



Full Length Research Article

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' SELF EFFICACY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM IN GHANA

ABROAMPA, Winston Kwame and *Ahmed Abdulai

Department of Psychology and Education, Faculty of Educational Studies,
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 27th November, 2016
Received in revised form
17th December, 2016
Accepted 21st January, 2017
Published online 28th February, 2017

Key Words:

Early Childhood Education,
Self- Efficacy, Curriculum.

ABSTRACT

The study examined Pre-service teachers' belief in their ability to implement the kindergarten Curriculum in Ghana. The descriptive survey design was employed. All 150 pre-service early childhood students in a last session of a post diploma sandwich programme at the University of Education, Winneba were involved in the study. A questionnaire with 55 items on a Likert-type scale was used to gather data. However, 136 questionnaires were retrieved. Means, standard deviation and ANOVA were used in analyzing data. The study revealed that pre-service early childhood teachers have a high level of self-efficacy to enable them implement the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana. However, the level of self-efficacy of males and females differed on classroom management, parental involvement and assessment procedures. It was recommended that teacher preparation programmes should cater for components that will develop pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, identity and expectations since they play a major role in curriculum implementation.

Copyright©2017, ABROAMPA, Winston Kwame and Ahmed Abdulai. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

Most research conducted over the years such as the High Scope Perry Preschool study of lifetime effects and the Abecedarian study that began in the early 1970s stressed on the positive effects of early childhood education on later life of children. Lunenburg (2000), and Barnett (2008) agree that interest in children's early years, especially the first five years, has gained momentum as studies have shown that appropriate programmes for young children can make a difference in the academic, economic, and social spheres. It has therefore become widely accepted that early learning experiences prepare children academically and socially for the rest of schooling and further improves school attendance. The benefit is felt mostly by children in less endowed communities (Rao and Pearson, 2009). It is for this reason that most countries all over the world including Ghana have developed and introduced early childhood education programmes. In Ghana, since 2007, early childhood education, comprising two years' kindergarten have been made compulsory for all children of ages four and five before they enter primary one. 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.

***Corresponding author: Ahmed Abdulai**

Department of Psychology and Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

As a result, the success of any educational programme and the quality of learners turned out is a logical consequence of the quality of teachers (Abroampa and Wilson, 2013). To a greater extent, learners' achievement is determined by the quality of teaching. By extension the quality of teachers largely determines the quality of education in a society. They emphasized that the indicators of the quality of a school system are the qualifications and experiences of teachers, which may influence teachers' level of efficacy. Earlier, there has been 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). It has therefore become very necessary to develop teacher preparation and education programmes which will equip prospective teachers with the requisite skills and expertise to enable them effectively implement educational programmes. As pre-service teachers or teacher trainees enter the teaching profession, it is assumed that they bring a fresh perspective to the educational milieu, and new set of ideas, which have the potential of influencing conventional practice. Two primary areas affect the development of successful teachers: their belief system and application of those beliefs in the classroom. Correspondingly, the beliefs pre-service teachers have affect the transfer of knowledge about the teaching profession and the eventual application of successful teacher practices in the classroom (Anderson, 2007; Richardson, 2003; Minor, Onwuegbuzie,

Witcher and James, 2002). At the core of every teacher is a set of beliefs and knowledge regarding teaching and learning. As a teacher develops her expertise, curricular practices are refined and self-efficacy enhanced. Teachers possess varying degrees of efficacy and perceptions that influence how they implement an educational programme. Yet, often times they are mandated to teach in certain ways to achieve desirable learner outcomes, even when they may not agree with the methods or processes wholeheartedly (Dyer and Cheek, 2013). Several studies have shown that individual teacher beliefs and values play a vital role in shaping the objectives, goals, curriculum and instructional methods of schools (Hitchens-Smith, Ortlieb and Cheek, 2011; Duffy-Hester, 1999). Results of research studies show such beliefs and values can spell success or failure for any reform.

