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University of Cape Coast

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

PRESCHOOL TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

EDUCATIONAL BEST PRACTICES IN THE CAPE COAST

METROPOLIS IN GHANA

BY

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Thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Psychology, Faculty of
Educational Foundations, College of Education Studies, University of Cape
Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Award of Master of
Philosophy Degree in Educational Psychology

APRIL 2018

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree at this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature……………………… Date……………………

Name:…………………………………………………………………..

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down in the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature………………… Date…………….…………

Name: …………………………………………………………………………

Co- Supervisor's Signature…………………………. Date…….…………..……

Name: …………………………………………………………………….

ABSTRACT

The study assessed knowledge and practice of preschool teachers about early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study employed quantitative approaches through the use of self-developed questionnaires. In all Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table was used to select 217 preschool teachers using the multistage sampling technique. The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The findings from the study revealed that preschool teachers were aware of and have knowledge about early childhood educational best practices. Also, results from the study indicated that even though preschool teachers had knowledge about the early childhood best practices, they did not apply or implement them in the classroom. Some challenges including lack of teaching learning materials hindered the implementation of early childhood educational best practices among preschool teachers in Cape Coast Metropolis. It was recommended from the study that, the Ministry of Education should ensure that the developmental goals and objectives in the early childhood development curriculum reflected local values and informed approaches to classroom practices. It was further revealed that the curriculum should also reflect the customary practices, traditions, and rituals that touched the lives of children in various cultural contexts and encourage the participation of children in the everyday activities of their community. Early childhood teachers should be given professional training.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my father Prof. Prosper Deku

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

As the first country in Africa to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Republic of Ghana has a record of attention to children's rights and development. More recently, the Government of Ghana declared its commitment to addressing the developmental needs of children and achieving the Millennium Development Goals through policies and plans including the National Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy, adopted in 2004. This policy provides a framework for government and other stakeholders to promote survival, development, and protection for children from birth to age 8, emphasizing integrated and coordinated services among other strategies for achieving this goal.

Key indicators have in recent years shown improvement in young children's education, health, and social welfare status in Ghana. Increases in pre-primary education attendance have been substantial and have exceeded national goals. However, rates of maternal and child mortality, malnutrition, and lack of access to adequate water and sanitation remain high, and substantial disparities in these areas remain across income groups and geographic regions.

According to Thorsen (2008), beliefs will always be part of our lives whether it is everyday activities, theories, philosophies, or the art of teaching." (p

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2). This point is further reinforced by Myers (2004) who alluded to the fact that practice may also affect beliefs.

At a time when the early childhood education sector in Ghana is implementing several curricula reforms influenced by the ideals of Western goals of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), it is important to examine the beliefs and perceptions held by teachers in the education sector. This is especially relevant in light of the fact that some of these goals may be unconnected to Ghana's cultural values, beliefs, and educational priorities. Ghana's practices have been influenced by our colonized past and Cannella and Viruru (2004) claimed that justification for the "the continued use of outdated practices and attitudes need to be challenged" (p. 7).

It is not necessarily a new idea to think of the world as a constantly changing place, nor is it new to philosophize about how education should respond to these changes. Education has long been recognized as a powerful force for shaping culture, transmitting cultural values to the next generation of learners and influencing social change (Rename, 2007; Abraham, 2012). Understanding the complexity of today's changing world, recognizing inequality as a persistent and growing problem and accepting the consequences of actions taken by generations past–while seeking better, more sustainable choices for the future–are only a few of the challenges facing educators today.

Educators have the opportunity to candidly accept these challenges and take an active stance in addressing them (Boutte, 2008). One vehicle for impacting change is through the practice of Education for Developmentally

Appropriate Practices. In 2007, the government of Ghana declared the commitment to the developmental needs of children by making the kindergarten part of the basic education. The policy provides a framework for promoting DAP in order to foster language, cognition and social competence among the children.

Developmental Appropriate Practice (DAP), is an approach to teaching grounded on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development (Cochran, 2007). Charlesworth (1998) argued that DAP is for everyone with diverse socioeconomic status, culture, race, gender, age, or special needs. Elkind (1989) also stated that a challenging, developmentally appropriate learning environment would help children develop creative thinking and critical thinking abilities. Empirical studies have demonstrated the efficacy of DAP in enhancing preschool children's learning and development. For instance, preschool children who enrolled in DAP classrooms had better grades in science and in physical and social skills (Macron, 1993) and scored higher on rote learning and applied knowledge skills (Huffman & Speer, 2000).

On the other hand, children in developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) classrooms exhibit more stress behaviors than those in more DAP classrooms (Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, & Kirk, 1990). According to National Association of Educating the Young in U.S reported that one of America's larger challenges regarding ECE is the dearth in the workforce, partly due to low compensation for rigorous work. Because the teacher is critical in the

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implementation of the developmentally appropriate approach, the teacher's perception about classroom practices is important. Research showed that teachers' developmentally appropriate perception not only influence program quality but children's learning outcome. McCarty, Abbott-Shim, and Lambert (2001) found that teachers in low-quality classrooms have more inappropriate perceptions than those teachers in high-quality classrooms. Jones and Gullo (1999) found that teachers' developmentally appropriate perceptions were associated with children's positive social skills ratings, but not academic achievement. Research findings indicate teachers' perceptions and how they are related to their practice are important issues in the delivery of early childhood education (Rusher, McGrevin, & Lambiotte, 1992).

It is worthwhile to note that preschool teachers as key players in young children's education have a crucial role to play in best practices. This may include child guidance and discipline, respecting cultural diversity (McDonnell, 1999), establishing a reciprocal relationship with families, (Lundin, 2000), and creating a caring community of learners, teaching to enhance development and learning (NAEYC, 1997) in the classroom. In preschool best practices, both personal and environmental factors are effective. As researchers, we agree to the idea of National Association of Education of Young Children that teachers, as human beings, bring their past experience into classroom settings so their beliefs regarding how children learn and develop affect quality of the preschool best practices. In the study of Cronin- Jones (2006), it was elaborated that if the teachers' existing belief structures were not consistent with the philosophy of the

curriculum, then they affect the success of curriculum adversely. Parallel to this study, Kern, Kruse, and Roehring (2007) also maintains the ideas that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are strongly influencing the best practices in early childhood education. In other words, once the teachers are defending the ideology of the curriculum being implemented, then the performance of the teacher in the real classroom setting is affected positively during implementation. Furthermore, besides appreciating the philosophy of the new curriculum, Park (2008) suggested that understanding of the curricula by the teachers is crucial for proper implementation. Because once the teachers do not comprehend what the curriculum's theoretical framework is in details, they will not be able to successfully implement best practices in early childhood education.

Statement of the Problem

The concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) is based on Western ideology (Gupta, 2006). Literature indicates that, there is reform of the early childhood sector because pedagogical competence of the early childhood practitioner has come under greater scrutiny (Williams & Charles, 2008). It has also been accepted that in the early childhood years children gain the educational experiences needed to set the foundation for academic skills in the later years (Saracho & Spodek, 2008). The quality of the early childhood teacher at this level, therefore, becomes of utmost importance in setting this foundation.

Although reform has been endorsed by teachers in the sector, successful implementation rests on the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and practices of these teachers. Equally, strides have been made with regards to training of teachers to

cater for the needs of children in their early years yet, it is perceived that impact is not to be felt generally UNICEF (2008). According to UNICEF (2011), institutions for teacher training have been established, but only a small proportion of teachers are formally trained .Less than a third of teachers in public kindergartens nationwide have received any type of formal training in education (2008/2009 EMIS data).

More so, in-service training sessions for KG teachers tend to focus on narrow methodological topics or specific resource, as a result of inadequate comprehensive training agenda or syllabus for Kindergarten teachers (UNICEF, 2011). The research problem exists because in spite of the plethora of studies on perceptions of teachers on best educational practices, the context of the preschool or early childhood environment has not been fully explored. Limited studies touched on early childhood education especially preschool classroom environment. The vast majority of studies on the nature of best educational practices focused on primary, junior high and senior high school settings and therefore did not address issues in best educational practices of preschool teachers. The present study is an attempt to fill this research gab by exploring preschool teachers' perceptions of early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis, of Ghana.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate perceptions preschool teachers held about early childhood educational best practices in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to;

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1. assess the knowledge level early childhood teachers have about the best practices in early childhood education in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

2. examine whether the teachers use the best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis

3. ascertain the relevance of instructional activities in early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis

4. uncover the barriers to early childhood education in the Cape Coast Metropolis

5. examine how early childhood education can be managed in the Cape Coast Metropolis

6. explore gender difference between male and female teachers knowledge about early childhood educational practices

Research Questions

To address the objectives of the study as stated earlier, a number of research questions were formulated in order to guide the research towards achieving the stated objectives. These research questions are delineated as follows:

1. What are the perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

2. How do preschool teachers perceive the implementation of early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

3. What are the perceived challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

4. How can early childhood educational practices issues be addressed or managed in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

Research Hypothesis

The study tested the following hypothesis.

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between males and females teachers with respect to their Knowledge in early childhood best practice in the Cape Coast Metropolis

H_1: There is statistically significant difference between male and female teachers with respect to their Knowledge in early childhood best practice in in the Cape Coast Metropolis

Significance of the Study

This study intends to offer insight into perceptions of childhood teachers about early childhood best practices and how these influence their classroom practices. My study would also serve as a reference for educators who would like to know more about teacher beliefs and self-perceptions or how reflective teaching can be used to improve classroom practices in early childhood settings (Cole, 1997). Hopefully, the study would also affect how we look at early childhood teachers, challenge our own beliefs and perceptions of early childhood teachers and the policy directions of the sector.

Again, the study aimed at helping in examining the perceived knowledge levels of pre school teachers concerning early childhood educational best practices and how it can be used to polish our younger ones towards the future with regards to the future. Based on the findings, Stakeholders, Non-

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Governmental Organizations, Curriculum Designers, Ghana Educational Service, Ministry of Education and interested bodies stand the chance to benefit as they would be abreast with issues about early childhood educational best practices. This would enable the policy makers and the stakeholders to work out and implement the findings as the situation continue to live with us as a nation.

Delimitation

The study was delimited to preschool teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana and does not include basic and senior high school teachers. It was also delimited to the questionnaires for the study and the chosen sample. The study was delimited to the selected circuits within the Cape Coast Metropolis and did not include any circuit from any other district..

Limitations

This study was exploratory and produced descriptive, yet preliminary findings. The use of qualitative methodology could have allowed for a rich, detailed analysis of the teachers and their setting. This study was also limited to the purposefully selected sample of some selected teachers who volunteered their participation. The sample size was limited to only pre-schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis and as such, is not a representative of the total population of early childhood teachers in Ghana. The results, therefore, cannot be applied too broadly.

Definitions of Terms

Preschool Teachers: Teachers who teach between 3 and 8 years-olds children are referred to as pre-school teachers in the study.

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Early childhood Curriculum: According to Langenbach and Neskora, (1977) the early childhood curriculum is a product of both long- range and short term planning.

Preschool - includes all ECIs for children from three to six years. The school is privately owned, by either an individual, corporation or faith-based institution and operate with private fees and fundraising.

Kindergarten of Preparatory School - Preparatory schools are private institutions for children age's three to twelve. Kindergartens serve children three through to six years.

Basic School - A community-owned school operated by an individual, Trust, or faith-based institution. Considered "recognized" if the institution meets a set of basic requirements of the Ministry of Education are for the purpose of receiving subsidies to staff salaries and sometimes for nutrition supplies and learning materials.

