program and a physical approach is appropriate for a smaller study. This study used interviews, the physical approach, after which they were transcribed and kept on a computer. The data were categorized by interview question and then analyzed using patterns, themes, and content analysis to establish persistent themes, direct interpretation, and triangulation. An understanding of the data was attained through the recognition of patterns and themes, delving into teachers' beliefs and perspectives, and through the emergence of identified factors that influenced their beliefs. Each interview was individually considered and then examined as part of a whole (Cohen et al., 2003; Patton, 2002). When the interviews were complete, the first step was to transcribe. After the transcripts were completed, they were sent to each participant to confirm the accuracy of the notes. Corrections were made as needed. A comparison was made between notes, interviews, and transcriptions to discover themes and patterns.

After the data were considered, all information was included in a single document for ease of manipulation. The next step was to group all responses according to the questions in another document, which allowed the researcher to analyze and group similar responses, experiences, and beliefs (Patton, 2002). The author coded each with a number and used the codes for each participant, as well as including any important notes.

The author also searched for patterns, differences, and similarities in the responses. From this process, the narrative began to form. The themes that emerged included play schemas or scenarios, change in play during the school year, the way in which curriculum and toys impact play, and how professional development affects play.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures that would be used to collect the data, and assured them that there were no costs involved. The respondents were made aware that they had the rights to accept or decline to participate, and to withdraw participation at any time without hindrance. The respondents' anonymity and privacy were assured and that any information that they would give would be used for academic purposes only. The respondents were also assured of their confidentiality.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS/FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data collected from teachers and parent of KNUST preschool to access the parental influence toward early childhood education of KNUST Preschool. The findings and analysis was based on research questions.

Analysis of the main data

Research question one

4.2 The factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST preschool

Research Question One sought to determine the factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST preschool. Two of the interview questions pertained to the first research question and ten (10) teachers and two parents were interviewed on the issue. As the analysis of the conversation began, it was clear that throughout the narrative a theme was emerging. It was apparent that the responses could be grouped as themes within the interview questions as they related to Research Question 1.: What are the factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST Pre-school?

Teacher one

From the interview, teacher one (1) shared that one of the factors affecting early childhood education was parents' education. From the interview, the participant stated that *Parents who had attended classes and learned effective discipline and parenting techniques report having children with higher grades, fewer behavior problems, less substance abuse issues, better mental health and greater social competence.* The participant also stated in the interview that *children whose parents emphasize*

the importance of hard work and learning are far more likely to develop the grit required to achieve higher education and career goals. From the interview it was revealed that *after children start school whether in preschool, Kindergarten or even later a parent's role is to check in with the child about homework, encourage and enable reading and learning, and prove to the child that they will answer to the parent for poor performance in school. Kids whose parents model disinterest, on the other hand, will likely become disinterested themselves.* Parental educational level is an important predictor of children's educational and behavioral outcomes (Davis-Kean, 2005). The majority of research on the ways in which parental education shapes child outcomes has been conducted through cross-sectional correlational analyses or short-term longitudinal designs in which parents and children are tracked through the child's adolescent years. Our main goals in the current study were to examine long-term effects on children's educational and occupational success of their parents' educational level while controlling for other indices of family socioeconomic status and the children's own intelligence, and to examine possible mediators of the effects of parents' education on children's educational and occupational outcomes. The participants seemed to enjoy responding to the questions about factors affecting early childhood education and said family income also affect childhood education.

Teacher two (2)

Teacher two (2) mentioned that *the number of parents in the home, and access to books and play materials also affect the early childhood education. As a collective unit, their statements solidly embrace the belief that play material has a momentous impact on learning. One comment was: "Play is everything. Pre-literacy and pre-maths skills are*

developed through play. Play is so simple but it is everything. Play material is the base that all education is built upon". Participants declared that play makes learning relevant because the child is intense and engaged in the active examination of his or her environment. Participant went further to state that play affects development and learning by affording social interaction. Additionally, gross and fine motor skill-building opportunities are present during play. Finally, problem-solving opportunities allow children to work through ideas or thoughts, they do not fully understand. Remarks included: Everything that occurs during the school day should be playful. Children learn through play. If I am not conscientious I can get consumed with getting my students ready for kindergarten with ABC's and 123's rather than making my environment ready for learning through play

Teacher three

From the interview, Teacher three (3) stated that Stability of home life, affect early childhood education. The participant said *that stability can support a child to flourish in their home and school whilst in care, and reduce the impact of any difficulties they have already had to endure or any compounding problems. A stable home, a stable school which enables children and young people to form positive trusting relationships so they can thrive, and stable, strong relationships with consistent professionals, all contribute towards helping children and young people to feel safe and ready to succeed.*

Teacher four

Teacher four (4) stated that *high quality child care can have a positive influence on children's development and school readiness by providing valuable educational and social experiences. High quality child care is characterized as: Having well-qualified, well-paid, stable staff, low child-adult ratios, and efficient management.* The participant went further to explain that *only high quality provision can deliver well-being and appropriate development to young children. As an increasing number of mothers are in the workforce and most children age 3 and older now attend a child care facility on a regular basis, it has become critical that young children from all backgrounds should have access to high-quality child care and early education.*