In spite of this, the general assumption has been that once innovation has been clearly described and resources and other supportive systems put in place, implementation must take place without any recourse to teacher beliefs and expectations about the programme. In fact, Abrami, Poulson and Chambers (2004) note that implementation of educational innovation often meets with limited success. While some teachers enthusiastically apply an educational innovation, and are persistent in their implementation attempts, others avoid implementation of the innovation all together and renege after only a few initial attempts, all depending on their beliefs. Research in teacher self-efficacy beliefs has provided key information which shows that high self-efficacy teachers are more likely to persevere in their attempts to reach learning goals when they encounter obstacles, and are more prone to experimenting with effective instructional strategies that represent a challenge, and are more willing to run risks in their classrooms (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie and Beatty, 2010). These attributes, teachers with high efficacy demonstrate, have positive implications for implementing an instructional programme.

The self-efficacy level of pre-service teachers then becomes very crucial to the implementation of the curriculum. Given that teacher efficacy is related to teacher effectiveness and appears to influence learners' achievement, attitude, and affective growth, it is of great interest to explore the development of efficacy beliefs among student teachers. Additionally, considering the significance of a strong sense of efficacy for optimal motivation in teaching, exploring initial development of pre-service teachers' efficacy will help them develop strong efficacy beliefs early in their career. Experienced teachers are generally provided with the source of information, including an abundance of mastery experience, to develop their teaching efficacy. However, prospective teachers generally do not have this source of information, at least not until they have their teaching practice in school in which they receive emotional arousal and verbal persuasion, including performance feedback from supervisors, classroom teachers, and other peers (Chan, 2008; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Oh, 2011). With the varying amount of information from these sources, as well as different experiences of teaching practice, they may be variances in pre-service teachers' levels of belief in their teaching ability. The overwhelming majority of research in the area of teacher efficacy has been conducted on in-service teachers, and relatively little is known about the knowledge base in this area among pre-early childhood education preservice teachers.

In Ghana, before early childhood education, specifically kindergarten was incorporated into basic education, it was a common practice for preschools to be filled with secondary school graduates and people with middle school certificates who have been teaching in the basic school for many years. It is in this vein that the Anamuah-Mensah committee's report on the review of education in Ghana in 2002 indicated that there were only 6,762 trained pre-school teachers representing 18.5% of the total trained teacher requirements. One wonders whether this caliber of teachers understood the philosophy, goals and other demands of the early childhood education programme. The committee thus advised strongly that various measures should be put in place to cater for the deficit. As a result, University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba started regular and sandwich certificate, diploma and post diploma programmes in early childhood education. Currently, there are also seven out of the thirty-eight colleges of education offering diploma in early childhood education in Ghana. The level of efficacy early childhood education pre-service teachers possess before they start practicing as teachers is critical, especially because of the level they are trained to teach.

How efficacious a teacher is, has implications for instructional strategies used. Especially for kindergarteners, child-centred and activity-based learning at the kindergarten (KG) stage of education is essential for children to reach their full academic potential in later phases of education. It is in this light that Anamuah-Mensah committee's report suggested that at kindergarten, rigidly structured methods of teaching should be avoided and play-way method used. Teaching and using such methods, techniques and strategies at this level seems very difficult especially for teachers with low self-efficacy. Resnick (2008) regrets that for nearly 200 years, since the first kindergarten opened in 1837, kindergarten has been a time for telling stories, building castles, drawing pictures, and learning to share. But that has changed. Currently, more and more kindergarten children are spending time filling out phonics worksheets and memorizing math flashcards. In short, kindergarten has become more like the rest of school. One wonders whether this could be attributed to how pre-service teachers are prepared.

In their review of literature investigating teacher efficacy, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) refer to publications linking teacher efficacy to a variety of teacher processes. They explain that teachers with high teacher efficacy exhibit greater levels of planning and organization, greater enthusiasm for teaching, greater commitment to teaching, and increased likelihood to stay in the teaching field. Additionally, such teachers work longer with learners experiencing difficulty, are less critical when learners make errors and less likely to make special education referrals for those who are having difficulty. These teachers are also more open to new ideas, more willing to experiment with new methods to meet their learners' needs, demonstrate persistence when faced with difficulty and resilience when faced with setbacks. Soodak and Podell (1996) also list studies suggesting relationships between teacher efficacy and instructional decision-making, such as the use of class time, classroom management strategies, and questioning techniques. Teachers' efficacy beliefs are associated with teachers' willingness to devote more time to academic instruction and take greater responsibility for educating learners who have learning difficulties (Dembo and Gibson, 1985).