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

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

Infant School - Government owned schools which operate under similar Ministry supervision as the basic schools.

Early Childhood Institution - the term used in the 2005 Early Childhood Act to describe a setting that provides developmentally appropriate care,

stimulation, education, and socialization, for children under the age of six years, including day care centers and basic schools.

Organization of the Study

The success of any research work depends on how it is orderly organized. This thesis is organized into five chapters. The thesis starts with chapter one which presents the introduction and provides a background to the study and then discusses key research issues such as statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the definition of concepts, profile of the study area as well as the organisation of the study chapters.

Chapter two is the literature review. The literature was based on early childhood education, the importance of early childhood education, models of early childhood education and empirical review. In chapter three, the research methods were outlined including the research design, sampling techniques, and procedures, population definition and instrumentation. It also describes the data sources and methods of data collection, ethical concerns and data handling procedures. Chapter four is the data analysis and discussion, and finally, in the last chapter, a summary of finding, conclusions, and recommendations are offered.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature is based on three themes; (a) conceptual review such as objectives of preschool education, quality kindergarten curriculum (b) theoretical such as maria Montessori, Reggio Emelia model, head start review and (c) empirical review.

Conceptual Review

Historical Perspectives of Pre-School Programme

Throughout the history of early education, there have been a number of philosophers, educators, and theorists who have observed young children. Friedrich Frobel, the 19th century German who created and named the kindergarten (German to children's garden). Children between the age of 3 and 6 spent their days working in identically laid out gardens, participating in especially composed singing, games, and interacting with materials designed to teach a series of specific skills. (Suzanne & Kristine: 2001) Frobel is generally considered the founder of early childhood education not only because he was the first to design a curriculum specifically for young children but because he introduced play as a major medium of instruction (Carol, 2000) s.

A second example, still in existence, is the curriculum developed by Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor who was inspired, in part, by Frobel's materials.

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Observing and working with the same age children, she focused on creating curricula that permitted youngsters to advance in their learning to the greatest extent possible. Her learning materials were near as prescribed and rigid as Frobel's, but Montessori also was dedicated to creating citizens for democracy and built a variety of choices into the curricula and the teaching methods (Bloch & Popkewitz, 2000).

Now a day's two approaches or a combination of both is being implemented as at the leading world kindergarten school methodology for teaching children. Kindergarten by and large is a product of 20th century, beginning from 1940 to mid1960's in which preschool education has become the subject of serious studies by scholars and researchers because this time research evidences and provocative literature on child development and early learning had motivated the community in general and policy makers in particular. This idea shows that better economic development and the advancement of human knowledge on the importance of early learning brought the need for the establishment and expansion of preschool education all over the world including our continent, Africa. However, the differences in economic development and educational status among the nations of the world created disparities in the development of preschool education (Gama, 2007).

Objectives of Pre-School Education

Education has continue to play a definite role in human history as a means of transmission of knowledge, skills, ideas, and values from generation to generation. That is why all societies that are found in different stages of

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development have established systematic methods of teaching their young children. These methods of teaching are imperative for children to understand their society, its traditions, and to equip them with tools for survival (Adams, 1993).

As stated by MOE (2002) the main aim of pre-primary education is the all-rounded development of children in order to prepare them for formal schooling. On the other hand Wasserman (1993) pointed out that the aim of the program can be achieved through meeting the following goals by participating in the kindergarten program: children will develop confidence in themselves and their ability to learn, demonstrate curiosity and the ability to focus their attention, acquire a level of communicative competence that is personally satisfying, acquire social skills and abilities which enable them to relate to other children and to adults and remains true to their individual natures, being free to develop to their own potentials.

Quality of Kindergarten Curriculum

According to Quality of Education in General (Adams, 1993), considerable consensus exists around the basic dimensions of quality education today. Quality education includes: Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender,

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health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace. Processes through which trained teachers to use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. As stated by (Grisay & Mahlck, 1991). The general concept of quality of education is made up of three interrelated dimensions. These are the quality of human and material resources available for teaching (inputs), the quality of teaching practices (process) and the quality of results (outputs and outcomes).

The quality of preschool education can be seen in many perspectives. For instance, according to information available on line, quality preschool education refers to the inclusion of the following experiences. These are: The availability of positive relationships between teachers and children. The classroom equipped with sufficient materials and toys, communication throughout the day, with mutual listening, talking/responding and encouragement to use reasoning and problem-solving, provision of materials and activities to promote understanding and acceptance of diversity, encouraging parents to involve in all aspects of the program small size groups qualified teachers and staff, and supervision and evaluation of all staff with professional growth.

Theoretical views on Early Childhood Education

Maria Montessori Model

The name itself comes from Maria Montessori, an Italian medical doctor who was influenced by Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi thinks that a teacher must have a

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special training combining both intellectuality and the ability to touch the hearts by feeling respect and sympathy for the children (Montessori, 1972). Montessori followed the ideas of Pestalozzi and she focused on the process of normal development to discover how human beings could reach their potential more fully than they did in traditional schools. Montessori worked with younger children before elementary schools and Montessori began her experiment in January 1907. She viewed her schools as labourites in which to study how children learn best (Lillard, 2005).

According to Montessori's philosophy, a child-sized environment offering beauty and order is the best for children's learning because it is cultivating and stimulating. In such an environment, children may choose their own work-activities that have meaning and purpose for them. In addition, there are times when carefully sequenced and structured materials (sensory materials) are introduced by the teacher to the child (Wortham, 2006). The Montessori curriculum is divided into motor education, sensory education, and language and intellectual education (Wortham, 2006).

Motor education: The Montessori classroom is designed in order to provide children's free movement during the day. Children's fine motor skills are enhanced by the sensory materials as well as the work in the area of practical life. In addition, as children learn to pour materials, sweep, polish shoes, they have the opportunity to foster both large and fine motor skills.

Sensory education: Manipulative and didactic materials are used for sensory education. The sensorial curriculum includes a large number of sets of

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materials that promote seriation, classification and conservation activities in a variety of media. The materials are sequenced according to difficulty with control of error being a primary objective.

Language and intellectual education:

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

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

Reggio Emilia Model

Reggio Emilia, a small city in industrial northern Italy, established what is now called "The Reggio Emilia approach" shortly after the Second World War when working parents helped to build new schools for their young children (New, 2000). Founded by Loris Malaguzzi, the early childhood schools of Reggio

Emilia, Italy, have captured the attention of educators from all over the world. Inspired by John Dewey's progressive education movement, Lev Vygotsky's belief in the connection between culture and development, and Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development developed his theory and philosophy of early childhood education from direct practice in schools for infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers (Thorton & Brunton, 2009).

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

Head Start Model

Head Start is a publicly funded program. Developed in the 1960s for intervention with at-risk minority and low-income children, it is a comprehensive program that addresses the educational, nutritional and social needs of such children. It can be associated with public school districts or conducted as a separate program through a community agency. These programs are the largest

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publicly funded educational programs for infants and toddlers (Early Head Start) and preschool children. They include health and medical screening and treatment, required parent participation and involvement, and comprehensive services to families. "Today there are Head Start programs in every state and territory, in rural and urban sectors, on American Indian reservations, and in migrant areas" (Essa, 2003, p. 24). From its inception in 1965, Head Start has sought to provide classroom-based and, most recently, home based comprehensive developmental services for children from low-income families.

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

High/Scope Model

The high scope is a cognitively oriented curriculum (Wortham, 2006) developed in order to serve 3 and 4 years-old children from poor neighbors in Ypsilanti, Michigan, in 1962 so it helps children to become independent thinkers and problem solvers (Peyton, 2005). However, through the four decades of working, the curriculum has evolved to the model that is used today. There are principles of the curriculum (Morrison, 2008, pp.101-102):

Active learning: Active learning is the most crucial way for children to make sense of their world because as they interact with the real world, as they have immediate first-hand experience, they are able to build their own understanding (Morrison, 2008).

Key experiences: Interacting with people, materials, and ideas through a creative and ongoing way helps children to enhance mentally, emotionally, socially and physically. Plan-do-review process: Children have right and time to plan their own activities, perform them and at the end, reflect on what they had done (Morrison, 2008).

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

Child-adult interaction: The adult is the supporter in High-Scope Preschool program. Positive interaction strategies such as focusing on children's strengths, sharing control with children, forming an authentic relationship with children are highly valued in High- Scope classrooms. In other words, when dealing with the every situation in the classroom, the teacher is the guide and supporter which creates a harmony in the classroom (Morrison, 2008).

Learning environment: Environment is significant in this model and it is arranged into different areas to foster children's different developmental levels.

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Many kinds of activities can be carried out in High-Scope classroom by the wide variety of materials (Morrison, 2008).

Daily routines: Active learning is also supported by daily routines. A consistent routine is important. Plan- to- review session, small group and large group times when teachers also engage in, is a crucial part of a typical High-Scope preschool classroom (Morrison, 2008).

Assessment: There is a special observation record used for assessing the children's progress; The High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) because observation is the major tool to understand children's development and learning. While observing and interacting with children, teachers also keep daily anecdotal records and planning sessions (Morrison, 2008). As early childhood curriculum models and guidelines were enhanced throughout time, countries' early education curriculum were also affected by the innovations and developments in the field accordingly. Ghana has also gone through many ways regarding early childhood curriculum.

The Concept of Early Childhood Education

The definition of the term early childhood education depends on the angle one picks it from. In terms of the child's life, early childhood education is considered as the period from birth to eight years of age (Miles & Browne, 2004). Grotewell and Burton (2008) also shared this definition as they elaborated it accordingly as the time between the zero and eight years of age. However, by school terms, early childhood education incorporates the group settings for infants through elementary school grade three (Miles & Browne, 2004). In other words,

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early childhood education is a special branch of education serving with children from infancy to elementary grade level of three (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). As definitions of these authorities imply, it is believe that early childhood education brings or exposes children (birth to eight) into the world. The significance of the early childhood education increased tremendously all over the world within the last twenty years. This situation is complementary with research results based on long term effects of early education to later life (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008)

The Importance of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education, within the last few decades, considered different fields (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005) such as developmental psychology, cultural psychology, childhood studies, cultural anthropology, history, and philosophy. This is because recent studies showed that babies and young children are born with the capacity to understand the world around them (Nutbrown, 2006). More so, childrens' brains are ready to learn when they come to the world. During this process; both the environment and genes take an important role which in turn, builds the brain (Levitt, 2008). Considering what had been said so far by authorities in respect to childhood education, it can be asserted that children are being perceived as competent learners rather than empty slates. This has, therefore, brought changes in the way of perceiving children or early childhood education. The readiness of children to learn even when they are just born triggered the necessity of early childhood education both for the individual child and for the society as a whole.

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

Early childhood education also becomes more beneficial especially, for the children coming from the low socio-economic background. Barnett (1995) identified benefits of being exposed to early education for children coming from low-income families as cognitive growth and school readiness. Besides children from the low socioeconomic background, good quality of early childhood education provides early reading and math skills to children from high and middle socioeconomic status. Early education cultivates children in terms of socialization rather than purely academic enhancement such as math and reading. Webb (2003) elaborated that children learn cooperation through education in child care centers and such skills help them to obey rules and stay safe in the society. Regarding socialization, parents also share the same perspective. In the study of Seng (1994), it was revealed that one of the biggest reasons for parents sending children to early childhood education centre is to get them socialized. In fact, in a longitudinal study, Kagıtcibasi (1991) explained that children who received early childhood education became emotionally and socially more competent adults compared to the ones who did not receive early education.