Teacher five

Teacher five (5) argued that *Cultural Differences is one of the factors that affect early childhood education.* The participant went on to state that *different cultures view education in various ways. For example, in most Asian countries' education is highly valued. Therefore, Ghanaian children are usually high achievers even in KNUST pre-schools. You know, one of the largest cultural issues that students face in school is language barriers. I have noticed that if students cannot speak English, they will often have trouble understanding the lesson being taught. In this case, communication between the student and teacher is also hindered, further enforcing cultural differences.*

Teacher six

From the interview, teacher six mentioned *that economic background and environment of students affect early childhood education. Some come from extremely rich families, while others come from excessively poor backgrounds. The reasons for this include the prevalence of single-parent households and differing education levels. Children who come from better economic situations are not necessarily smarter, but often do better in school. This is probably because the neighborhoods where these children are raised have better access to tutoring, support and resources. Also, more affluent children may have greater parental attention. In poorer neighborhoods, education is sometimes secondary to getting a job and surviving. Students from lower income families often have more responsibilities, such as baby-sitting, cooking and cleaning, that takes away from studying. In terms of socioeconomic status (SES) factors, the positive link between SES and children's achievement is well-established (Sirin, 2005). Seminal literature reviews also have documented well the relation of poverty and low socioeconomic status to a range of negative child outcomes, including low IQ, educational attainment and achievement, and socio-emotional problems. Parental education is an important index of socioeconomic status, and as noted, it predicts children's educational and behavioral outcomes. However, Sirin (2005) has pointed out the value of distinguishing among various indices of family socioeconomic status, including parental education, persistent versus transitory poverty, income, and parental occupational status, because studies have found that income level and poverty might be stronger predictors of children's cognitive outcomes compared to other SES indices. Thus, in the present study, we control for other indices of socioeconomic status when considering the effects of parental education.*

Teacher seven

From the interview, Teacher seven (7) said *Teachers and Environments also affect early childhood education. Safe, responsive, and nurturing environments are an important part of supporting the learning and development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Such environments also help to prevent challenging behaviors and serve as a core component of interventions for infants and young children with identified disabilities. According to the Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices. Unfortunately, many practitioners are unsure how to create environments that support their children's learning across different age groups (e.g., infants, toddlers, preschoolers) and developmental domains (e.g., social, communication, cognitive, motor). Well-designed classroom environments: support responsive caregiving, foster independence and feelings of competence in young children, encourage staff efficiency, promote children's engagement, decrease challenging behavior, facilitate appropriate social interactions among children and provide structure and predictability*

Teacher eight

From the interview, Teacher eight (8) reflected on his observation and stated that *Students' Desire affect early childhood education. The participant went further to explain that a student's desire to learn can have a big effect on his or her education. Desire can probably overcome any other factor. If a child has the desire, it matters less where he comes from, how much money he has and what his daily life is like. The poorest child in Ghana can achieve more than the most entitled person if he or she has desire and the wealthier child does not.*

Teacher nine

Individual Differences

From the interview, the participant said *lots of factors can influence child development from ages two to five. Some of these influential factors are external, like the environment the child is raised in or the experiences they have. Other influential factors are innate, meaning that the children are born with them. These innate individual differences might include health, heredity, physical characteristics, and temperament. In the debate about whether nature (genetics) or nurture (upbringing) has more impact on child development, these innate individual differences would represent the "nature" side, while environment and experience illustrate what we mean by "nurture." Let's take a look at some of the ways a child's innate individual differences can impact cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and language development.*

Teacher ten

Language Development

Some of the ways individual differences impact language development may require medical interventions to correct hearing, speaking, or vision issues. Speech therapy may also be needed. A child's demeanour or temperament may impact their personality, making them less likely to engage conversationally with others. For instance, because George is so shy, he has had fewer opportunities to practice communicating with other children.

Preschool teachers can help identify any barriers to language development by providing opportunities for evaluating children as they use language in a variety of contexts.

Teachers can also help to increase student vocabulary and make referrals to professionals as needed based on the evidence they gather.

Parent one

The duration of breastfeeding affect early childhood education

The importance of appropriate infant feeding and the vital role played by breastfeeding in child survival, growth and development are well known. Breastfeeding helps to protect the infant against some of the major causes of childhood morbidity and mortality. After adjusting for covariates, infants who were breastfed for 9 months had significantly better cognitive development than those who had not been breastfed. These results suggest that the longer duration of breastfeeding improves cognitive development in infants.

Parent Two

Nutrition in Early Childhood

Although eating a well-balanced and nutritious diet is important throughout the course of our lives, it's especially critical in early childhood. On average, preschoolers between the ages of two and five grow between six and nine inches and gain between 12 and 15 pounds. Significant brain development occurs as well. Instilling healthy eating habits and providing good nutritional choices is extremely important to ensure normal development in a child. Cognitive development, or the development of the brain. This includes the ability of children to develop language skills and short and long-term memory, and make connections. Physical development, which refers to the actual physical growth of a child, including his/her height and weight. Emotional and social development, or the ability of children to form relationships with

others and mature. Let's take a look at how nutritional choices can influence early childhood development in both a positive and negative way.