In Ghana, the limited resources available coupled with the high enrollment figures in kindergartens, require pre-service teachers with high level of self-efficacy to effectively implement the early childhood education curriculum. It is on this account that this study examined early childhood pre-service teachers' efficacy beliefs about the implementation of the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana. Specifically, their level of self-efficacy in achieving curriculum goals, engaging learners, using instructional strategies, managing classroom, involving parents and using assessment techniques was considered. It was thus hypothesized that; Male and female pre-service early childhood educators' will differ significantly in their levels of self-efficacy (achievement of goals, students' engagement, instructional strategies, classroom management, parental involvement and assessment techniques).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey was employed for the study. The design helped to generate enough relevant data to provide answers to the broad and complete range of research questions and also generate stronger evidence to arrive at conclusion for the problem under investigation. The study was largely quantitative. The accessible population for the study comprised all 150-final year pre-service teachers pursuing post diploma in early childhood education by sandwich and were in their last session in a public university in Ghana (University of Education, Winneba). In all 136 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis.

Since they were not many census selections employed, a Likert-scale type questionnaire with eight sections and 55 items were administered to all of them. This was an adaptation of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) teacher self-efficacy instrument, which has three subscales and 24 items. Apart from the items in section B which was on a four-point scale and was coded; very adequate (4), adequate (3), inadequate (2) and not at all (1), items in sections C to H were on a five-point scale coded; A great deal (5), very much (4), quite a bit (3), very little (2) and nothing (1). Due to the modifications that were done, the instrument was pre-tested using 20 regular final year early childhood education students. Data gathered were subjected to a reliability test using the Cronbachalpha coefficient. This generated the following alphas for the various sections;

Table 1. Reliability test results for instrument

Variables(subscales)	Alpha value
Teacher preparation	.68
Curriculum goals	.84
Learner engagement	.85
Instructional strategy	.86
Classroom management	.85
Parental involvement	.91
Assessment procedures	.87
Overall	.95

With these values, the questionnaire was considered highly reliable since the alpha's for the various sections and that of the entire instrument were above .7 (except teacher preparation) as recommended by Pallant (2005), and Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012). Data gathered were analyzed using means, standard deviation and the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data show that there were more female students (70.49%) pursuing early childhood education than male students (29.51). This is consistent with national and global statistics. According to the International Labor Organization (2012), both national (93%) and global statistics (94%) suggest there are more female early childhood practitioners than males. Sanders (2002) underscores this pithily by asserting that the field of early childhood is an overwhelmingly female one with the males conspicuously 'missing'. Cunningham and Dorsey (2004) agree with Sanders that women are naturally predisposed to caring for young children, and men are not. This nature of women makes them better placed to handle the responsibility of raising and nurturing children, both in the home and in collective approaches (Wardle, 2004). Most applicants for the ECE programme are therefore females.

Table 2. Teacher preparation to implement components of the curriculum

Components	X	SD
Language and literacy	3.47	.544
Environmental studies	3.32	.554
Mathematics (number work)	3.40	.588
Creative activities (music, dance and art)	3.25	.777
Physical development	3.22	.685
Psychosocial skills	3.08	.869

Mean ranges: not at all 1.00-1.49; inadequate 1.50-2.49; adequate 2.50-3.49; very adequate 3.0-4.00

The data suggest that early childhood education pre-service teachers (PSTs) were adequately prepared to handle language and literacy (3.47) than any other component of the kindergarten curriculum, followed by number work (3.40) and environmental studies (3.32). They considered psychosocial skills as the least though they all fall within the same mean ranges (2.50 – 3.49). This pattern of response is not surprising since from the outset all efforts and resources that are expended on education in most societies including Ghana are geared towards the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills by learners. The ability of, especially, children in school to communicate and use numbers is considered fundamental building blocks and sign posts for the development and understanding of concepts and construction of knowledge in other areas. French (2012) underscores this by asserting that improved communication and oral language skills of very young children underpin their development of literacy and ability to develop early mathematical ideas and language. Thus, early understandings of literacy and numeracy are best supported when early childhood professionals have a deeper knowledge of literacy and numeracy (Fleer and Raban, 2007). This to a large extent might have influenced PSTs level of preparation in these two areas.

