

Early Childhood Educators' Self-efficacy and Instructional Experiences in the Central Region, Ghana

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Abstract

The study assessed kindergarten teachers' use of learning activities and instructional resources in Central Region, Ghana. The concurrent explanatory approach was employed. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from 1413 KG teachers using questionnaires adapted from the Ohio Teacher Efficacy Scale, while 10 of them were observed and interviewed. The teachers were randomly selected from ten districts in the Central Region of Ghana. Quantitative data were analysed using means and standard deviation. It came to light that KG teachers had high self-efficacy in engaging learners, using instructional strategies, managing classrooms and involving parents. However, the qualitative data suggested that teachers had challenges with inadequate resources and large class sizes without support teachers. It was recommended that adequate relevant resources and support teachers should be provided. More teachers with background in early childhood education should be deployed to kindergartens to teach.

Keywords: Early childhood education, kindergarten, self efficacy

Introduction

Early social interventions such as varying modules of early childhood education, care and support services have been found to be highly cost effective. Such interventions have the capacity to minimize the need for special remedies in later life, and have the most significant effects on children's development and learning (International Labour Organization, 2012). An early start in education is particularly deemed important for children from disadvantaged families. By the time children enter primary school, disparities in language skills linked to socio-economic background and other factors are often so wide that children are not able to bridge the gap. Evidence from the United Kingdom shows that test scores of infants at 22 months are a strong predictor for their educational qualifications at 22 years (UNESCO, 2010). Available information from high and some middle-income countries indicate that a public investment of one percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is required to deliver quality ECE services (OECD, 2006). Evidence suggests that high-quality ECE can save money later; possibly a potential return rate of 7-16 percent annually from high-quality early childhood education. Studies conducted most notably in the United States of America indicate that returns are higher than other educational interventions and for the most disadvantaged, returns are over a longer period and the skills acquired are a foundation for further learning (UNESCO, 2007). These and under studies have proved beyond doubt that quality early childhood education has enormous intellectual, social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, linguistic and economic significance.

Though efforts at providing quality early childhood education require the input of various stakeholders, teachers are the prime vanguards; they are the final implementers of the curriculum. Therefore the successful implementation of a quality programme rests on the shoulders of effective teachers. One construct of teacher belief that has consistently been associated with the numerous qualities of an effective teacher has been teacher self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is underpinned by the social cognitive theory. It emphasizes the evolvment and exercise of human agency that people can exercise some influence and control over what they do (Bandura, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). Teacher self-efficacy has been explained as teachers' judgments about their capability to bring about the desired outcomes of learners' engagement and learning (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). It is also described as teachers' beliefs in their ability to realise what they intend or expect learners to be able to do (Wheatley, 2005).

According to Bandura (2006) it is believed that the achievement impact of teacher self- efficacy arises from goal-setting and attribution processes. Teachers who anticipate that they will be successful set more challenging goals for themselves (and their learners accept responsibility for the outcome of instruction) and persist through obstacles. Bandura expounds that learners' achievement of cognitive and affective goals can be enhanced by strengthening teacher efficacy. The changes teachers apply to their practices and adaptation to innovations require that they have a high self-efficacy. Teachers play a critical role in actualizing the ideas in a new curriculum. Hence, no matter what the curriculum suggests, it is the teacher who finally decides what goes on in the classroom (Isler & Cakiruglu, 2009).

In the context of early childhood education, teacher self-efficacy beliefs has been found to significantly influence children's development in print awareness and achievement (Guo, Piasta, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2010). Evers, Brouwers, and Tomic (2002) contend that teacher self-efficacy beliefs were found to be significantly related with the burnout level of the teachers when implementing a new educational innovation. The study indicated that efficacious teachers tended to more willingly accept and practise educational changes. Cobanoglu (2011) also reported that teacher self-efficacy and teaching beliefs significantly predicted the extent early childhood teachers implemented current curriculum as regards content selection and learning process. Cobanoglu explained that individuals with a higher sense of self-efficacy indicated less and different varying concerns as they moved along the implementation of the innovation and viewed success as a product of effort rather than luck. The author argued that efficacious teachers were more likely to perceive the innovation to be less difficult to implement, to be congruent with their current practices, and to be very significant. The foregoing discourse suggests that most or almost all instructional successes may be attributed to teacher self-efficacy.