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

It is however imperative for the Government of Ghana to start to pay particular attention to the early childhood education since it has been proved that good quality of early education has long lasting effects on the children's later life and very productive for the society. To affirm this idea, Oppenheim and MacGregor (2002) established that children who receive early education are less likely to involve in crime and more likely to complete their high school education and get a college education. Other studies such as Chicago Longitudinal study and the Cost, Quality and Child outcome study indicated that getting high-quality early childhood education makes children become successful students and citizens in their later lives (Reynolds & Ou, 2004).   On the other hand, according to the World Bank Report (2005), between 0-6 years of age, each 1 dollar invested on children was returned to a fold of 7.6 dollars in the future as a result of the productivity gained through early childhood education. Parallel to this study, Everingham, Karoly, and Kilbourne (1997) indicated that the rate of the return of the investment in people in early childhood period is higher compared to investment in other periods of human life.

In addition, research results support that through early childhood education, children are exposed to good quality experience, which allows the

connections in their brains to develop and this is of immense importance to the society. Such results opened the way to start education of brains as early as possible. In one of the studies conducted by Knudson (2004), it was elaborated that developmental flexibility of brain wiring or its ability to change due to influences of experience were affected by both genes and early environmental factors. So, the necessity occurs for educators, policy makers, and others in the society helping children to construct their initial brain architecture by providing education for them in their early ages. Findings of the longitudinal and cross sectional studies (Kagitcibasi 1991; Barnett, 1995; Openheim & MacGregor, 2002; Reynolds & Ou, 2004) related the benefits of early childhood education provided logical reasons to emphasize on early education for a better society. Besides, in the last twenty years, sociocultural changes such as getting into the information age and changes in the world order through globalization triggered early childhood education to be a concern of many societies.

Globalization and Early Childhood Education

Globalization has reshaped many issues such as international relations, population growth, development, human rights, the environment, labour, health care and poverty. It also affected and reshaped the education as well (Grant &Grant, 2007; Koggel, 2003). Beginning from early childhood education to college education, we may see the influences of globalization. Effect of globalization cut across all countries. After 1985, it have seen more of globalization as we have entered into an information age by the mass spread of computers and internet all around the world. This necessitated the training of

people who have skills in several foreign languages, and able to produce and make use of technology. In the light of this, countries started to reshape their curriculums in all levels of education (from early childhood to college) towards cultivating those types of people (Dulger, 2000). As this cultivation process starts from the first level which is early education, the countries are looking for the best curriculum model in early childhood education.

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

Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Self-Perceptions

More recent researches have pointed to the fact that a teacher's belief system will determine the quality of education in the classroom (Garvis, 2011; Garvis, Twigg & Pendergast, 2011). According to Fang (1996), the teachers' beliefs or philosophy affect teaching and learning. Research also suggests that there is a strong relationship between the teacher's thoughts and actions in understanding teacher effectiveness (Brophy & Good, 1974; Edwards, 2003; Leung, 2012).

Kagan (1992) viewed teachers' beliefs as their "assumptions about their students, classrooms, and academic materials to be taught." (p. 65). Teachers' beliefs are therefore what teachers say and do in the classroom based on their thinking about educational practices. This point is supported by Lockhart (1998) who posited that a teacher's action is reflective of what they know and believe and this knowledge and belief become the philosophical framework which guide their teaching methodology.

Beliefs also emerge from one's past and present experiences and socialization or cultural models that were presented (Raths, 2001). The development of these beliefs is based on previous experiences in the teachers' life and has a bearing on how they relate to the children in their classroom (Lockhart, 1998). This point is especially critical in light of the cultural-historical legacy of early childhood education in Jamaica and the teacher pedagogy that is still evident today. This brings me to the point of self-perception, especially as it relates to the professional self. How one views self has an impact on one's behavior. According to Bem's (1972) Self-Perception theory,

Individuals come to *'know'* their own attitudes, emotions,

and other internal states partially by inferring them from

Observations of their own overt behavior and/or

Circumstances in which this behavior occurs. (p. 2).

In other words, an individual's self-perception is formed implicitly by meanings derived from events and interactions in the environment. Teachers are no different from their perceptions and beliefs influence their actions (Kagan,

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1992; Borg, 2001). They concluded that whether teachers were confident or unsure of their abilities, this perception is reflected in their classroom practices. In fact, Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt, (2000), concluded from their study of Netherland secondary school teachers' perception of their professional identity, that self-perception is the schema from which teachers derive their professional identity as experts in subject matter, pedagogy, and didactic teaching.

This has similar implications for EC classroom practice. The early childhood teacher's personal and professional experiences are intertwined and are linked to their personal and professional identity (Court, Merav & Ornan, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Court, et al. (2009), described the professional self as "a product of the interaction between the teachers' personal experiences and the social, cultural and institutional environment within which they work on a daily basis." (p. 208). In their study of ten Israeli teachers' reasons for choosing the teaching profession and their perceptions of their roles as teachers, the researchers drew a relationship between the teachers' expressed beliefs about early childhood education and their roles as teachers. According to Court et al., these teachers perceived themselves to be 'nurturers', and "perceived their work as allowing for an intensive relationship with children, contributing to their moral, social and cognitive development…" (pp. 213-214).

However, Garvis, Fluckiger, and Twigg (2012), from their study on pre-service teachers' beliefs and perceptions, alluded to the fact that this may be an "idealized or romanticized view of early childhood education…" (p. 101). While the participants in their study also perceived teaching in a positive, almost idyllic

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

In the same manner, teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions may also determine the nature of the interactions that occur between them and the children they teach (Lim & Torr, 2007). According to Miller and Smith (2004), teachers' beliefs have an influence on their nature of interaction with, and the resources and structure that they provide to children. Additionally, their beliefs also unconsciously affect the attitudes they convey to children (Miller & Smith, 2004). The teacher's attitude and behavior will have an impact on the young child's emotional well-being and positive sense of self, and so the quality of teacher's interaction and relationship with the child are very important (Davies, 2008). Thus the teacher's beliefs shape his/her approach to teaching and influence instructional strategies and performance in the classroom as these beliefs help to define their professional identity (Cheng et al., 2009; Tsai & Chuang, 2005).

Early childhood education in Jamaica is at a critical juncture and as such its services are evolving and changing to meet global standards. The teacher is crucial in this evolution of providing high-quality services as these services are based on a secure relationship between the children and the teacher (Sims, 2010). This secure relationship will also impact on effective pedagogy because, according to Bowman, Donovan and Burn (2001), young children depend on the adults with whom they interact and in many instances, it is their classroom teacher. Brophy and Good (1974) described teachers as socializing agents who have a significant influence on students' behavior as they transmit powerful interpretations of values and expectations. However as Court, Meray and Ornan (2009) found in their study, early childhood teachers' self-perception as professionals are subjected to constant testing and shaping by the environment within which they work and as such, acknowledgement and recognition by significant others, including parents, will have a direct positive effect on the teachers' self-esteem..

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in Early Childhood Education

In this section, I discuss the guiding principles of (DAP) and its impact on early childhood education and reform. Because DAP operates as a foundation for teaching among the five early childhood teachers who took part in the study, I will also discuss the contentious issue of what constitutes "Appropriate" and conclude with highlighting research on early childhood teachers' beliefs about DAP. As mentioned in the previous section, research has led to different ways of looking at children's development in a holistic way.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices presented at the NAEYC Conference in 1987. DAP is defined as "the outcome of a process of teacher decision making that draws on at least three, critical interrelated bodies of knowledge: (a) what teachers know about how children develop and learn; (b) what teachers know about the individual children in their group; and (c) knowledge of the social and cultural context in which those children live and learn". (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). DAP also serves two major purposes namely, a) to enhance the quality of early childhood experiences of young children by using developmentally appropriate activities, materials and having developmentally appropriate expectations in early childhood programmes and b) to balance academic instruction in early childhood programmes with other socio-emotional and physical development aspects (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Additionally, teachers need to meet the children where they are. This involves observing children's engagement with materials, activities, and planning curriculum and adapting teaching strategies based on observation; assessing what children already know and their interests, and keeping teaching goals in mind. (Bredekamp, 2011). So in essence, developmentally appropriate practice is teaching that is in keeping with a child's age, experiences, abilities, and interests, that seeks to help the child reach challenging yet achievable goals (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009). Built on a constructivist platform, and informed by the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (Schunk, 2000), this approach also emphasizes the role of play as a crucial vehicle for children to learn the

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language and develop social, physical and problem-solving skills. Topcu (2011) supports this point by claiming that "Teachers whose epistemological beliefs are consistent with a constructivist approach pay more attention to student discussion, interaction, and problem-solving..." (p. 100), as opposed to teachers who use traditional approaches. Therefore the use of physical punishment, prolonged seatwork, and rote-learning without hands-on experiences would be considered developmentally inappropriate practices and not to be encouraged in the classroom. DAP soon, therefore, became the 'best practices' model and guiding principle for early childhood education (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009).

In 2009, NAEYC revised its policy statement based on new research and concerns from experienced practitioners regarding the changing contexts in which early childhood educations occurs (Bredekamp, 2011; NAEYC, 2009). These contextual concerns included issues such as learning expectations, curriculum, classroom practices and decision-making, the role of culture and language, and including children with special needs. The statement was revised to reflect these ongoing concerns and acted as a guideline for teaching children from birth to 8 years. NAEYC also recommended practices based on age groups, namely, infants and toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarten and early primary grades (Bredekamp, 2011; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009).

File (2012) still challenged some of these notions of the recently revised edition of DAP. She argued that the philosophical underpinnings of DAP still had strong ties to traditional child development theories with child development

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"framed as universal and singular" (p. 34). She added that the DAP statements "provided little room for philosophy and values" (p. 34) and may not sufficiently contribute to curriculum decisions. She also bemoans the fact that the voices of children's families have been largely silent in the professional discourse and suggests that "Children's families and communities provide an understanding of desirable traits and skills" (p. 39) and so should shape what should be part of the curriculum. Blaise and Ryan (2012) support this view and concluded that the early childhood curriculum shares a complex yet inter-relationship with not only content and methodology that it contains, but a socio-cultural relationship with the people it serves.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

NAEYC's (2012) DAP guidelines also emphasized the importance of play. Their policy statement on play states that "Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as promoting language, cognition, and social competence…" (p. 2). Smidt (2011), views play as a way of being able to use hands-on or real or life-like situations to answer questions that arise in children's heads as they constantly seek to make sense of their lives, experiences, and feelings. (p. 3). She went further to opine about the appropriateness of play by stating that play is not just for pleasure but can be "cognitively challenging, requiring the child to use memory, signs, and symbols, cultural tools including language, social skills like negotiation and planning and sharing, prediction. Of such import is play that it continues to be taken seriously by academic researchers and policy-makers (Wood & Attifield, 2005).

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In defining play, Fleer (2012) posits two theories of play namely, developmental/maturational, where the play is internally driven, and a cultural-historical perspective which suggests that "rules of everyday life and the child's experiences of everyday practice shape how the play is enacted" (p. 26). Wood and Attifield (2005) however believed that play cannot be defined or categorized as it is context-dependent and the contexts vary (p. 5). As the contexts vary, so do the types of play. There are different types of play such as role-play, imaginative play, sociodramatic play, heuristic play, constructive play, fantasy play, free-flow play, structured play, and rough-and-tumble play, all resulting in a variety of learning and developmental outcomes (Wood & Attifield, 2005, p. 5).