Children who eat nutritiously are also more likely to grow and gain weight faster. They're physically stronger and more capable of fighting off illnesses more quickly. Additionally, children who eat well-balanced meals seem to be advanced both emotionally and socially. And the simple fact of participating in family meals helps them to develop social skills that are essential to forming friendships in preschool.

4. 3 Perceived challenges of early childhood education at KNUST preschool

The objective of this research question was to ascertain the perceived challenges of early childhood education at KNUST preschool. From the interview conducted, findings of this study revealed that most Teachers identified public prejudice about the relevance of early childhood education to the total educational development of the child as a challenge. Such prejudices according to early childhood educators involved in this study, manifest in persistent societal stereotype about the essence, relevance, status and levels of intelligence of teachers involved in early childhood education. In fact, all teachers or educators who participated in this study share this view; that there still exist public prejudice about early childhood education. For example, this is how some of the early childhood teachers interviewed put it:

Teacher one

Once, somebody questioned me personally; this person is an important person at the Education office here in Kumasi Metro. And the person said, upon all your degree, you still teach at the KG (kindergarten) What are you doing there, you should be at the JHS or

SHS (Junior High School or Senior High School) or something because as for those children, what are you teaching them with all your qualification?

Teacher two

They don't see why people should be trained with degrees to handle children in kindergartens. They believe we go there to sing songs and recite rhymes. For most people, early childhood educators can only sing and clap. People wonder why we should be wasting our time at that level when, in actual fact, we could be making productive use of our time at the higher basic levels.

Teacher three

The problem is, people bring their wards to the school and the perception they have about the children they have brought to you is the problem. So they make the issues very difficult for us teachers to handle; my colleague teachers do not understand why you are paying much attention to a particular child, and the parents do not understand why you should say they should visit the school frequently to ask questions about the child. The educationist at the office also does not understand why you have an early childhood degree and you are still sitting at the KG and that why don't you go to the JHS? So the problem is not coming from one angle, our education should be done right from the scratch. In fact, we should not see those at the office as people who know what goes on in early childhood education, instead, they should be educated themselves.

Pursuance to authenticating these assertions as expressed by early childhood educators involved in this study, heads of early childhood institutions were asked of their opinions on public prejudice about early childhood education. The following is a response by a teacher:

Teacher four

You see my brother; you have to understand where we have come from when it comes to early childhood education. If you remember, KG was known to be a place where working mothers use to drop off their children before leaving for work. And at these places we had only old women and most times pregnant women who never had any form of teacher training. So that mindset about people teaching at the early childhood level still persists. Unfortunately, people do not know that practice of untrained teachers at the KG has changed. Currently we have four teachers who are all trained with three of them having Cert "A" and one having Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. The one who went for the early childhood programme is doing very well and I know it is because of the training she had in the early childhood education and because of that I have asked two of the other teachers in the section (early Childhood) to do the early childhood programme. So, you see when people are trained, they bring out their best. I think with time, this perception will change.

Parent one

One day, my son's madam was saying she wants to leave the KG for upper primary because her colleagues laugh at her because she teaches at the KG. And this, she said, is a problem

for her because to teach at the KG you need to be tolerant, patient, and also have to know how to handle children. So, you see, when people are teaching at the nursery, it does not mean they do not know anything or cannot speak English fluently as most people think. It is because the teachers there have to speak the local language for the children to understand what they are teaching them. So, I think the Ghana Education Service will have to advise the public about the work of the nursery teacher.

From the interview, Lack of Parental Involvement and Commitment to Early Childhood Education was identified as a challenge. Apart from public prejudice about the relevance of early childhood education in the education and development of the young child, lack of parental involvement and commitment to early childhood education was also identified as a challenge. This challenge was mostly identified by early childhood educators and heads of early childhood institutions. The following are some responses by early childhood educators on this subject:

Teacher five

I will say that, if your question is about Ghana in general, then most people in our society do not attach more importance to the education of their children. Most parents think their children do not know anything and for them, they just send their children to school for somebody to occupy the child for the period of time that the child will be in the school. Most of the parents of these children engage in trading and because of that the children are being taken care of by their grandparents who themselves are not educated.

Teacher six

The situation is not different from my school. Most of the parents come and write the names of their children, and in no time, you will not find the children again. And if you inquire from their mates, you will be told that, the child has been taken away to another place to be taken care of by another guardian. You will be there for two to three months and the child will pop up intending to come back to school.

Teacher seven

Sometimes the parents try to compare children in the private schools with government schools (public schools). And they argue that, those in the government schools are not doing well. How do you expect a child who comes to school bare footed, half belly filled to learn even how to hold a chalk? The child, before coming to school is emotionally troubled and sitting beside a colleague who is wearing a shoe and socks and you think they do not have conscience? They know and remember that right from day one that they entered this school they never wore a slipper and you think such a child will understand anything, definitely no. So, I think if the parents want us to perform magic for their children, they have to do their part by being responsible in their children's upbringing.