Thus, in recent times, there is consensus that the quality of teaching in initial school levels, such as the early childhood stage, is a strategic factor for improving the educational system and for the development of countries (OECD, 2005). Teachers possess a set of beliefs and knowledge regarding teaching and learning. As teachers develop their expertise, curricular practices are refined and self-efficacy is enhanced. Teachers possess varying degrees of self-efficacy and perceptions that influence how they implement an educational programme. Several studies have shown that individual teacher beliefs and values play a vital role in shaping the goals, instructional techniques and assessment procedures of schools (Hitchens-Smith, Ortlieb, & Cheek, 2011) and can spell success or failure for any reform.

In Ghana, considering the high rate of untrained kindergarten teachers, inequitable allocation of resources to urban and rural schools, coupled with the high enrollment figures in kindergartens due to social interventions like the free school feeding programme, there is the need for early childhood educators' with high self efficacy to implement the curriculum. Teachers with high self-efficacy are also more likely to persevere in their attempts to reach learning goals when they encounter obstacles, are more prone to experimenting with effective instructional strategies that represent a challenge, and are more willing to take risks in their classrooms (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie & Beatty, 2010). The characteristics demonstrated by teachers with high self-efficacy,

thus have positive implications for implementing an instructional programme. In spite of the relevance of early childhood education and the significant role efficacious teachers play in the school life of learners and the its implications for the implementation of the curriculum, it appears in Ghana the specious impression about what early childhood education is and the role of teachers is rife.

In a study by Lemaire, Amoah, Nstiful and Bonney (2013) and Abdulai (2014), they report the erroneous impressions teachers, parents and education officers have about early childhood education. It is against this backdrop that this study was conducted. The main thrust of the study was to explore early childhood educators' experiences and their self efficacy in teaching kindergarteners. The following questions guided the study;

1. What is Early Childhood Educators' self-efficacy in engaging learners?
2. What is Early Childhood Educators' self-efficacy in using instructional strategies?
3. What is Early Childhood Educators' self-efficacy in classroom management?
4. What is Early Childhood Educators' self-efficacy in parental involvement?

Methodology

The study examined Central Region early childhood educators' self-efficacy. Since this cannot be measured directly it involved eliciting responses from respondents. Specifically, explanatory concurrent design was used. This allowed the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The rationale for this approach was that the quantitative data and results would provide a general picture of the research problem. More analysis, specifically through qualitative data collection, was used to refine, extend, or explain the general picture (Creswell, 2012). A good amount of responses from a wide range of early childhood educators were gathered using questionnaires, interview and observation for analysis. This helped to describe, observe and documented aspects situations (teaching) as it naturally occurred rather than explaining it.

All KG teachers of public basic schools in the Central region of Ghana constituted the target population. Teachers from 492 randomly selected KGs in ten selected districts were sampled for the study. Since most KGs had only two teachers in some schools, all the teachers found in each school were involved. In all 1489 KG teachers were used for the study. Ten teachers (one teacher from a selected school in each of the ten districts) who were part of the sample, were conveniently selected for observation and interview. Trained research assistants and circuit supervisors in selected districts assisted with questionnaire administration and retrieval while observation and interviews were conducted by researcher himself.