There are many benefits of play to academic learning (Bennett, Wood & Rogers, 1997; Fleer, 2010; Sherwood, 2010). However, the role of the teacher is important in providing meaningful learning experiences for children. It is therefore important for teachers to observe and assess children while they are engaged in play activities. Drake (2009) claimed that observing children is vital to understanding children's interests and learning needs and is a significant feature of the 'teaching' role (p. 186). This has implications for DAP. One of the challenges faced by Ghana n EC teachers is how to make learning relevant to the children and connect subject matter knowledge with students' everyday lives and existing knowledge (Fleer, 2010; Smidt, 2011). Both researchers endorse the fact that children benefit most when play and learning are relevant.

Another implication or challenge is the importance of teachers interacting and participating with the children during play. The teacher, although the observer

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should not just be a spectator, a participant taking care to give the children ownership of what they are doing. If the play is a natural response to the environment (Moyles, 2001), then the teacher may miss a great teaching moment by not participating in play activities. Unfortunately, traditionally, many Ghana EC teachers view their roles as 'supervisor' of children's play activities.

What Constitutes 'Appropriate' and 'Inappropriate' Practices

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

But what constitutes appropriate practices? Bredekamp (2011) pointed out that the term appropriate is a culturally laden term (p. 90) and continues to provoke controversy. She further argues that to be developmentally appropriate, teaching practices must be effective, in that they must contribute to the child's ongoing development and learning (p. 73). In other words, if the child is not learning and progressing towards important learning outcomes, then the practices and experiences are developmentally inappropriate. Being responsive to children's individual development and varying culture is deemed appropriate.

As such, according to Bredekamp, early childhood teachers need to be intentional in everything they do (p. 73). Intentional teaching and making purposeful decisions are important facets of DAP and go hand in hand with developmentally appropriate practice. Bredekamp (2011) posits that in DAP,

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"teachers' intentionality undergirds the entire program and all of the experiences provided." (p. 73). This requires the early childhood teacher to carefully organize the physical environment, select and arrange materials to promote active engagement and support children's learning and developmental progress. These decisions are made as a result of careful advance consideration and planning, based on learning experiences, curriculum planning and considering the social and cultural contexts in which the children live (Bredekamp, 2011). Bredekamp further added that intentional teachers acknowledge that play is developmentally appropriate and therefore promotes play so that it benefits the children's development as far as possible.

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

As such, DAP guidelines have become one of the leading theoretical perspectives that have helped to shape the guiding principles of the new Ghana n early childhood curriculum (Davies, 2008) and was the basis of its conceptual framework. As mentioned earlier, much of the curriculum surrounds to a large

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

Early Childhood Teacher Beliefs about DAP and Classroom Practices

According to Bredekamp (2011), DAP has a history of well-grounded research about children's learning and development and provides scientifically-based guidance for early childhood teachers (p. 89). These research studies also form the basis for NAEYC's work on DAP (Bredekamp, 2011). Since the late 1980s there has a been a growing body of research especially out of the United States, that supports the effectiveness of DAP in children's learning, (Bredekamp, 1987; Burts et.al., 1990, 1993; Bryant, Clifford & Peisner, 1991; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts & Hernandez, 1991; Charlesworth, Burts & Hart, 1994; Buchanan, Burts and Pellar, 1998; Huffman and Speer, 2000; Hart, Yang, Charlesworth and Burts, 2003).

The study by Hart, et al., (2003) was significant as it revealed there was a negative correlation between developmentally inappropriate practices and student outcome. The study concluded that regardless of children's socioeconomic status, race or gender, they were more likely to experience more stress and attendant behavior problems. They were also more like to lag behind in mathematics and reading achievement compared to their peers from DAP classrooms. This study was corroborated by a study conducted nearly a decade earlier by Marcon (1992).

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In that study, Marcon concluded that children who experienced child-initiated DAP, had better language, mathematics and science skills compared to children who experienced more teacher-directed instruction. The study also concluded that children in DAP classrooms had better social skills and work habits and possessed a stronger self-esteem, compared to children coming from developmentally inappropriate classrooms (Marcon, 1992). Research from Head Start, a poster child for DAP, and the use of the High Scope (2007) DAP approach, also supported positive correlations between DAP and children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Bierman, Domitrovich, Nix, Guest, Welsh, Greenberg, Blair, Nelson and Gill, 2008). The Head Start program utilizes 'hands-on' lessons and activities and specific teaching activities that promote the development of children's socio-emotional, language and emergent literacy skills (Bredekamp, 2011).

However, the successful implementation of DAP relies heavily on the early childhood teachers' beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning (Vartuli, 2005; Parker and Neuharth-Pritchett, 2006; Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb, and Gheith, 2010). According to Chi-hung Leung (2012) that "teachers are an important component of high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs." (p. 39) and as such, they have an impact on student outcomes.

There is much debate regarding the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices. Parker and Neuharth-Pritchett (2006) pointed to the gap that exists between teacher beliefs and practices by arguing that "there is often a discrepancy

between what the research indicates and the philosophies of early childhood educators, which tend to be developmentally appropriate in nature, and their actual teaching practices, which tend to be developmentally inappropriate for young children" (p. 65). Like Kim (2011), I argue regarding this relationship within two categories, as follows: a) the relationship that exists between teachers' stated beliefs about DAP and observed practice and b) the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs and reported practice (p. 12). While DAP assumes a universal view of teaching practice (Kilderry, 2012), we must not begin to think that the relationship that exists between beliefs and practice can be measured objectively in trying to determine whether a teacher is using appropriate or inappropriate practices (Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb, and Gheith, 2010; Kilderry, 2012). I must point out however, that my debate is framed within the context of the role of culture and what is considered developmentally appropriate practices as this has significance to my study. As such, I will be drawing on research from countries outside the United States which, although embracing the overarching principles of DAP, the findings showed varying beliefs when it came to implementation.

Developmentally Inappropriate Practices or Culture-Based Beliefs and Practices?

Canella and Viruru (2004) posited that ECE has been organized and justified around the principles of DAP and has failed to recognize the diversity of children and their families in a global context (p. vii). Several studies about early childhood teacher beliefs and practices pertaining to DAP have been conducted in

different parts of the world (Doliopoulou, 1996; Chen; 1997; Edwards, 2003; Kim, Kim & Maslak, 2005; McMullen, Elicker, Goetze, Huang, Lee, Mathers, Wen and Yang, 2006; Hedge and Cassidy, 2009; Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb and Gheith, 2010; Lee, 2010; Walsh, McGuinness, Sproule and Trew, 2010; Kim, 2011; Leung, 2012). These studies pointed to the fact that although early childhood teachers believed in the principles of DAP there are contextual barriers to implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

Early Childhood Practices and Challenges in Ghana

In a post-modern world, the concept of childhood has made a significant shift in meaning as adults and children share very much the same world (Mook, 2007; Janzen, 2008). In this technologically rich, information saturated and sometimes chaotic world, 21st-century young children are expected to display competence in technology, creativity, and innovation. They also are expected to adapt to early formal schooling, while coping with changes in family structure and dynamics and the attendant social issues that become a part of their lived experiences (Elkind, 1998). However, by virtue of being children, they continue to have social, emotional and intellectual needs that must be met by the adults around them. It has been well documented that children's early exposure to quality learning environments that are developmentally appropriate will contribute to their cognitive, academic and socioemotional outcomes (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). It is within this context that investing in early childhood education has become particularly significant, especially as post-independent

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Ghana seeks to bring about desired changes in the delivery of early childhood education services.

The early childhood period is divided into two stages namely: from birth to three years, and from three to six years. Like many countries around the world, the early childhood care and education system in Ghana was divided into two components, namely day-care or nursery (which accommodates infants 0-3 yrs.) and basic/infant schools (pre-schools which accommodate children 4-6). Day-care centers are full-time programs provided to working parents who need custodial care for their children. Basic schools are community-based sponsored institutions and exist mainly as 'recognized' and 'unrecognized 'institutions. Recognized basic schools receive financial assistance from the Government in the form of subsidies to offset teachers' salary, meals for the students, furniture and appliance and building grants. Unrecognized basic schools (often operated by the Church or private individuals) on the other hand receive no financial assistance at all from the Government and have to rely on fees charged to parents to offset teacher salary and other expenses. Infant schools are operated by the Ministry of Education and some are attached to Primary and Primary/All Age, schools and are referred to as Infant Departments. Kindergartens are often found in privately-owned preparatory schools. All these settings provide children with readiness skills for formal schooling in Grade One. Presently there are approximately 2,661 early childhood institutions in Ghana with 140 being Government operated and 135 being Kindergarten. Basic schools account for the remaining figure (M.O.E., 2013). Nearly half of the total number of EC institutions are classified as

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'recognized', while approximately 7% are considered 'unrecognized' (Jones, Brown & Brown, 2011).

The primary cause for concern, however, remained the delivery of early childhood education and development programs for young children. According to The United Nations World Data on Education for Ghana (2010/2011), this is due to several factors. These factors include the disparity between the quality of teachers in preparatory and government infant schools and infant departments versus those who in community basic schools. Teachers in basic schools are usually minimally trained or not formally trained unlike their counterparts in government-run institutions. Presently, the Ministry of Education is placing one trained teacher in recognized basic schools with a minimum enrollment of one hundred children. This is woefully inadequate and compromises the quality of curriculum delivery and care provided to the children (Ho, 2008).

As discussed earlier, ECE in the Caribbean evolved as a response to a need to provide custodial services to working mothers and as such, operated outside of government action for many years (Charles & Williams, 2006; Williams & Charles, 2008). Many of the facilities, especially in Ghana were unsupervised and were primarily owned by non-government organizations. The informality of the early childhood sector led to the low levels of training among the caregivers. Teachers in these facilities had a little theoretical understanding of child development and displayed a lack of awareness of appropriate early childhood pedagogical strategies (Davies, 1997; Charles & Williams, 2006). Many of these teachers had no experience and were mainly Sunday school

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teachers or other paraprofessionals with poor basic education and who had little or no teacher training (Charles & Williams, 2006). Much of my early childhood years were spent sitting in front of many of these teachers. This practice continued for quite a while and became a common feature within the Caribbean.

The field expanded during the 1980s with greater focus being placed on teacher training to equip teachers with the acquisition of skills needed to teach at this level as prior this, most of the teachers were being trained primarily through participation in-service training (Davies, 1997). Additionally, the University of the West (U.W.I.) and some Teachers' Colleges in Ghana and Trinidad selectively offered undergraduate degree programs. During the 1990s, the sector expanded by way of increased subventions from the Government as well as the establishment of pre-school units in primary schools. Despite this, the level of training within the region has remained low (Charles &Williams, 2006).

Historically, training for basic school teachers in Ghana took the format of workshop-based training that did not lead to certification. With the exception of Barbados where a significant number of teachers possess undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in early childhood education, employment in most day-care centers in the Caribbean do not require post-secondary qualifications to become part of the support staff. The method of delivering educational content was primarily by rote learning, delivered by mostly untrained teachers. These teachers (many who came out of 'Sunday School') were inexperienced and lacked in-depth knowledge of essential child development and education principles and practices (Davies, 2008).

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

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

Challenges of Implementing ECE Educational Practices

Stenhouse (2009) defines curriculum implementation as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same child to function effectively in a society. Putting the curriculum into operation requires an implementing agent. Stenhouse (2009) identifies the teacher as the agent in the curriculum implementation process. She argues that implementation is the manner in which

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the teacher selects and mixes the various aspects of knowledge contained in a curriculum document or syllabus. Implementation takes place when the teacher-constructed syllabus, the teacher's personality, the teaching materials and the teaching environment interact with the learner (Stenhouse, 2009).