Again, Teacher seven stated that

Personally, I think the problem is even more serious with fathers. I hardly see fathers coming to the school. I cannot talk of 10 fathers for the past five years that I have been in my school coming to inquire about their children. Even when you send for them it is mothers who show up, and in most instances, you will find the grandmother not the parents. So, you find the child coming to school with nothing and not expecting much from you the teacher.

Teacher eight

I think one of the challenges that we face is that, most of the children are left in the care of their grandmothers and because they are not able to provide all the items the children are to bring to school; we are always confronted with a lot of problems. And as you are aware because of government's policy on free education, no parent wants to pay any form of fees. Meanwhile, the capitation grant from (government is not much and if parents contribute just a bit and work with us, early childhood education in Ghana will be the best in the world.

The above notwithstanding, all ten teachers who participated in the study did not see this as a problem or challenge. In fact, all teachers attested to attending Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings regularly, and have always engaged their respective early childhood educators involved in their children's education. The National Early Childhood Coordinator even though acknowledged such a challenge; however, she saw it as a remnant of the perception and practice of early childhood education in the past, and thought it was a challenge that was being addressed.

Lack of Teaching Staff and Infrastructure

Lack of teaching staff as well as limited or no infrastructure was also identified as a major challenge associated with early childhood educational practices in the KNUST Pre school. There was unanimity on the part of all participants on the issue of teacher quality in terms of training and teacher pupil ratio. In addition, large class sizes as well as lack of teaching and learning materials were also identified as major challenges. The following are responses by participants of this study to the question of class size and teacher student ratio:

Teacher Nine

I think one of the biggest challenges we have when it comes to early childhood education in KNUST Preschool is the problem of class sizes. A school in town has a population of 80 pupils at KG one and they are being handled by three teachers with no attendants. The school is called A.M.E Zion D preparatory school and it is closer to the hospital. I can say it may have the largest class size in town. The reason being that, our folks at the markets have been told that if they do not send their children to school they will be questioned and because of that perception, the head teachers cannot tell them the place is choked and they have to admit them especially when education is free. And you cannot levy them to buy tables and chairs. Will you be surprised to know that there are some schools in this circuit where children are taught in churches? It is really a challenge.

Teacher ten

As for classrooms, it has always been a problem and as you can see there are ongoing projects, but the challenge is when they will be completed. I am sorry to say that because of lack of space we are mostly compelled to put a number of pupils together even though they are not supposed to be in the same class. And this is because the policy says you are to admit every child of school going age, you cannot turn them away.

Teacher four

As you will realize when you move into these kindergarten centers, you could see that most of the facilities they use are of very poor quality. Sometimes some of these children are put

into dilapidated structures, some sit under trees, while others eat on bare floor and this does not augur well for these children...

As part of infrastructural challenges, lack of qualified early childhood educators was also identified. This challenge as stated by the teacher nine is captured in a compact that aims at improving early childhood programs in the country. The following is the response of the teacher nine on the subject of teacher background and training.

Teacher eight

The first phase is targeting professional teacher development. With this you realize that at the kindergarten level we have a lot of teachers who are not professionally trained. What I mean is that a lot of teachers who are at this level do not have enough training in the methodology on how to handle children at the kindergarten level. Also attached to professional training, includes teaching learning materials, involvement of the community, and family members.

The question of teacher quality and training was also identified by teacher ten as being a challenge, especially at private schools. The following are some responses by Teacher nine and ten.

Teacher nine

When you go to the private schools, it will be very difficult to get more trained teachers than in the public schools, and I think this is a problem. An example is where my daughter

attends school; when I visit the school sometimes, I just tell myself that these teachers are not professionals and they do not know how to handle children.

Teacher ten

I think most of the teachers especially at the private centers are S.H.S. (Senior High School) graduates. Some time ago, a lady whose son attends the same school with my son was complaining to me that when her child nowadays comes home and she is doing something the child picks up broom sticks and attempts to cane her. So I think the teachers in the school have been using cane at the children, and I don't understand which professional teacher will cane a four year old boy.

For most heads of early childhood centers and teachers, even though they acknowledged the lack of professional early childhood training on the part of some early childhood educators, their position has been that the challenge is more prevalent with private schools than that of public schools. A response by head teacher three of this study on the question of public prejudice about early childhood education in Ghana is in itself an acknowledgement of this challenge; lack of professional training on the part of some early childhood educators.

Institutional Barriers

A fourth challenge that was identified in the course of this study is what is described as institutional barriers regarding how early childhood education is practiced: personal or

management of early childhood programs in the KNUST Pre school: policies and programs put out by government with regards to early childhood education: and societal orientation about the whole concept of early childhood education. Responses by participants illustrate this point. On the question of how early childhood educational practices serve as a challenge to overall successful early childhood educational development, this is what some parents had to say:

Parent one

Once, a colleague friend whose daughter was in the same place with my child saw me and was asking me if my child could write, and I said yes, she could scribble something but it was not that clear. She said with her daughter she was not able to write at all and she was of the same age as my child. What this friend of mine did at first was to go to the teachers and tell them her experiences so far as what she thought was the problem. She said the teachers have been giving her child home work assignments, and when the child brings these assignments home, she realizes that they are too difficult for the child to do and was complaining to the teachers that the work was too difficult for her child but the teachers seemed not to care.