The questionnaire was a five point likert-scale type which was coded 5-a great deal; 4-much; 3-very little; 2-poorly and 1-nothing. It was an adaptation of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2001) Ohio Teacher Efficacy Scale. It was pretested using 30 KG teachers in Western Region of Ghana. The content validity and reliability of the instruments were determined through expert review of items and the use of the Cronbach Coefficient alpha which generated alphas of .761 for items on learner engagement; .772 for instructional strategies; .779 for classroom management and .805 for parental involvement. Reliability of observation and interview guide were ascertained by employing the trustworthiness criteria. In all data were analysed from 1413 KG teachers since 76 questionnaires could not be retrieved. The Means and Standard Deviation were used to analyse research questions 1,2,3 and 4 while qualitative data were recorded, transcribed and reported in narratives.

Findings and Discussions

This section appears in four different subscales as presented in the Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5. The following keys have been used to represent the scales in the table; *NT-nothing*, *VL-very little*, *QB-quite a bit*, *Mu-much* and *GD-a great deal*. However data were interpreted using means with the following mean ranges to determine levels of efficacy: *Mean Ranges: Not at all 1.00-1.49; Low 1.50-2.49; Moderate 2.50-3.49; High 3.50-4.49; Very high 4.50-5.00.*

Table 1: Background characteristics of Kindergarten Teachers

Qualification	frequency	%
Professional: Cert 'A' 3year post sec	20	1.4
Certificate in pre-school	42	3.0
Diploma in Basic Education	701	49.6
Diploma in Early Childhood Education	159	11.3
Degree in Basic Education	248	17.6
Degree in Early Childhood Education	72	5.1
Post Graduate Diploma in Education	5	0.4
Master in education	14	1.0
None	152	10.8

Data in Table 1 reveal that KG teachers had gone through various kinds of programmes in education that qualified them as professional teachers. These ranged from certificate 'A' 3- year post-secondary teacher training (which has been faced out) to master's degree in education. The data reveal that almost half of the teachers 701(49.6%) had a diploma in basic education, with another 248 (17.6%) having a degree in basic education. Therefore, about 949 (67.2%) had training in basic education. However, it was noted that only 273 (19.4%) of the teachers had been specifically trained to teach early learners and possessed either a certificate in pre-school, diploma or degree in early childhood education. In all, 89.4% could be considered as professional teachers with the rest (10.6%) being non-professionals.

The analysis and interpretation of data for research questions is captured in subsequent tables. Specifically, the first research question on early childhood educators' self efficacy in engaging learners have been dealt with in Table 2.

Table 2: ECEs self efficacy in Learner Engagement

Statement	Mean	SD
1. How much can you do to get to the most difficult pupil?	3.74	.88
2. How much can you do to help your pupils think critically?	3.93	.83
3. How much can you do to motivate pupils who show low interest in school work?	3.95	.84
4. How much can you do to get your pupils to believe they can do well in school work?	3.92	.84
5. How well can you do to help your pupils value learning?	3.99	.82
6. How much can you do to enhance your pupils' creativity?	3.91	.82
7. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a pupil who is struggling?	3.89	.88

Data in Table 2 illustrate KG teachers' belief in their ability to engage their pupils during lessons. It was realized that out of the seven items, teachers first considered themselves much capable of helping their pupils to value learning. Their response to this item generated a mean of 3.99. This was followed by their belief that they will be able to motivate many pupils who show low interest in school work, which yielded a mean of 3.95. Similarly, the teachers responded favourably to the notion that they can help their pupils to think critically. This also produced a mean of 3.93. However, response to how much they can do to get to the most difficult pupil, yielded the least mean of 3.74. In spite of the slight differences in responses to the various items, it may be deduced that KG teachers have high self-efficacy in engaging kindergarten pupils in learning since the cumulative mean (3.90) fell between the range of 3.50-4.49.

Engaging learners in an instructional process is critical to its success, especially with early learners. The observation of lessons conducted revealed that teachers engaged and interacted with pupils in different ways. All the teachers observed used the local language (Fante) widely spoken in Central Region. This practice is

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consistent with the current language policy in Ghana. It made it very easy for teachers to communicate in the language the pupils understand. It was thus observed that pupils were engaged in lessons. They were able to carry out instructions during activities and answered questions asked by teachers. Teachers attended to the needs of individual pupils and supported those who had difficulties, Though, the English Language was used occasionally, interaction between teachers and pupils was cordial. Follow-up interviews conducted further showed that teachers tried as much as possible to establish a congenial and less intimidating environment to enable them engage and interact with pupils.