Curriculum implementation, therefore, refers to how the planned or officially designed course of study is translated by the teacher into syllabuses, schemes of work and lessons to be delivered to students. Despite the actual and potential advantages of kindergarten education, some problems remain to be overcome before it promise can be fully realized. Regarding challenges of implementing kindergarten curriculum Snow (2003) and Bredekamp et al. (1992) mentioned that child based, family-based and neighborhood, community and school-based problems are basic problems to implement kindergarten curriculum as planned.

Child based: Includes age of children's severe cognitive deficiencies, hearing impairment, early language impairment, and attention deficit/Hyperactivity disorder

Family based : Includes family history of education, home literacy environment (the ability to value placed on education, literacy, press for achievement, availability and instrumental use of reading, playing, technological materials and reading with children), opportunities for verbal interaction, home language, socioeconomic status and very limited or total absence of parents involvement to the school.

Neighborhood, community, and school-based: Also includes the practice for factors such as the neighborhood where the family lives, the cultural and economic community of which the family is a part, and the school the child attends, teacher qualification, curriculum and center facilities, time factor, availability of equipment, pedagogical factors etc.

Role and Responsibility of Pre-School Teachers

Teaching characteristically is a moral enterprise. The teacher, whether he/she admits it or not, is out to make the world a better place and its inhabitants' better people. Sykes and Turner (1980) noted that teachers are constantly observing the behavior and activities of their pupils as a basis for action or intervention to maintain the smooth running of their class. Teachers play a vital role in the development of children. What children learn and experience during their early years can shape their views of themselves and the world and can affect their later success or failure in school, work, and their personal lives. Teaching practices for young children include opportunities for choice, hands-on learning, promotion of collaboration between children, use of a variety of teaching strategies, individualization, and self-regulation (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Buchanan et al., 1998). Goldstein found in a qualitative study that kindergarten teachers could address content standards in a developmentally appropriate manner by "recognizing and building on the curricular stability in kindergarten, employing instructional approaches that accommodate the children's developmental needs, setting limits, acquiescing to demands for developmentally inappropriate practices and materials, engaging in proactive education and

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outreach, accepting additional responsibilities, and making concessions" (Dosen, 1994. p.51). Teachers also take active roles in promoting children's thinking and the acquisition of concepts and skills. These roles range from asking a well-timed question that provokes further reflection or investigation to show children how to use a new tool or procedure (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997).

To help them reach their maximum levels, teachers can encourage children to tackle tasks that challenge them and that are slightly beyond their skill levels. Teachers can structure their experiences with children and note how children use their assistance as well as what hints and cues are most helpful. Keeping anecdotal records, art portfolios, and checklists are all useful means of analyzing children's progress within the ZPD. When a child reaches the maximal level of the ZPD, the teacher plans what he or she will do to help the child move forward. The upper level of the ZPD now becomes the lower level, and the whole process begins again (Rosemary, 2003). In order to make an informed decision about how to make meaningful differences while providing high-quality care and education, teachers need knowledge of child development, learning, and best practices as well as tools for making sense of this vast array of information. (Terri, 2001) Kindergarten teachers perform a complex and multidimensional role. They are responsible for implementing a program that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, integrated, developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive, and that promotes positive outcomes for all children.

1. Kindergarten teachers need to be aware of the curriculum expectations

for Grade 1 and later primary grades. Knowledge of the literacy and numeracy continue, in particular, is critical for teachers as they lay the foundation for learning.

2. Teachers should use reflective practice, planned observation, and a range of assessment strategies to identify the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children in order to provide instruction that is appropriate for each child

3. Teachers should promote integrated learning and allow children to handle, explore, and experiment with a variety of materials that are familiar to them or that they can connect to everyday life.

4. Teachers should also be a balance between teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities

5. Teachers should also use their knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which the children live to develop and provide learning experiences that are meaningful, relevant, and respectful.

Working with children brings with it particular responsibilities, as children look to teachers as their role models for behavior and attitudes towards others. Teachers should find out their own behavior and/or attitudes may come under scrutiny or question. This does not infringe on the teacher's rights as a unique individual, but is a recognition of the particular sensitivity or working with children and the power of teachers in their lives. It means it is necessary to ensure high standards of professional behavior within early years work settings (Dosen, 1994).

Pre-school teachers' qualification

Teachers' qualification is a critical issue for effective utilization of kindergarten education they should internalize lots of methods of teaching. These qualities can be achieved through adequate training and experience. The courses given in kindergarten have a complex nature that requires a sound knowledge and skill on the parts of teachers. Andrew (1970) stressed child development is an essential subject of study for everyone who works with young children. People who work with children need to be carefully trained as well as informed about how children develop and learn because the child is crucial in the program of pre-school education.

Teachers and other personnel need an opportunity to continue to develop professionally and personally through in-service training. Their pre- service preparation provided an opportunity to begin the process of developing the foundation for professional service. In another way their lack of pre-service formal preparation forced them to practice the profession depends on experience (Beaty, 1993) in both cases in-service training is necessary for the professional development of personnel. The training duration of kindergarten teachers varies from country to country based on the nature of the program offered. The survey study made by UNESCO on 67 United Nations member countries shows that most of them offered courses that last for two years. However, the study showed that in some countries there were no specified certification records other than completion of the primary or secondary level (UNESCO, 1985). With regard to

the trends in Ghana, kindergarten teachers attend one-year pre-service training after completing grade ten.

Parents Participation and Responsibilities in Pre-School Education

Parental involvement has been found to be an important predictor of educational achievement in the general population. Parents can be involved by participating in the day-to-day activities of the program or through involvement in the management of the center. Active parent involvement in the child's kindergarten years will have positive benefits for both child and family.

Parents are one of the major determining factor and contributors to the development of an integrated personality of their children. Children can be contributing citizens of a country mainly if parents provide them the required attention to their progress. Lilley (2007) expression reflects that parents encouragement love, understanding and follow up of the children daily activity have more important for children further growth. Parents who share ideas and feelings with teachers accommodate more guidance to the teachers about their children so that it would help the teachers to adjust their lessons. A working parent can also maintain a positive relationship with the teacher and an understanding of how the school operates by participating on the parent committee, calling and speaking with the teacher and by attending the annual general meetings. Parents make judgments about school quality when investing in their children's education. They expect schooling to help their children develop creative thinking and acquire the skills, values, and attitudes necessary for them to lead productive lives and become responsible citizens (Dufera, 2010).

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Terri (2009) stated that children perform better in school if their parents are involved in their education. Parents can do many things to support and be involved in their child's learning – for example, they can provide encouragement and express interest in their child's education. Parents can expect that teachers will be culturally aware and sensitive to the school-community relationship and that teachers will support parental involvement in school life. It also informs parents about what their children are learning and why learning is important. This awareness will further enable parents to communicate with teachers, to offer relevant information, and to ask questions about their child's progress. Knowledge of their child and awareness of the teacher's observations will also help parents to interpret the assessment of their child's learning and to work with the teacher to improve and facilitate their child's progress. Participating in parent conferences, working on the school council, talking with their child about life at school, and reading with their child are some of the many ways in which parents can take an active part in their child's education. Various evidence has shown that partnerships that recognize the rightful role and responsibility of parents can provide an opportunity to have a say on decision making in various aspect of the kindergarten activities. Parents can serve in policy council, on sub-committees, and play a supportive role in fund raising and various issues related to children's learning. An official recognition of the role of parents in the children's education, with respect to their involvement in assessment, representation in governing bodies and access to information needs to be emphasized. Sided by side, with an increase in the involvement of parents with their children's education, the school

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needs to introduce the concept of accountability of school to parents (Curtis, 1998).

The role of Government In Pre-School Education

In Ghana, the government policy education of is help build a strong foundation for pre-school. To achieve this, the government has a critical role in policy development, curriculum design, standard setting, supervision, etc. Therefore, the government will encourage the private sector, NGOs, and communities (MOE, 2002).

Empirical Review

In the work of Ntumi (2016) who conducted a study to find out challenges pre-school teachers face in the implementation of the early childhood curriculum in the Cape Coast Metropolis, his studies revealed that teachers, teaching and learning materials are the main factors that influence the implementation of the early childhood curriculum. Ntumi's findings further show that pre-school teachers are faced with a lot of challenges in implementing the early childhood curriculum. A notable one among them is that most pre-school teachers do not understand the early childhood curriculum, preschool teachers do not have enough teaching and learning materials to help them implement the early childhood curriculum, parents do not involve themselves in their wards education, therefore, it makes it difficult for pre-schools to do the work alone.

Also, in a study conducted by Şıvgın (2005), early childhood teachers' views regarding the curriculum being implemented were gathered. The data were collected from early childhood teachers in Ordu city and their views categorized

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into four areas: objectives, education, and planning, parent involvement and evaluation. Regarding the objectives, it was detected that teachers did not have difficulties both on deciding the objectives to choose for an activity and choosing objectives from all areas of development appropriate for the age group of the children. Teachers, in terms of education and planning, proposed that there was a need for examples regarding which methods to use, what kinds of technological materials to be included in the daily plans. In addition, teachers elaborated that the examples of science and nature activities, music activities and reading- writing activities should be included in the curriculum. The type of activities was needed regarding parent involvement, on the other hand, were not described clearly according to the views of the teachers. They added that parent involvement should consider the involvement of both fathers' and mothers' education. Finally, teachers found evaluation forms designed for evaluating children inadequate. They suggested that there should be more examples of evaluation forms to understand the whole progress of the children. In other words, observation forms designed for children were not adequate so other evaluation techniques should be included in the curriculum.

Another study (İnal, Kandır, & Özbey, 2009) focused on the difficulties faced by preschool teachers in the planning and implementation of the curriculum. The study sample consisted of a total of 154 teachers working at private and government kindergartens in Ankara and Afyon. A questionnaire with two sections (demographic information of teachers and their views on educational contexts) was used to gather the data. In the study, it was aimed to analyze

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whether teachers' views on planning educational contexts varied with respect to their years of experience, educational background and type of the school they are working in. At the end of the study, it was found that the biggest difficulties teachers faced were in preparing annual plans and choosing objectives and goals for the whole year. Then, evaluation was the difficult part for the teachers since they were not sure what to write. On the other hand, choosing the kinds of teaching methods and techniques was a problem for the teachers. They had difficulty in designing the classroom and having a problem regarding the attitudes of parents towards early childhood education.

Despite stating the different types of problems faced by the preschool teachers, problems related to the kinds of activities such as science-math, reading, and writing, field trips, inclusion were not included in the questionnaire. Moreover, the reasons for such problems were not gathered from the firsthand resources that of the preschool teachers. In that sense, to be able to offer suggestions for a possible solution to the problems of preschool teachers, their ideas might also be included in the process.

Chapter Summary

The literature gives evident to conclude that DAP plays a significant role in pre-school teachers understanding of the best practices. All the reviewed empirical studies suggests that pre-school teachers knowledge affect their practices in the classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The previous chapter elaborated the theoretical framework, conceptual framework and empirical knowledge of the study. These contributions influenced not only the knowledge that was gained from the study but also guided the research process towards achieving its stated goal. In this chapter, the methodology and research design are delineated. This involves the underlying assumptions guiding the research process and detailing what was done and why. The scientific tools available for investigating social problems are as numerous as they are varied (May, 1993), though each design to research has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Research Design

Choosing an appropriate research approach is of paramount importance in any study (Creswell, 2009; Punch, 2009). Research can adopt a quantitative approach, a qualitative approach or a mixed method approach (Creswell, 2003; Creswell, 2009; Punch, 2009). The present study adopted the quantitative approach. Creswell (2009) described a quantitative approach as: ''a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedure'' (p4). The researcher therefore

employed descriptive survey for the study. This enabled the researcher to collect information on the issue under study. A descriptive survey deals with the collection of data so as to provide answers to the research questions or hypothesis. It presents issues as it is on the ground with less or no personal sentiments. That is to say, a descriptive study reports findings the way they exist. Typical descriptive studies are concerned with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, demographic information, conditions, and procedures. This was considered most appropriate for this research since the study seeks responses from the respondents with little or no biases. The descriptive survey basically makes inquiries into the status quo; it attempts to measure what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Aryetal, 1990).