Parent two

I think most of the teachers do not understand what they are doing because it is true that they teach most of the children things that are higher than them. For example, my elder sister took her daughter to a school and at KG one, she could recite the times table (multiplication table). So one day, I went to her house and she told me that the school her child attends was very good because her daughter could recite the times table.

But I told her to be very careful of that school because at that level, the child should not be reciting times table. Now the girl is in class two and she finds mathematics very difficult and cannot work simple mathematics. Now it looks like she does not like mathematics. Meanwhile, from the beginning she could recite the times table well and her mother was happy.

Quite apart from the foregoing, some teachers identified the background of some management personnel at the KNUST as a challenge to early childhood education development. For example, this is how a teacher described the problem:

For most teachers of early childhood education, government policy on free education even though laudable, has not been helpful due to delays in the release of funds. For example, this is how a head of an early childhood educator puts it:

Teacher three

Generally, infrastructure and furniture is a major problem and these are also very important to help these children to learn very well in school. Besides, funds from the government to cater for these children are also a problem. Another problem has to do with parents; because the government says free education, parents do not want to supply their children with anything and this is a major challenge. These monies (government subvention) do not come at the time they are mostly needed for the up keep of these children, and this becomes a major problem for every headmaster or mistress (heads of schools).

Effective supervision of schools especially in preschool was identified as a major challenge. In fact, some private schools are seen as being engaged in the business of money making and that for most stakeholders, is a problem. The following was the response by the Teacher Five on this subject:

Teacher four

You know some of these private people (heads of private schools) come in because of the money and sometimes when they are establishing the schools, they do not even involve us. We as an office cannot go to the entire nation but rather it will be proper to turn to the right quarters and find out what is to go into let's say, facilities, staff, and structures. You cannot just involve or get anybody to handle these children for you just because you want to make money. Currently, we have been collaborating with the preschool. They have an association and we have been talking with them and sometimes when we organize workshops and seminars, we involve their executives. We want them to spread the message to their members about best practices of early childhood education. You know in Ghana, we are always confronted with financial problems, so organizing these programs have always been a challenge. UNICEF (United Nations Children Education Fund) has always been of help in these sensitization programs and we are very grateful to them.

As part of the objectives of the study, participants were asked about research question two; what factors have contributed to challenges associated with early childhood education in the study area? Findings revealed that, most challenges, as presented, are in themselves factors that might have contributed to some of the described challenges. However, participants went further to specifically present reasons or factors that in their view have led to the current state of affairs when it comes to early childhood education and

development in the KNUST Preschool. On the question of lack of trained teachers and educators at early childhood education, as well as public prejudice about the relevance of early childhood education, the following are some of the reasons assigned by participants.

Teacher five:

It is not because those with the requisite skills are not there to teach, it is because those who are supposed to post them to early childhood education do not see the need to post them there. Because they think they will be wasting their time at the lower level they instead send them to the upper classes.

Teacher Eight:

I think the whole issue has to do with the way society frowns on early childhood education. It will interest you to know that some of the trained teachers still do not want to come to early childhood education. You know, there are a number of training colleges offering early childhood education programs in addition to what is offered by the universities. However, when most of the teachers at the training colleges graduate from school scarcely will you find them posted to the KG. Through their own connections they work things out to get them posted to the JHS, because teaching there, society turns to see you as one who is good and intelligent. So, every teacher trained in early childhood education especially from the teacher training college is anxious to be posted to the higher basic level.

With regards to challenges associated with infrastructure, most participants attributed reasons to lack of resources. For instance, this is how a head teacher put it.

I think another problem with infrastructure has to do with the release of funds. This problem has to do with the public schools. When you go in to ask for funds for any program, you should not be surprised to be told that either the capitation grant has not arrived or the money has already been spent. So, the teaching and learning aids that you are supposed to use in teaching these children are even not there, so how would you expect to build that foundation?

With challenges associated with early childhood educational practices at the KNUST Preschool captured, as well as factors that have contributed to these challenges identified, the study went further to answer research question three; what recommendations can be provided in addressing the identified challenges? Responses with regard to research question three by participants of this study centered on the need for education and awareness on the part of the general public. The following are responses by participants.

Teacher one

It is all about awareness creation, sensitization, and education. For some of us, we have been fortunate to have had this training, I mean early childhood education, so we know the essence of early childhood education and so we would want to be there but those who do not know still believe that as it was yesterday is still what is practiced today. So, for some people, the center is just to take care for their children whiles they go to work. So, I think we need enough education and sensitization on the part of the public for them to be aware of the essence of early childhood education for them to attach a lot of importance to it.

Teacher Four

I will also share the same opinion and will say that the education should not be geared towards a group of people like parents but should start from the education directorate. I think a memo should be sent to the education directorate here in KNUST Preschool for them to understand the essence and relevance of early childhood education to the total educational development of the learner. Also, we should also organize periodic in-service training not just for parents and teachers in early childhood education but also those in management positions. There is the need to organize workshops on early childhood education and also ensure that what is taught is put into practice. I remember some time ago, we used to visit market places, radio stations, churches, mosques and so forth and I believe this will help.