A teacher indicated that;

My interaction with them is ok especially when I teach with the local language. My relationship with them is cordial so they feel free to come to me. Especially, when there is a lot of singing and dancing. This makes it possible for me to know what their problems are and assist them...(T2).

Another teacher stated that;

I'm very satisfied with the level of engagement and I think so far so good. When these children come to school we become their parents so I try as much as possible to come down to their level so they can get closer if there is any problem. Sometimes I wish I could do more but because they are many, you become tired after attending to a few children (T9).

Almost all the teachers expressed similar views as evidenced in the responses of T2 and T9. This largely confirmed what they did during instructions as observed and the reactions they provided to the items in the questionnaire. Generally, early childhood educators' ability to engage and interact with early learners was healthy as suggested by expression like "my relationship with them is cordial..."and "...we become their parents...". This facilitated teaching and learning but it was to a large extent undermined by the large class sizes that made it difficult for teachers to engage effectively with their pupils.

Analysis and interpretation of data gathered for research question three relating to the use of instructional strategies is captured in Table 3. Observation and interview data were used to expand quantitative data.

Table 3: ECEs self efficacy in using Instructional Strategies

Statement	mean	SD
1. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your pupils?	3.80	.89
2. How much can you gauge pupils' understanding of what you have taught?	3.78	.88
3. To what extent can you craft good questions for your pupils?	3.79	.86
4. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual pupils?	3.89	.86
5. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation when pupils are confused?	3.93	.87
6. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	3.84	.85
7. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable pupils?	3.74	.88

Data in Table 3 reflect KG teachers self efficacy in using instructional strategies. It was evident that the teachers found themselves first and foremost much capable of providing an alternative explanation when pupils are confused, with a mean of 3.93. The mean of 3.89 suggests that they equally believed much in their ability to respond to difficult questions from their pupils. In a similar fashion their response to how well they can implement alternative strategies in their classroom yielded a mean of 3.84. The mean of 3.74 which is the least was the result of KG teachers' reaction to how well they can provide appropriate challenges for very capable pupils. A gleaning of the foregoing indicates that KG teachers expressed a high ability in using various

instructional strategies with early learners. This is depicted by the average of the means of 3.82 which fell within the range of 3.50-4.49.

Observation of lesson revealed KG teachers' ability to use mainly demonstrations and a restricted number of activities due to inadequate teaching learning resources. Because most of the resources were not available most of the teachers resorted to demonstrations with the few available resources after which they invited learners individually to stand in front of the class to do same. For instance, T1, T3, T5, T6, T7 used demonstrations. Though, learners are called, only a few are involved during a lesson due to large class sizes and the instructional time available.

Reponses generated by the interview session concurred with the notion that though KG teachers involved pupils in various activities, most of them were through demonstrations which were sometimes teacher dominated due to inadequate resources. Some also did indicate that they sometimes used role plays and dramatization for themes that had to do with market scenes and shopping. It may thus be inferred that KG teachers had much belief in their ability to use varying instructional strategies to enable them answer difficult questions, provide alternative explanations, provide appropriate challenges for more capable learners among others but these were undermined due to the use of inadequate instructional resources for early learners which lead to more teacher dominated activities.