The above notwithstanding, Creswell (2003) holds the view that descriptive survey makes it easy to identify attributes of a large population from small groups of individuals. Again, according to Cohen, Morrison, and Manion (2004), in a descriptive survey design, researchers gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared. Again, as recommended by Leedy and Omrod (2010), descriptive surveys are suitable for purposes of making generalizations from a sample to a population so that inferences could be made about the characteristics, opinions, attitudes and past experiences of the population.

The descriptive survey determines the nature and the situation as it exists at the time of the study. The descriptive survey design describes and interprets

events as they occur (Best & Kahn, 2003). It is versatile and practical, in that it identifies present conditions and points to the recent needs. It has the characteristic of analyzing the relationships, differences, and trends that contribute to teacher's knowledge, challenges in early childhood best practices at the pre-school level. By this, the researcher could find clues to answer the research questions or hypothesis which involve classroom related challenges (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008; Sarantakos, 2005).

The researcher employed the descriptive survey design because of its myriad of merits. For instance, the design provides a more accurate and meaningful picture of events and seeks to explain people's perception and behavior on the basis of data gathered at a particular time (Frankel & Wallen, 2000). This would allow for in-depth follow up questions and items that are unclear to be explained. More so, descriptive survey design has the potential to provide a lot of information from quite a large sample of respondents (Frankel & Wallen, 2000). It is as well considered as the best approach for the study because it is a relatively inexpensive way of getting information about people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. It assures manageability of the data collected. The descriptive survey is more economical since many subjects can be studied at the same time (Frankel & Wallen, 2000). Also, findings from the study can be generalized for the entire population.

Despite its advantages, the researcher acknowledges its disadvantages. Frankel and Wallen (2000) identified that the difficulties associated with descriptive surveys are that, it is difficult getting respondents to answer questions

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thoroughly and honestly. Again, there is a difficulty in getting a sufficient number of questionnaires completed for meaningful analysis to be made. Further, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2008) maintain that in the descriptive survey, there is the difficulty of ensuring that the questions answered are clear and not misleading. The reason is that survey results can vary greatly due to the exact wording of questions. As a result, it may produce unreliable results. There is also the difficulty of obtaining an adequate number of a questionnaire completed and returned for meaningful analysis to be made in some cases. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the descriptive survey design was found to be most appropriate and applicable for the study. It would help the researcher gather accurate data on teachers on variables underlying the study for concrete conclusions to be made.

Population

Population refers to the name of the large general group of many cases from which a researcher draws a sample and which is usually stated in theoretical terms (Neuman, 2003). Also, according to Polit and Hungler (1996), a study population reflects the entire aggregate of cases that meet designated set of criteria. The population of the study comprised the entire public basic school teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

According to Amedahe (2000), target population refers to the population that the researcher will ideally like to generalize. Ofosua- Adane (2013) also maintains that target population refers to the empirical units such as persons, objects, occurrences, etc used for the study. The target population is the group of interest to the researcher. It is the group from whom the researcher would like to

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generalize the results of the study. The target population of the study comprised three (3) selected circuits in the Cape Coast North Metropolis. Within the three circuits, the researcher targeted only teachers at the pre-school level.

Sampling Procedure

The sample size was 217 respondents from the various schools selected based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table with its appropriate confidence level and confidence interval on a population of 496.

Amedahe (2000) postulates that sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population.He further asserted that a sample denotes a small and representative proportion of the population. Sampling enables the researcher to study a relatively small number of units in place of the target population and to obtain data that is representative of the whole population (Sarantakos, 1998).

Three circuits were randomly selected from 6 circuits within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Again, seven schools were purposively selected from the ten (10) Basic Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis for the study. Simple random was used to make sure any circuit, school and individual stand the chance to be selected for the study. According to Yates, David and Daren(2008), in simple random sampling each individual is chosen randomly and entirely by chance, such that each individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process, and each subset of population individuals has the same probality of being chosen the sample in any study These schools were selected based on the fact that they are all public schools that are less restrictive to the study and at the same time teachers are readily available.

Purposively, preschools were selected for the study .The sampling procedure decision was based on the fact that the study was about early childhood developmental practices. I used purposively sampling because I was working with only preschool teachers and no other teachers from any educational category. According to Black (2010), purposive sampling technique in which a researcher relies on his or her own judgment when members of population to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs where elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgement of the researcher.

Data Collection Instrument

.   The instrument for data collection was a four-point Likert scaled questionnaire with their ppropiate numerical values.The scale of the questionaire was strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3,and negative ones were Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

The questionnaire was used to gather information from the preschool teachers in the cape coast metropolis. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2004), the questionnaire is widely used and is useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured and unstructured numerical data that can be administered without the researcher, May (2001) also maintains that the purpose of the survey questionnaire is to elicit information about the characteristics or opinions of the respondents. The questionnaire has the advantages of allowing the researcher to collect data from a group of respondents at the same and it is easy to score.

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The questionnaires were designed for teachers at the early childhood level. The questionnaires elicited demographic data, the perceived knowledge of teachers on early childhood best practices, teachers perceive the implementation of early childhood educational best practices, the perceived challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices and finally, how early childhood educational practices issues be addressed or managed. The items in the questionnaire were structured in such a way that they enabled the respondents to pick alternative answers against their choice of responses. Questionnaire for respondents comprised four segments respectively. Section 'A' elicited the bio-data of the respondents. Section 'B' covered the first research question which considered items regarding the perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on early childhood educational best practices. Section 'C' also looked at teachers perceives the implementation of early childhood educational best practices. Section 'D' took care of the perceived challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices and finally the last section considered how early childhood educational practices issues be addressed or managed.

Validation of Instrument

In quantitative research, validity rests on the foundation that a method, a test or a research tool is actually measuring what it is supposed to measure (Bryman, 2008). In a similar manner, Silverman (2009) stated that validity is a way of finding an accurate representation of the phenomena to which they refer to. Reliability is a measure of the consistency over time of instruments with

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groups of respondents and it deals with precision and accuracy (Cohen et al., 2000). Validity and reliability are essential features of any research (Creswell, 2003; Robson, 2002).

In order to enhance the validity of the study, the questionnaire was given to the researcher's supervisors and some other lecturers in the Department of Education and Psychology at the University of Cape Coast for expert judgment and assessment. This ensured both face and content related evidence to the items and examine whether the items would relate to the research questions and also comprehensively cover the details of the study. Based on their comments and suggestions the questionnaires were fine-tuned to achieve the purpose of the study.

Pilot Testing of the Instrument

A piloting of the instrument was carried out on 40 pre-school teachers in the Cape Coast South Metropolis. These schools were excluded from the study. The aim of the pilot testing was to improve the validity and reliability of the instruments. The respondents were given draft copies of the questionnaire. The participants of the pilot test were asked to complete the questionnaires and to provide comments or suggestions for revising any ambiguous items. They were also told to discuss frankly with the researcher any ambiguity, incoherence or incomprehension that they experience about any aspect of the draft questionnaire. The final instruments9+ for the study were produced after subsequent revisions in the wording of a few items. The reliability of the instrument was .075. This is within the normal range (Field, 2005).

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Education and Psychology. The letter spelled out the purpose of the study, the need for individual participation, anonymity as well as confidentially of respondents' response. After establishing the necessary contact with the head teachers of the selected schools, permission was sought for the administration of the instrument.

Again, the researcher trained two research assistants for the collection of the data. These assistants were trained on how to talk to respondents, how to explain certain difficult questions to respondents and other equally important information that enabled the researcher to have uniform information. The researcher together with the assistants explained the purpose of the study and procedure for responding to the questionnaire to respondents. In order to ensure clarity of how the questionnaire could be completed, the researcher together with the assistants again administered the questionnaire themselves respondents personally during regular school time. The researcher and assistants used (3) three weeks to distribute and collect the answered questionnaires in March, 2017.

Data Processing and Analysis

The research data collected was very extensive and was analyzed using quantitative methods. Patton (1990) notes, "the analysis of the empirical data aims to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals" (p. 371). The field data was collated, sifted

through and edited in order to address questions that have been answered partially or not answered. For effective statistical presentation and analysis, the questionnaires were serially numbered to facilitate easy identification. It is necessary to observe this precaution to ensure quick detection of tiny sources of errors when they occur in the tabulation of the data. Responses to the various items in the questionnaires were then be added, tabulated and statistically analyzed.

After editing and coding, the data was entered into the computer using the Statistical Product and service solution (SPSS Version 22.0) software. Before performing the desired data transformation, the data was cleaned by running consistency checks on every variable. Corrections were made after verification from the questionnaires.

For research question one, two three and four descriptive statistics were used to analysed the data to describe simple characteristics and research variables. Frequencies and percentages were used for categorical and nominal data and means standard deviations were used for interval or ration data.

Data from the teachers was analyzed based on the research questions as follows.

Ethical Consideration

Punch (2008) was of the opinion that researchers should be mindful of ethical issues especially in social research because it is concerned with data about people. Consideration for moral issues and respect for participants is essential in social research. Hence, in this research, several ethical issues were taken into

consideration. The research addressed all ethical concerns which include informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

One of the issues involved in this research was informed consent. It affords prospective participants the opportunity to accept or decline to engage in the research. It describes the need for participants to understand the aims, objectives and potential harm that such involvement may have on them (Seidman, 2006). It also spells out that they have the right to withdraw even after consent has been given; this is in line with Cohen et al (2000) and Mertens, (2010), who stated that informed consent arises from the participant's right to freedom. In this study, the purpose of the study was carefully reviewed with each participant before they were involved in the research.

The anonymity of study respondents was also highly taken into consideration in the present study. Oliver (2010) pointed out that anonymity is a vital issue in research ethics because it gives the participants the opportunity to have their identity concealed. In this research, fictitious names were used for identification purposes which cannot be traced to the participants. Codes were also adopted where necessary to ensure anonymity of information and harm. In order not to unnecessarily invade the privacy of participants, the researcher made prior visits to schools before the data collection commenced. Neither names nor any identifiable information from respondents was taken as a way of ensuring the ethical principle of anonymity in social research. This is to prevent possible victimization of respondents where certain responses may be viewed as unpalatable to other stakeholders.

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

Chapter Summary

The research is quantitatively motivated. The design employed for the study was the descriptive survey design. A sample of 217 respondents were randomly selected from a total population of 496 pre-school teachers in the Cap Coast Metropolis. Data was processed using the SPSS and then with descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, demographic characteristics of respondents were analysed. Also, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent samples-t-test) were used to analyse the research questions and hypothesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the preschools teachers perception of early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The analysis is based on the 100% returned data obtained from 217 selected pre-school teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on early childhood educational best practices?

2. How do preschool teachers perceive the implementation of early childhood educational best practices?

3. What are the perceived challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices?

4. How can early childhood educational practices issues be addressed or managed?

Research Hypotheses

H_0:   There is no statistically significant difference between males and females teachers with respect to their Knowledge in early childhood best practice.