Parent one

I think when teachers are posted to their districts, they should actually be placed at where they were trained for and not sent to upper classes. Sensitization as described by my colleagues is also very important because if a foundation is well laid, building on it will not be that difficult, so I think parents and all those involved in early childhood education should know that the course is something which is really going to help children.

In terms of recommendations, parents on their part saw the need for them to be involved in issues pertaining to school administration. The following was the concern of a parent regarding school parent collaboration.

Parent two

I think one of the major problems that we have is the lack of education for us parents by the teachers. Usually, when we attend PTA meetings all that the teachers talk about are contributions from parents for this or that. Never will you hear of teachers wanting to explain to parents new developments on early childhood educational practices, and what we the parents can do to improve the education of our children. So when this is not done, how do you expect us to understand what is going on in the school? I think we need to be involved in what takes place in the schools.

On the question of lack of trained teachers at early childhood centers, some parents called for the posting of trained teachers to private institutions. For example, the following recommendation was suggested by a parent.

Parent two

Currently we have a plan that aims at maybe changing the name of the profession and then also try to educate people to let them know that there is specialty, and that not only women get engaged in early childhood education even though they are the most passionate about things that concern children. I think men also have a vital role to play when it comes to early childhood education. They just need to be encouraged, educated to understand and accept their place in this important enterprise. In certain countries, you find out that men play very important roles in early childhood education, but here in Ghana maybe because of our cultural practices men seem to have a problem when it comes to child upbringing. I think the only way we can break this mindset is through education and sensitization.

For some teachers of early childhood centers, teaching and learning materials need to be made more readily available. In addition, the need for collaboration between various

tertiary institutions and the Ghana education service in the provision of quality early childhood education programs according to Teachers of centers is important.

Teacher Three:

I think teaching and learning materials will have to be made readily available at the various centers. You know at the early childhood level; you cannot engage in any efficient teaching if the child cannot feel what is being taught. That is why government will have to strive hard to ensure that the various centers are provided with adequate teaching and learning materials. Besides, I also think the university, I mean the one here in KNUST Preschool will have to create an early childhood education center or unit to keep some of the samples of teaching and learning materials which will be like a resource center for schools to visit and take inspiration from. These materials can even be rented out to schools.

4.4 The strategies to improve early childhood education at KNUST preschool

The objective of this research question was to assess the strategies to improve early childhood education at KNUST preschool. The researcher was interested in investigating the following variables that are Focus first on children's safety, health, and happiness, Support the early care and education workforce, Create a culture of continuous quality improvement, Build partnerships to support quality, Ensure all young children have access to early care and education, Promote socioeconomic integration in early childhood classrooms, and then use observations and assessments.

Teacher one

Focus first on children's safety, health, and happiness.

The participant said that *regardless of setting, children's safety, health, and happiness are the non-negotiable elements of quality care and education. Minimizing risk and maximizing children's opportunities to engage with teachers, caregivers, other children, and the world around them are essential strategies for promoting physical health and social-emotional, language, and cognitive development. Rigorous licensing regulations and regular monitoring of programs are essential. Yet a review of existing state regulations indicates that current protections for children are inadequate.*

Teacher two

Support the early care and education workforce.

From the interview it was realized that *the administrators, teachers, and caregivers working with young children each day are at the center of creating high-quality early care and education. The current workforce has a low education level, and average annual incomes for some workers are under the federal poverty level for a family of four, despite efforts to promote higher qualifications and access to professional development. Further efforts should target improvements in the quality and content of early childhood education preparation programs; opportunities for supervised internships and student teaching; ongoing professional development that is rigorous and relevant; compensation parity; and coaching, consultation, and mentoring that facilitates the application of new knowledge to everyday practice.*

Teacher three

Create a culture of continuous quality improvement

High-quality early care and education programs never stop improving. Continuous improvement starts with program leaders who engage themselves and staff in reflecting on strengths and growth areas through self-assessments, feedback from colleagues and parents, and data collected about the quality of their program, classroom, or child care home. Professional development and technical assistance can be linked to growth areas, and programs as a whole can annually update goals, objectives and strategies for improving services. State Quality Rating and Improvement Systems offer quality standards, professional development supports and incentives to guide the quality improvement process.

Teacher four

Build partnerships to support quality

Quality early care and education programs are supported by a larger early childhood service system that includes access to health care and medical homes for young children, social-emotional development and mental health services that focus on prevention and intervention, comprehensive parent engagement that is responsive to parents' needs, and family support services to help families access resources and build their capacity to support their children's development. An effective early childhood system is dependent on strong partnerships among early childhood settings and across service-delivery systems; coordination of resources; and alignment of standards, which are critical for promoting quality early care and education programs that can meet the full range of children's and families' needs.

Teacher five

Ensure all young children have access to early care and education

The early childhood years are a critical part of a child's development and lay the foundation for future academic success. Access is a quality early childhood program that offers individualized education focused on developing a child's cognition and language, fine and gross motor skills and social-emotional development. Literature is the cornerstone of the curriculum, setting the stage for the study of math, science, social studies and history. These learning experiences are enriched with music, art, drama and technology. By using multi-sensory elements that involve touching, seeing and hearing, access instructs for all learning styles.