Analysis and interpretation of data gathered for research question two relating to classroom management is captured in Table 4. Observation and interview data were used to expand quantitative data

Table 4: ECEs Self efficacy in Classroom Management

Statement	mean	SD
1. How much can you do to control some pupils' disruptive behaviour?	3.78	.89
2. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about pupils' behaviour?	3.79	.84
3. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	3.74	.86
4. How much can you do to get pupils to follow classroom rules?	3.85	.89
5. How much can you do to calm a pupil who is disruptive and noisy?	3.81	.91
6. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of pupils?	3.74	.90
7. How well can you keep a few problem pupils from ruining an entire lesson?	3.77	.92
8. How well can you respond to disobedient pupils?	3.73	.93

Data in Table 4 depict KG teachers' reactions regarding their self-efficacy in managing classrooms for early learners. The data portray that teachers have much belief in their ability to get pupils to follow classroom rules. This is reflected by the highest mean of 3.85. In response to what they can do to calm a pupil who is disruptive and noisy, the teachers again answered they were much capable with a mean of 3.81. The third highest mean of 3.79 was generated by their reply to how they can make their expectations clear about pupils' behaviour. The last in ranking of the means (3.73) represents teachers' response to how well they can respond to disobedient pupils. Though, there seems to be slight discrepancies in the responses provided, the data in Table 4 seems to suggest that, with the cumulative mean of 3.77, KG teachers possessed high self efficacy in managing instructional settings for kindergarteners.

Observation and interview data from KG teachers on the management of classrooms of early learners yielded varying results. It was evident during observation sessions that teachers made efforts at managing their classes by getting pupils to follow instructions when doing activities, getting them to obey basic classroom rules like taking turns in submitting exercise and calling a few disruptive ones to order by their names or get them to sing half way through a lesson to get their attention. However, generally KG teachers found it quite difficult managing their classes. While lessons where in progress some pupils were seen sleeping, writing on tables, some fidgeted and disrupted their peers while others even left the class without any permission. Kindergarten teachers' inability to manage their classes much better could largely be attributed to the large class sizes without

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attendants, most of which were more than forty. It was only T6 with 21 pupils who as a result did quite well managing them. Another observation worthy noting is that in eight out of the ten schools observed, pupils were seated on dual desks which were heavy to move around during group tasks which made managing them more difficult.

During the interview most of the teachers expressed their frustration about this condition. For instance;

T7 laments that:

teaching these kids at this level all these years has not been easy especially if you are not fortunate to get a large class you might not be able to do much in a day or even in a term because you will have troubles managing them. Because if you rush too you will leave a lot of the children behind.

T1 agrees by saying that that:

I try my best controlling the class but you know that children at this level like playing a lot. It makes teaching at this level very difficult. Whiles you are teaching they will be playing and they forget easily...

These reactions with expression like “...has not been easy...” and “...makes teaching difficult...” gave enough impression about the hassle these kindergarten teachers went through in teaching and trying to manage early learners. Though, teachers asserted they had high self- efficacy in managing classrooms, it seemed their efforts were seriously being undermined by the large class sizes without attendants or assistants and inadequate resources.

Analysis and interpretation of data gathered for research question four relating to early childhood educators’ ability in involving parents; this is captured in Table 5. Observation and interview data were used to expand quantitative data.

Table 5: ECEs Self-efficacy in Parental Involvement

Statement	mean	SD
1. How much can you do to assist parents establish a home environment that would support their children’s learning?	3.57	.93
2. How well can you communicate to parents about their child’s progress in school?	3.69	.92
3. How much can you do to enlist parents’ support in the classroom?	3.43	.98
4. How much can you do to get parents’ support and embark on excursions with children?	3.32	.96
5. How much can you do to assist parents to help their children at home with homework and other related activities?	3.55	.97
6. How much can you do to get parents in making decisions about their wards?	3.52	.99
7. How much can you do to get parents to share information about their children with you?	3.52	.97
8. How much can you do to get parents to feel comfortable visiting their children at school?	3.74	.96

Data from Table 5 illustrate that of all the statements measuring KG teachers’ belief in their ability to involve parents in the education of their young children, teachers responded highly to the fact that they could get parents to feel much comfortable visiting their children at school with a mean of 3.74. Additionally, the mean of 3.69 connoted teachers’ belief they were much capable of communicating to parents about their child’s progress in school. The third in ranking was teachers’ reaction to the notion that they could assist parents much to establish a home environment that would support their children’s learning. This was signaled by the mean of 3.57.