H_1:   There is statistically significant difference between males and females teachers with respect to their Knowledge in early childhood best practice

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responses). On the other hand, where the standard deviation is relatively large (within 1), the teacher's responses are believed to be heterogeneous (dissimilar responses). A mean of 2.50 and above indicates teacher's positive responses while a mean of 2.00 and below indicates teacher's negative responses.

Research Question 1

What are the perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on early childhood educational best practices?

To materialize the purpose of the study means and standard deviations were computed for the responses of the teachers with regards to perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on early childhood educational best practices. Table 1 presents the findings.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Perceived Knowledge Preschool Teachers Have on Early Childhood Educational Best Practices

Knowledge of teachers about ECE best practices	N	Mean	Std. D
ECE best practice consider children's individual differences	217	3.25	.437
ECE best practice take into consideration children's in interest	217	3.33	.471
ECE best practice rest on the idea that children's to select their own activities	217	3.46	.500
ECE best practice provides a variety of concrete learning materials in centres (writing Centre, science Centre, math Centre, etc.)	217	3.34	.796

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Table 1- Continue

ECE best practice allows children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials.	217	3.21	.408
ECE best practice allows children to learn by interacting and working cooperatively with other children	217	3.22	.413
ECE best practice allows teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions,	217	3.46	.500
ECE best practice allow children to establish rules for their classroom	217	3.79	.408
ECE best practice allows children to have stories read to them daily, individually or in groups.	217	3.20	.403
Mean of Means/SD	217	3.37	.426

Source: Field Data (2017)

Table 1 presents the perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on early childhood educational best practices. From the Table, the overall mean and standard deviation (M=3.37, SD=.426) show that majority of the were aware and have knowledge about the early childhood educational best practices. To illustrate few of the statements, the majority of teachers indicated that ECE best practice takes into consideration children's individual differences. The mean and standard deviation of (M=3.25, SD=.437) confirm the foregoing statement.

The findings further show that majority of the pre-school teachers (M=3.33, SD=.471) are knowledgeable and aware that ECE best practice is the

one that takes into consideration children's in interest. The findings lend support to the work of Bredekamp (2011) who posited   that teachers need to meet the children where they are. This involves observing children's engagement with materials, activities, and planning curriculum and adapting teaching strategies based on observation, assessing what children already know and their interests, and keeping teaching goals in mind.

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

On the issue of whether pre-school teachers are aware that ECE best practice allows children to establish rules for their classroom, the mean and standard deviation of (M=3.79, SD=.408) gives statistical evidence that majority of the pre-school teachers agreed totally to the statement. This study corroborates the findings of Webb (2003) who elaborated that ECE practice pay way for children to learn cooperative skills through education in child care centres and such skills help them to obey rules and stay safe in the society.

Research Question 2

How do preschool teachers perceive the implementation of early childhood educational best practices?

The researcher went further to explore m the teachers whether they put in practice the early childhood educational best practices. To achieve this, means and standard deviation were deemed appropriate for the analysis.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis How Teachers Put In   Practice the Early Childhood Educational Best Practices

Teachers use of early childhood educational best practices	N	Mean	Std. D
I use all aspect of the development in teaching	217	1.28	.257
I promote a positive climate for teaching and learning	217	2.03	.271
I use a variety of teaching strategies	217	1.06	.300
I assess and evaluate children's learning progress primarily through observation, check lists, work samples as part of their classroom assessment	217	1.14	.496
I provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allows for children to become responsible	217	2.01	.298
I use enough teaching and learning materials	217	1.22	.323
Mean of Means/SD	217	1.27	.226

Source: Field Data, (2017)

Table 2 presents how preschool put into practice the early childhood educational best practices. The results show that even though the majority of the teachers are aware of the early childhood educational best practices they seem not to put them into practice. The overall mean and standard deviation (M=1.27, SD=.226) which is less than 2.50 supports the findings. For example, to find out the pre-school teachers use of all aspects of the childhood development in teaching, the mean and standard deviation (M=1.28, SD=.257) shows that most of the teachers do not use all of them. The findings agree with of Hart, et al., (2003) whose study revealed that there was a negative correlation between developmentally inappropriate practices and pupil's outcome.

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

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

The findings are in conformity with that Brede-kamp and Copple (1997) and Buchanan et al., (1998) who argued that teaching practices for young children include opportunities for choice, hands-on learning, promotion of collaboration

between children, use of a variety of teaching strategies, individualization, and self-regulation, however, most teachers do not engage pupils in these activities and such they are not able to teach pupils to unearth their potentials.

Research Question 3

What are the perceived challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices?

To accomplish the purpose of the study, I further explored from the teachers some perceived challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices. To find out this, descriptive statistics using means and standards deviations were computed for the responses of the teachers.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis about Challenges in the Implementation of Early Childhood Educational Best Practices

Challenges of implementing of early childhood educational best practices	N	Mean	Std. D
Lack of parental support challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices	217	3.54	.500
Inadequate teaching and learning materials challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices	217	3.20	.403
Lack of Curriculum materials challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices	217	3.54	.500

Table 3-Continued

	N	Mean	SD
Lack of pupils readiness challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices	217	3.25	.437
Inadequate government support challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices	217	3.00	.300
Inadequate government support challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices moral responsibility in my entire life in the society	217	3.25	.437
The attitudes of school heads challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices	217	3.22	.413
Inadequate school facilities challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices	217	3.78	.413
Mean of Means/SD	217	3.22	.413

Source: Field Data (2017)

Table 3 presents the descriptive analysis (means and standard deviation) on the challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices. To achieve the purpose of the study, I further went on and assessed factors that challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices. The results show that there are many factors that hinder the

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implementation to early childhood educational best practices. The pre-school teacher's responses produced a mean and standard deviation (M=3.22, SD=.413) showing that majority of the teachers aligned with the pre-coded items that they were responsible factors that challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices.

On the statement "lack of parental support challenge, the implementation of early childhood educational best practices" the mean and standard deviation (M=3.54, SD=.500) shows that majority of the teachers agreed that parents do not support the smooth running of the childhood educational best practices. The results further show that inadequate teaching and learning materials challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices. The mean and standard deviation (M=3.20, SD=.403) gives ample evidence to that fact. The findings disagree with of Marrison (1986) who also found out that parents who involve themselves in school activities help in the implementation of the early childhood curriculum. Similarity, Lilley (2007) postulated parents who share ideas and feelings with teachers accommodate more guidance to the teachers about their children and this helps in successful implementation of the early childhood curriculum.

Lack of curriculum materials was also identified as one challenge of the implementation of early childhood educational best practices. The mean and standard deviation (M=3.54; SD=.500) shows that majority of the teachers agreed that lack of curriculum materials pose a challenge in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The findings

are in conformity with the work of Ntumi (2016) who revealed that teachers, teaching and learning materials are the main factors that influence the implementation of the early childhood curriculum.

Research Question 4: How can early childhood educational practices issues be addressed or managed?

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis on How Childhood Educational Practices Issues be Addressed or Managed

How childhood educational practices issues be addressed	N	Mean	SD
Change of teachers attitudes can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.25	.437
Parental involvement can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.54	.500
Adequate school facilities can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.58	.495
Adequate teaching and learning materials can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.80	.403
Government active involvement in early childhood education can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.80	.403
Adequate curriculum materials can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.25	.437
Workshops and seminars on early childhood education can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.33	.471
Readiness of pupils can help in managing childhood educational practices	217	3.33	.471
Mean of Means/SD	217	3.27	.476

Source: Field Data, Deku (2017)

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Table 4 depicts the solutions to managing the situation of not properly implementing the ECE best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The results from the study show that the majority of the pre-school teachers agreed to the fact that there are a number of factors that can help in managing the situation. The overall mean and standard deviation (M=3.27; SD=.476) gives that strong indication. For example, on the issue of parental involvement, the majority of the teachers agreed that when parents get well involved in the school activities, it will help in managing childhood educational practices. The mean and standard deviation (M=3.54, SD=.500) which is greater than 2.50 support that evidence. The findings agree with Lilley (2007) expression that parental involvement reflects encouragement, love, understanding and follow up of the children daily activity have more important for children further growth.

The Table further depicts that change of teachers attitudes can help in implementing childhood educational practices. The mean and standard deviation (M=3.25, SD=.437) which is also greater than 2.50 confirms that fact.

On the issue of Government active involvement, the results show that the active role of Government can help in implementation of childhood educational practices. The mean and standard deviation (M=3.80, SD=.403) shows that majority of the teachers agreed that government can help in the implementation of the childhood educational practices. The findings lend support to the reports of MOE (2002) that the government has a critical role in policy development, curriculum design, standard setting, supervision, etc. Therefore, the government will encourage the private sector, NGOs, and communities

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Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis to find out the differences between males and females with respect to their knowledge in knowledge in early childhood best practice was considered. To do this, independent sample t-test was deemed appropriate for the analysis

H_0:   There is no statistically significant difference between males and females teachers with respect to their knowledge in early childhood best practice.

H_1:   There is statistically significant difference between males and females Teachers with respect to their knowledge in early childhood best practice.

Table 5: Results of t-test Comparing Male and Female Teachers with Respect to their Knowledge in Early Childhood Best Practice (n=217)

Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig-Value
Males	31.92	6.821	9.611*	168.9	.000
Females	97.84	18.73			

Source: Field Data (2017)   * Significant at p=0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 5 presents differences in male and female teachers with respect to their Knowledge in early childhood best practices. From Table 5, the means and standard deviation showed that the female teachers (M = 97.84, SD=18.73) are more Knowledgeable in early childhood best practice than males teachers (M=31.92, SD=.28079). The independent sample t-test, results show that there was a statistical significant difference between male and females in Knowledge in early childhood best practice [t (168.9) = 9.611, n=217, p = .000)]. This gives evidence that there is the statistically significant difference between females and

males with respect to their knowledge of the best practices in early childhood. and as such the null hypotheses stated as "there is no statistically significant difference between males and females teachers with respect to their knowledge in early childhood best practice:" is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis that "there is statistically significant difference between males and females teachers with respect to their Knowledge in early childhood best practice. the agrees with a study conducted by Şıvgın (2005) who also found that female early childhood teachers are knowledgeable and proactive to teachers practices than males.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study as well as the conclusions, recommendations, and directions for further research. Thus, the chapter focuses on the implications of the findings from the study for policy formulation and further research. The recommendations are made based on the key findings and major conclusions arising from the study.

Summary of the Study

The study assessed knowledge and practice of preschool teachers about early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study employed quantitative approaches through the use of self-developed questionnaires. The pre-schools teachers participated in the study via responding to the questionnaire. In all, there were 217 respondents. Quantitative data analysis was performed using the Statistical Products and Service Solutions (SPSS), Version 23.0). In relation to the quantitative data, both descriptive (means and standard deviations) and inferential statistical (independent samples t –test) tools were used in order to analyze the data, and also answer the research questions and hypothesis.

Summary of Main Findings

Findings from Research Question One

The main purpose of research question one was to determine the perceived knowledge preschool teachers have on early childhood educational best practices. The results from the study revealed that preschool teachers are aware of and have knowledge about early childhood educational best practices. Best practices such as ECE consider children's individual differences, children's in interest, ECE rest on the idea that children's to select their own activities, ECE provide a variety of concrete learning materials in centres (writing centre, science centre, math centre, etc.), ECE allows children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials were all indicated by teachers that they are knowledgeable in those best practices.