Generally, inferences made from the data imply that PSTs considered their preparation adequate as depicted by the composite mean of 3.29. This has positive implications for the development of their self-efficacy. For instance, in a study conducted by Pearson and Moomaw (2005), they realized professional self-efficacy of PSTs grew linearly as they progressed through their teacher education programme. Bandura (1993) suggests that in order for feelings of self-efficacy to persist, those feelings must be developed early in a goal quest or the adoption of a skill set.

Table 3. Pre-service teachers' Efficacy in Achieving Curriculum Goals

ECE Curriculum goals	X	SD
How much can you do to enable your children develop communication skills that enable them to express their emotions, thoughts and actions in various ways such as listening, speaking, reading and writing?	3.97	.778
To what extent can you get the children to familiarize themselves with the environment and its living and non-living things?	4.13	.676
How much can you do to enable children live a healthy life?	4.21	.724
To what extent can you develop children's psychosocial skills such as assertiveness and self-confidence?	3.81	.904
How well can you help learners to relate positively with people?	4.24	.683
How well can you awaken and develop the creative abilities of your children?	3.97	.793
To what extent can you help children to respond emotionally and intellectually to the world around them, through music and dance?	3.81	.818
How much can you do for children to appreciate and find pleasure in their own creations and those of others?	4.00	.793

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 4. Pre-service teachers' total Self-efficacy in Achieving Curriculum Goals

	Total efficacy	Curriculum goals
Total efficacy	Pearson correlation 1	.683
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	136
Curriculum goals	Pearson correlation .683	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	136

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 5. Pre-service teachers' Self-efficacy in Engaging Learners in Class

Statement	X	SD
How much can you do to get to the most difficult child?	3.71	.877
How much can you do to help your children to think critically?	3.99	.890
How much can you do to motivate children who show low interest in school work?	4.19	.687
How much can you do to get your children to believe they can do well in school work?	4.13	.721
How well can you do to help your children value learning?	4.04	.885
How much can you do to enhance your children's creativity?	3.77	.891
How much can you do to improve the understanding of a child who is struggling?	3.94	.841

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 6. Pre-service teachers' Self-Efficacy in Using Instructional Strategies

Statement	X	SD
How well can you respond to difficult questions from your children?	3.96	.873
How much can you gauge children's comprehension of what you have taught?	3.88	.770
To what extent can you craft good questions for your children?	4.00	.808
How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual children?	4.11	.858
How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	3.91	.847
To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when children are confused?	4.09	.788
How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	3.99	.789
How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable children?	3.87	.850

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 7. Pre-service teachers' Self Efficacy in Classroom Management

Statement	X	SD
How much can you do to control some children's disruptive behavior?	3.88	.770
To what extent can you make your expectations clear about children's behavior?	3.89	.798
How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	3.98	.682
How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	4.09	.768
How much can you do to calm a child who is disruptive and noisy?	3.74	.888
How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of children?	3.86	.853
How well can you keep a few problem children from ruining an entire lesson?	3.82	.787
How well can you respond to disobedient children?	3.86	.836

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 8. Pre-service teachers' Efficacy in Involving Parents

Statement	X	SD
How much can you do to assist parents establish a home environment that would support their children's learning?	3.65	.741
How well can you communicate to parents about their child's progress in school?	3.94	.832
How much can you do to enlist parents' support in the classroom, trips and related activities?	3.48	.695
How much can you do to assist parents to help their children at home with homework and other related activities?	3.83	.882
How much can you do to get parents in making decisions about their wards?	3.78	.961
How much can you do to get parents to share information about their children with you?	3.69	.812
How much can you do to get parents to feel comfortable visiting their children at school?	3.62	.734

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 9. Pre-service teachers' Efficacy in using Assessment Techniques

Statement	X	SD
How well can you use children's opinion of themselves and their work to gather information about them?	3.86	.870
To what extent can you converse with children in order to gather information from them?	3.90	.850
How well can you observe children in order to gather relevant information?	4.05	.749
To what extent can you interact very closely with children to elicit relevant information from them?	4.78	.789
How well can you set tasks for children to enable you gather information from them?	3.75	.811
To what extent can you use children's appreciation of each other's work to assess them?	3.92	.850
How well can you use checklist to gather information about learners?	3.62	.942
How well can you use anecdotal records to gather information about children?	3.53	.615
How well can you use tests to gather information from children in order to assess them?	3.84	.824