Teacher six

Promote socioeconomic integration in early childhood classrooms

The participant suggested that bringing together children from low- and higher-income families in early childhood settings an arrangement that rarely happens could help bridge achievement gaps.

The benefits of socioeconomic integration is well documented among school-aged children, but it is just beginning to be explored among the preschool and younger set — in part because child care in Ghana tends to be divided along class lines. Yet some research suggests that the same promise exists for the youngest students as it does when older children are integrated by family wealth.

One study in Connecticut found that children from low-income families in economically integrated preschool demonstrated much larger language growth than their counterparts in classes primarily composed of children from low-income backgrounds.

Teacher seven

Ensure salary parity for early childhood educators at community-based organizations The participant shared that view that, *the work of early childhood educators improves the social, behavioural, and academic development of young children, providing a foundation for success in school and in life. Yet, the early childhood workforce, predominantly made up of women of colour, continues to be undervalued and underpaid. Inadequate compensation remains a formidable barrier to a strong and sustained early childhood workforce that can effectively partner with children and families.*

So, the lack of adequate compensation is not a novel conversation for the early childhood community. Advocates in the field have been calling for fair wages for many decades, yet the problem persists. To fully understand the scope of this challenge and ultimately address it, leaders in early childhood must look more deeply at the lack of salary parity equal pay for equal or comparable work especially across setting.

Teacher eight

Expand capacity to increase infant and toddler access to high quality child care

From the interview, the participant stated that *by increasing public investment in child care from birth to age five, the early care and education system can be made more equitable for parents and children. Today, families with greater resources have many more choices when it comes to child care. For most parents, child care choices are constrained by the high cost of providing care for an infant or toddler. With few affordable options, some parents leave the workforce out of necessity rather than choice, which can have a*

compounding effect on lifetime earnings and savings. This circumstance, disproportionately, affects women and has been identified as one of the primary reasons that the Ghana now trails other economically developed nations when it comes to female labor force participation.

Currently, child care is most expensive and hardest to find when children are in their first few years of life, making infant and toddler care a promising investment in the financial security of families and the well-being of young children. The price of infant care today is higher than public college tuition in most states. Accordingly, the supply of infant and toddler care is three times scarcer than child care for preschool-age children. Together, these linked factors of cost and scarcity are parents as the primary challenge to finding infant or toddler care.



Teacher nine

From my interview with the teachers one of the strategies that helps to improve early childhood education was Make it affordable and accessible that is Children who attend a quality early childhood education service (ECE) gain benefits that last through to their early years in school and beyond. To achieve any benefits the family must find the early childhood education services affordable. The affordability of early childhood education services is one of the factors that determine how accessible early childhood education is and hence the extent that children are likely to participate.

From the interview the participant stated that *high-quality, affordable child care can help parents balance work and family responsibilities. Studies show that providing better access to and lowering the cost of high-quality care can significantly increase mothers' employment rates and This increase in family income has been shown to improve children's outcomes as well.*

Children who enter school at higher levels of readiness have higher earnings throughout their lives. They are also healthier and less likely to become involved with the criminal justice system. These positive spillovers suggest that investments in early childhood can benefit society as a whole.

Teacher ten

From the interview, it was clear that the use of observations and assessments to support every child's needs across all developmental domains was identified as one of the strategies to improve early childhood education at KNUST preschool

One of the teachers said that *observations are part of every day to day life of an early childhood educator. Most child care providers understand the role of observation but do they understand why it's important? Early childhood education [ECE] is not just about teaching children, it's about exploration, learning, and observing play. Educators play an important role in helping children meet developmental milestones and through observation is how educators learn more about each and every child they work with.*

The participant went further to explain that *observation is often seen as one of the simplest, yet effective methods of assessing young children as they develop. For an early childhood educator, observing a child begins by noting how each child behaves, learns, reacts to new situations, and interacts with others. An educator then takes this information and creates activities to promote growth on skills, document the success of those skills, and then reflect and assess.*

Parent one

Responses from the parents showed that support and correct child by providing positive guidance was another strategy to improve childhood education.

If a child is repeatedly told “no!” or spoken to in an angry way, then they consider the classroom to be an unsafe space. They simply will not learn as well in a negative setting. Instead, young students should be gently corrected and redirected. They should also be praised when they are making good choices or exhibiting positive behaviours.

For example, if a young child is experiencing trouble sharing, then a teacher might say, “Way to go, that's great sharing,” if they pass an object to a peer.

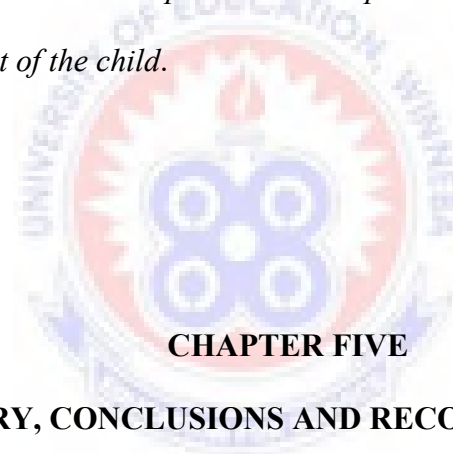
If the child is doing something inappropriate, suggest another productive activity instead of just telling them no. For example, if the children are banging their hands against the table or hitting other children, give them something to do with their hands, such as drawing or playing with play dough.