Though, teachers responses reflected an appreciable level of self efficacy in carrying out all the activities to enable them involve parents, the mean of 3.32 implied an expression of minimal belief in their ability to get the support of parents to embark on excursions with their children. Summarily, with the cumulative 3.54, it might be deduced that KG teachers have much belief they can get parents involved in the education of their young children. This signified a high self-efficacy.

Since the extent to which parents were involved in their children's education could not be observed in a day, the opinions of KG teachers were sought through interviews in that regard. Most teachers explained the challenge they had as evidenced in these responses:

T3 moaned that:

As for parental involvement we are suffering. You cannot get parents in this community to do anything for their children. Because government said free education so the parents don't want to do anything not even buying a pencil. The only way you can get them to give them information is through Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Even that, most of them don't come. I sometime send for them through the pupils.

T7 also asserted that:

I am not able to involve them too well. Because both parents of most children are working now and it's difficult to involve them in anything. They do not come to PTA meetings and only few come to the school to find out how their wards are doing. But sometimes when it is critical I send for them or discuss with them casually when I meet them on the street.

Almost all the teachers reacted similarly to this. Statements like "...you cannot get parents..." and "...it's difficult to involve them..." suggest that KG teachers are not able to do much in terms of getting parents involved in the education of their wards. Most parents think that their responsibility towards their children's education ends with meeting financial obligations. Majority of them thus, do not bother following up on their children. Unfortunately, teachers also lacked ideas about creative ways by which they can get parents involved in their wards education which might not necessarily involve spending money. These views are therefore slightly at variance with results deduced from quantitative data. Their self-efficacy could therefore be described as moderate.

Summary of Central Region ECEs self efficacy is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: General level of ECEs Self efficacy in the Central Region

Self efficacy subscales	Mean	SD	Ranking
Learner Engagement	3.90	0.844	1 st
Instructional Strategies	3.82	0.870	2 nd
Classroom Management	3.77	0.892	3 rd
Parental Involvement	3.54	0.960	4 th
General level of self efficacy	3.75	0.892	

It may be deduced from the above summary that KG teachers expressed a high self-efficacy in engaging learners with parental involvement in the education of their children being the least. Generally, it can be concluded that the mean of means of 3.75 signified that early childhood educators in Central Region had a high self-efficacy. This implied that ECEs were fairly confident they had the ability to teach kindergarteners. It was however noted that inadequate resources and large class sizes affected their ability to use various instructional procedures and how they managed their classrooms.

Learners' engagement has been found as a critical component of any teaching and learning interaction. Pianta, Hamre and Allen (2012) explain that learners spend at least one-quarter of their waking hours in schools, most of it in classrooms, one of the most proximal and potentially powerful settings for influencing children. Their relationships and interactions with teachers either produce or inhibit developmental change to the extent that they engage, meaningfully challenge, and provide social and relational supports. For children in an early childhood instructional setting, engaging them is crucial to their development. Fletcher (2005) posits that it is increasingly seen as an indicator of successful classroom instruction, and as a valued outcome of school reform. According to Taylor and Parson (2011) the consequences of not engaging learners in learning are reportedly dire. Many educationists consider engaging disengaged learners to be one of the biggest challenges facing educators, as over 66% (Cothran & Ennis, 2000) of learners are considered to be disengaged.

McDermott, Mordell and Stolfus (2001) underscore this by asserting that as important as engagement is for children's success as learners, strategies for promoting engagement are not emphasized or even present in the vast majority of school settings. Instruction that promotes passivity, rote learning, and routine tends to be the rule rather than the exception (Goodlad, 2004). Because children with low levels of engagement are at risk for disruptive behaviour, absenteeism, and eventually dropping out of school (Roderick & Engle, 2001), the need to increase engagement is critical to children's success in school. It is on this account that the need for teachers with high self-efficacy becomes paramount in order for early learners to be intellectually, emotionally and physically engaged.