Findings from Research Question Two

Research question two sought to determine how preschool teachers implement these early childhood educational best practices. The results from the study unraveled that even though pre-school teachers have knowledge about the early best practices, however, they do not apply or implement them in the classroom. For example teachers indicated that they do not emphasise all aspect of development in teaching, not promoting of positive climate for teaching and learning was also identified, teachers again indicated that they do not do variety of teaching strategies and more importantly they do not provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allows for children to increasing responsibility.

Findings from Research Question Three

Research question three explored from the pre-school teachers some factors that challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Identified challenges include the lack of parental support, inadequate teaching and learning materials, lack of curriculum materials, lack of pupils readiness, Inadequate school facilities, Inadequate government support and attitudes of school heads.

Findings from Research Question Four

The last research question elicited from the teachers about how early childhood educational best practices issues should be addressed or managed. In the quest of providing a solution to address the situation, it was revealed that change of teacher's attitudes, parental involvement, provision of adequate school facilities, adequate teaching and learning materials and Government active involvement in early childhood education were postulated as factors to manage the situation.

Findings from Research Hypothesis

I tested the hypothesis to find out the difference between male and female pre-school teachers with respect to their knowledge in ECE best educational practices. The results show that female pre-school teachers are knowledgeable and well equipped with ECE best educational practices than male pre-school teachers.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study it can be concluded there is a gap between theory and practice in teaching skills among the preschool teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The findings give reasons to believe that there is a need to engage teachers in critical reflection in action of what they know. This can be done by strengthening and facilitating professional development training to enhance the teacher's lesson delivery and provide an avenue for them to initiate discussions on what works or doesn't work for them in reality.

Recommendations

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

In the first place, it is recommend that the Ministry of Education should provide teachers with comprehensive training and awareness on the contextual implementation of the early childhood best practices within a culturally relevant context.

Again, the Ministry of Education should ensure the developmental goals and objectives in the curriculum reflect local values and inform approaches to classroom practices. The curriculum should also reflect the customary practices, traditions, and rituals that touch the lives of children in various cultural contexts and encourage the participation of children in the everyday life of their community.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Early Childhood departments in schools, provide hands-on

practice to in-service teachers so that they can translate child development principles to classroom practice. The model could include offering short courses with a multilevel approach which leads to a systematic professional development.

Principals must ensure that teachers are provided with continuous training on how children develop and equip them with the best ways of observing and listening to children. This can be done by affording them release time to attend workshops or observe other teachers and classrooms.

The government should establish an electronic inter-school database network in all of Ghana in which all early childhood teachers can exchange ideas, lesson plans, and activities, discuss similar areas of concern, and post videos documenting classroom best practices.

Finally, parents must be sensitised and encouraged to be fully involved in the education of their wards.

Suggestions for Further Research

From the overall recommendations which have been under listed in this research report, it is recommended that other academic research exercises could be directed around the topic. The following are some suggested areas that can be considered for further studies.

1. The researcher suggests that similar studies should be conducted in other Metropolis in the entire Region (Central), this is to help make a concrete generalization of the findings.

2. Further research can concentrate on the higher classes. For example lower and upper primary to examine teachers knowledge and practice of the subject matter.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear Respondent

The purpose of this study is to find out perceptions of preschool teachers about early childhood educational best practices in Cape Coast metropolis. Please respond to the statements as truthfully and honestly as you can. Be assured that whatever information you provide will be treated as confidential.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

SECTION A

Please, kindly tick **[√]** the appropriate response

Demographic Data

1. **Gender/Sex:** Male **[   ]**   Female **[   ]**

2. **Age ………………………………….**

3. **Teaching experience: Below 6 years [   ]   6-10 years [   ] Above 10 years [   ]**

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

SECTION B

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS HAVE ON

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL BEST PRACTICES.

Preamble: Childhood educational best practices

SN	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
1	ECE best practices take into consideration children's individual differences				
2	ECE best practices take into consideration children's in interest				
3	ECE best practices rest on the idea that children's to select their own activities				
4	ECE best practices provide a variety of concrete learning materials in centers (writing center, science center, math center, etc.)				
5	ECE best practices allow children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials.				
6	ECE best practices allow for children to learn by interacting and working cooperatively with other				

	children				
7	ECE best practices allow teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions,				
8	ECE best practices allow children to establish rules for their classroom				
9	ECE best practices allow children to have stories read to them daily, individually or in groups.				

SECTION C

PRESCHOOL TEACHER'S PERCEPTION ABOUT THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL BEST

PRACTICES.

SN	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
9	I use all aspect of the development in teaching				
10	I promote a positive climate for teaching and learning				
11	I use a variety of teaching strategies				
12	I assess and evaluate children's learning progress primarily through observation, check lists, work samples as part of their classroom assessment				
13	I provide a safe environment and age- appropriate supervision that allows for children to increasing responsibility				
14	I use enough teaching and learning materials				

SECTION D

Perceived challenges in the implementation to early childhood educational best practices

SN	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
17	Lack of parental support challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices				
19	Inadequate teaching and learning materials challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices				
21	Lack of Curriculum materials challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices				
22	Lack of pupils readiness challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices				
23	Inadequate government support challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices				
24	Inadequate government support challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices moral responsibility in my entire life in the society				
26	The attitudes of school heads challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best				

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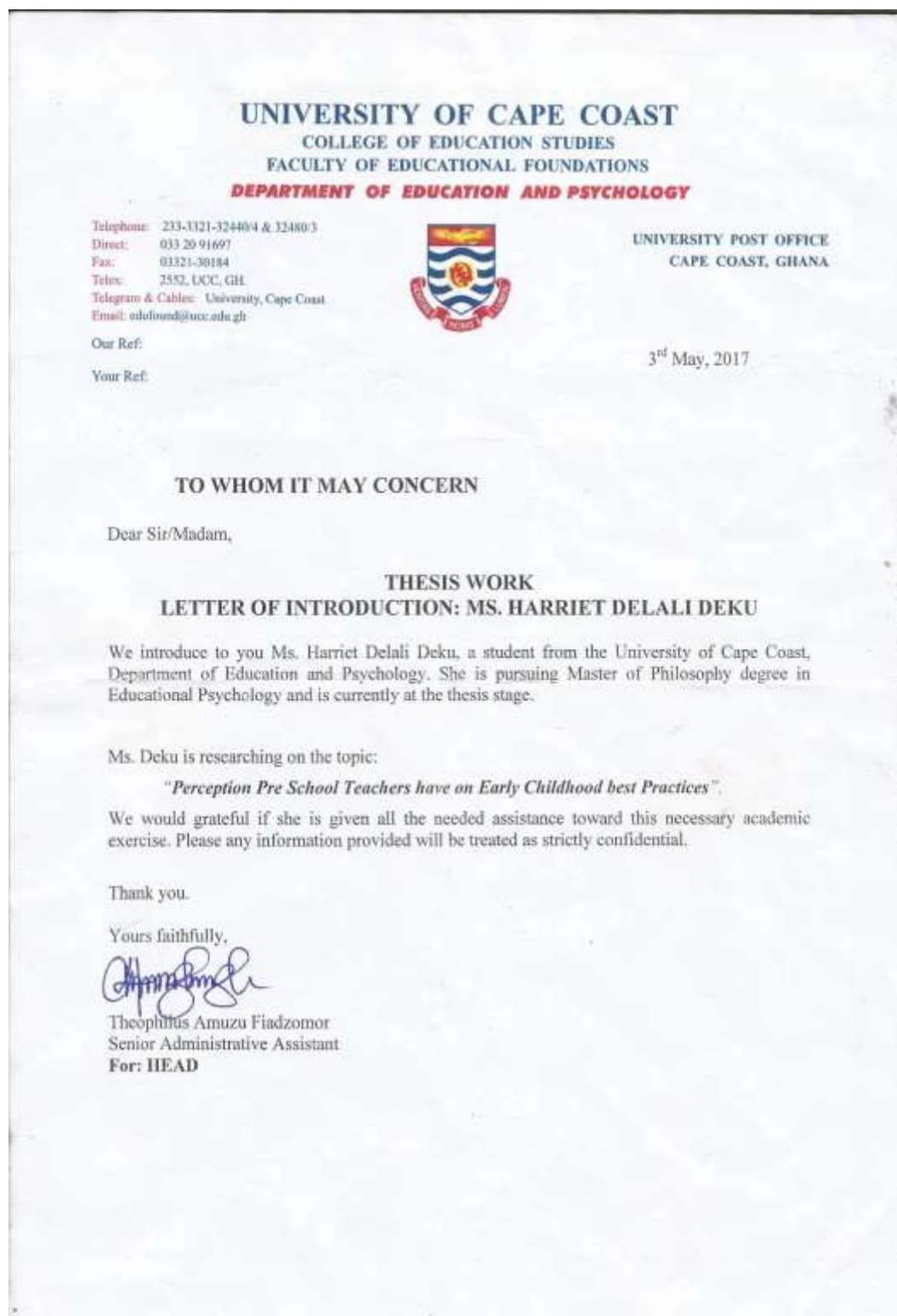|					
	practices				
27	Inadequate school facilities challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices				
28	Teacher attitudes challenge the implementation to early childhood educational best practices				

SECTION E

How early childhood educational practices issues can be addressed or managed

SNs	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
29	Change of teachers attitudes can help in implementation childhood educational practices				
30	Parental involvement can help in implementation childhood educational practices				
31	Adequate school facilities can help in implementation childhood educational practices				
32	Adequate teaching and learning materials can help in implementation childhood educational practices				
33	Government active involvement in early childhood education can help in implementation childhood educational practices				
34	Adequate curriculum materials can help in implementation childhood educational practices				
35	Workshops and seminars on early childhood education can help in implementation childhood educational practices				
36	Readiness of pupils can help in implementation childhood educational practices				

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APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Telephone: 233-1321-32440/4 & 32480/3
Direct: 033 20 91697
Fax: 03321-30184
Telex: 2552, UCC, GH.
Telegram & Cables: University, Cape Coast
Email: edufound@ucc.edu.gh

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

3rd May, 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

THESIS WORK
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MS. HARRIET DELALI DEKU

We introduce to you Ms. Harriet Delali Deku, a student from the University of Cape Coast, Department of Education and Psychology. She is pursuing Master of Philosophy degree in Educational Psychology and is currently at the thesis stage.

Ms. Deku is researching on the topic:

"Perception Pre School Teachers have on Early Childhood best Practices".

We would grateful if she is given all the needed assistance toward this necessary academic exercise. Please any information provided will be treated as strictly confidential.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Theophilus Amuzu Fiadzomor
Senior Administrative Assistant
For: HEAD

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APPENDIX C

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref: CES-ERB/ucc.edu/17/30

Your Ref: ....

Date: 16. 03. 2017

Chairman, CES-ERB
Prof. J. A. Omotosho
jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh
0243784739

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

The bearer, Ms. Harriet Delah Deku Reg. No ED/PPE/15/0005. is an M.Phil /Ph.D student in the Department of Education and Psychology, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He/She wishes to undertake a research study on the topic Perceptions of pre-school teachers about early childhood educational best practices.

Vice-Chairman, CES-ERB
Prof. K. Edjah
kedjah@ucc.edu.gh
0244742357

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed the proposal submitted by the bearer. The said proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance that may be needed to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Secretary, CES-ERB
Dr. (Mrs.) L. D. Forde
lforde@ucc.edu.gh
0244786680

Thank you.
Yours sincerely.

Dr. (Mrs.) Linda Dzama Forde
(Secretary, CES-ERB)

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