Parent two

“Develop parent-teacher connections” was another way of improving childhood education.

Participants opined that *when parents and teachers work together to teach a child, everyone wins. In the best scenarios, a teacher will have the time and resources to provide progress reports to parents on a weekly basis. Then, during monthly or bi-monthly formal conferences a teacher can expand on their reports via an in-person conversation with a child's parent(s)*

For example, a weekly report might discuss how a child is performing on regular vocabulary exercises. In addition to academic areas, it's also important to monitor how a child's socialization and behaviors are progressing over time. There should be an open-door policy for teachers to talk to parents. Allow parents to discuss their concerns with teachers for the benefit of the child.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the entire work. It comprises a summary of the study, which is followed by key findings; and based on the key findings, conclusions are drawn for consideration. Again, relying on the key findings of the study, recommendations together with suggested topics for further studies are presented.

5.1 Summary

Overview of the Study

The study assessed the parental influence toward early childhood education. a case of KNUST preschool. Specifically, the study sought to find out the acts/nature of indiscipline in the junior high schools, teachers' roles in preventing indiscipline in the junior high schools, ways of ensuring self-discipline on the part of students, and teachers' means of controlling indiscipline in the junior high schools. A self – designed interview guide was the instrument used to collect data. Data gathered from the interview were also transcribed. After transcribing the data, the researcher started the procedure of data analysis by interpreting and discussing the data.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

From a careful analysis of the variables presented in the previous chapter, the study revealed the following major findings:

Research question one

The study revealed that parents' education, the number of parents in the home, stability of home life, quality of child care, cultural differences, economic background and environment, teachers and environments, students' desire, individual differences, language development, the duration of breastfeeding and child nutrition were the factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST Pre-school.

Research question two

From the interview conducted the finding revealed that public prejudice, lack of parental involvement and commitment, lack of teaching staff and infrastructure, institutional barriers, background of some management personnel, government policy on free education, teaching and learning materials need to be made more readily available came out as the challenges of Early Childhood Education at KNUST Pre-school

Research question three

From the interview the findings showed that focus first on children's safety, health, and happiness, support the early care and education workforce, create a culture of continuous quality improvement, build partnerships to support quality, ensure all young children have access to early care and education, promote socioeconomic integration in early childhood classrooms, and the use observations and assessments were the strategies to improve early childhood education at KNUST preschool.

5.3 Conclusions

Findings of this study indicated several important challenges that affected the efficiency and quality of early childhood educational practices in the KNUST Pre-school. Undoubtedly, as evidenced in responses by participants of this study, the Whole concept of early childhood education regarding what it entails, its practices, and its relevance to the total education and development of the young child is still not well engrained in the psyche of the Ghanaian populace. Definitely, challenges revealed by participants representing public prejudice and stereotypes, as well as a lack of parental involvement and inadequate

infrastructure can among other factors, be traced to a lack of education and understanding on the part of the public about early childhood education.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends:

1. The need for a robust educational and sensitization programme for the public about the important place of early childhood education in the educational development of the child.
2. That government should be more committed and supportive of early Childhood programmes, and most importantly for parents to exhibit concern regarding their children's education especially at the early childhood level.
3. More effort should be made to encourage parental participation and partnership in early Childhood educational programs.
4. That notwithstanding the benefits associated with free Compulsory Universal Basic Education as practiced in Ghana, as revealed in this study, funding and support represented in capitation grants aimed at augmenting the non payment of school fees by parents needs to be more timely and forth coming.

5.4 Suggestions and Areas for Further Research

Future research should look in greater depth at parental perspectives regarding the place and relevance of early childhood education in the totality of the child's educational development. Studies should also be conducted to identify alternative funding for early childhood educational programs. Again, studies on how to encourage and foster collaboration between local institutions such as the community and early childhood centers

in the use of local resources would be Very critical. Investigating the place and role of men in early childhood education would also be worth pursuing.



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APPENDIX

Appendix A: interview guide

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WENNEBA
(KUMASI CAMPUS)

Dear Respondent,

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PARENTS TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. A CASE OF KNUST PRESCHOOL

I am LINDA AMPOFO, a graduate student of the University of Education, Winneba-Kumasi Campus, conducting a study on the topic: the contribution of parents toward early childhood education. A Case of KNUST Preschool. This study is in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of Arts in Educational Leadership. It would be appreciated very much if you could kindly respond to the interview guide as you have been selected to participate in the study. Your name and your school's name would not be needed in the interview guide unless you wish to provide them. The information you will provide will be anonymous and will be used for academic research purposes only.

I count on your co-operation in this regard.

Thank you.

Interview question

1. Could you please tell me some of the factors affecting early childhood education at KNUST preschool?
2. Could you please tell me how the factors influence early childhood education
3. What are challenges of early childhood education at KNUST preschool?
4. Could you please tell me the impact of the challenges on early childhood education at KNUST preschool

5. What are the strategies to improve early childhood education at KNUST preschool.