With regard to the use of instructional strategies, the absence of adequate resources coupled with the large class sizes, grossly weakens teachers' self-efficacy to effectively involve learners in developmentally appropriate activities. This supports Agyeman's (1993) claim that a teacher who is academically and professionally qualified, but works under unfavourable conditions, would be less dedicated to his work and thus be less productive. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2002) further concurs that though these have not been considered as sources of efficacy, it is believed the availability of resources and parents' support have a potential in enhancing the level of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Thus, teachers may consider themselves highly capable of dealing with instructional challenges but the conditions and the environment in which they work may take a negative toll or weaken their level of self-efficacy to perform certain tasks effectively.

Although society and the educational system have undergone monumental transformations, classroom management still remains as the most trying issue for new teachers (Rosas & West, 2009; Stoughton, 2007) as identified in the current study. Especially with early learners who are more fidgety and playful at their age, behaviour and instructional management related issues are common. Coddling and Smyth (2008) identified side talks, joking during the lesson, changing sitting locations, issuing annoying voices, too many requests, eating in the classroom, stubbornness, lying, theft, laughing without reason, assaulting others, feigning sickness, non interest of classroom cleanliness, damaging individual or classroom property, or bullying other learners as some misbehaviours kindergarten teachers have to contend with. In a research conducted, Ashton and Webb (1986) noted that teachers with low self-efficacy were not only oriented toward control in their classrooms, they also tended to achieve control through punitive management strategies in comparison to high-efficacy teachers who encouraged learner trust, autonomy and responsibility. It must however be noted that early learners can be effectively managed when they are few, coupled with the availability of an attendant and adequate instructional resources to engage them. The ultimate goals of classroom management are to provide a healthy, safe environment for learning, and to equip learners with the necessary skills to be successful in life, both academically and socially (Wong & Wong, 2009).

Besides, kindergarten teachers' moderate self-efficacy in involving parents seems to reinforce Basikin's (2008) finding from a study that the efficacy for helping families to help children do well in school was low. In another investigation, Jinapor (2014) also found that lack of parental involvement and commitment was a challenge to early childhood education. Though it seems teachers with high efficacy can promote parental involvement in education, it appears apart from inviting parents to Parents Teacher Association (PTA) meetings through letters,

ECEs are bereft of creative ways of involving parents in the education of early learners. To this effect, Bridgemohan (2002) explains that most schools do send written information to parents. However, receiving written information does little to increase parents' understanding; implying that they have little knowledge of what actually happens in the classroom. Soyoun (2005) recommends that parents' main interest is to know their children's performance in school and they are ready to help where possible. Schools should, therefore communicate with parents so that the latter can participate actively in school-based activities. Cungua, Said, Wallhåger and Ngie (2003) also explain that for any pre-school programme to succeed in stimulating and sustaining healthy growth and development of young children, the parents' role and involvement as partners in education is crucial.

Generally, high level of KG teachers' self-efficacy might have been influenced by the fact that majority of the teachers are professionally qualified to teach in basic schools. This validates the assertion by Whitebook (2003) and Barnett's (2003) that better qualified teachers are more effective and recommends that four years degree is required in order to increase effectiveness. It is therefore not surprising that KG teachers perceived themselves as having high self efficacy on learner engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management.

Recommendations

- The heads of basic schools should liaise with district education directorates in providing adequate developmentally appropriate resources to enable kindergarten teachers effectively engage kindergarten pupils.
- The heads and kindergarten teachers should liaise with the pre-school district coordinators to train teachers in using more effective activity oriented instructional strategies apart from demonstration to facilitate learning.
- The Ghana Education Service should also recruit and train support teachers to assist kindergarten teachers with large class sizes as to enable them to effectively manage their classes.
- During PTA meeting parents should be educated on the need to be involved in the education of their young children and also KG teachers should adopt more effective ways of involving parents in their ward's education.

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