Table 10. MANOVA results

Efficacy subscales		X	SD	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)	
Curriculum goals	m	40	31.350	4.515	-1.463	134	.146
	f	96	32.520	4.139	-1.411	67.693	
Learner engagement	m	40	31.000	3.397	-1.147	134	.253
	f	96	32.000	5.051	-1.343	106.768	
Instructional strategies	m	40	30.925	5.215	-1.457	134	.147
	f	96	32.198	4.385	-1.357	63.119	
Classroom management	m	40	29.775	4.486	-2.298	134	.023
	f	96	31.688	4.395	-2.279	71.711	
Parental involvement	m	40	24.300	5.608	-2.920	134	.004
	f	96	27.167	5.049	-2.795	66.668	
Assessment procedures	m	40	33.100	5.546	-2.079	134	.040
	f	96	35.188	5.245	-2.032	69.533	
Total efficacy	m	40	180.450	22.7076	-2.470	134	.015
	f	96	190.760	21.9621	-2.436	70.903	

Therefore, Redmon (2007) argues that teacher preparation programmes should be designed and administered in such a way that the "teachers in training" develop strong feelings of teacher self-efficacy and maintain these feelings throughout their preparation programme and into their first teaching assignment. He further explains that candidates who develop strong efficacy early in their pre-service professional education are better prepared to retain those feelings and it will help them deal with challenges that confront almost all beginning teachers; especially, teachers of early learners. One goal of teacher preparation programmes should be to build those feelings of efficacy, while tempering those feelings with the realities of classroom teaching. Data on PSTs efficacy in achieving kindergarten curriculum goals reveal that, first and foremost, they will be much efficacious in getting kindergarteners to relate positively with people (4.24), live a healthy life (4.21) and thirdly getting children to familiarize themselves with the environment and its living and non-living things (4.13). Since PSTs had indicated earlier that they are better prepared in the language and literacy component, it was anticipated that they might be more efficacious in helping learners develop communication skills, however, that ranked fifth. PSTs efficacy in helping kindergarteners develop psychosocial skills was the least with a mean of 3.81 together with their ability to help children respond emotionally and intellectually to the world around them, through music and dance. To a large extent both of these will help engender affective elements in early learners. This reaction is consistent with PSTs level of preparation in psychosocial skills. This pattern of response is clearly indicative of the low level of emphasis placed on assisting children to develop values and attitudes. This concurs with McCubbins (2004) assertion that the early childhood education curricula have become too academic, suggesting an over emphasis on the development of the cognitive to the detriment of the affective which is heavily influenced by the development of the psychosocial skills in children. This has made teaching of early learners too rigid contrary to child development principles (Sackey, 2009).

Hancock and Wingert (1998) explain that the primary focus of early childhood education is providing children (learners) with the opportunity to form relationships with others and feeling competent exploring the world. With these psychosocial skills reinforced, reading, writing and mathematics will come more easily when children are ready. However, generally, the data reveals that PSTs have a high efficacy in achieving goals of the kindergarten curriculum or have the belief in their capacity to assist early learners to demonstrate skills, values and attitudes intended for them as suggested by the aggregated mean of 4.02. Many researchers have repeatedly related teacher efficacy to a variety of positive teaching behaviors and learner outcomes (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy, 1998). There was further analysis to ascertain the relationship between PSTs total self-efficacy and achievement of kindergarten curriculum goals by using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient. The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between PSTs self-efficacy and achievement of curriculum goals [$r = .683$, $n = 136$, $p < 0.005$] with high PSTs efficacy associated with high level of achievement of kindergarten curriculum goals. This implies that the higher the belief in themselves the better they will be able to achieve curriculum goals.

The coefficient of determination computed to explain how much variance the two variables shared showed that nearly 47% of PSTs ability to achieve curriculum goals was explained by their level of self-efficacy. With respect to PSTs efficacy to engage early learners in class, they indicated they can motivate children who show low interest in school work (4.19), get children to believe they can do well in school work (4.13) and help kindergarteners to value learning (4.04). Though, PSTs ability to get to the most difficult child was ranked lowest (3.71) it fell within the same mean range, suggesting they are very much capable. Generally, inferences from the data implied that PSTs were highly efficacious and will be able to engage early learners in the classroom as indicated by the cumulative mean of 3.96. Being able to

engage learners is increasingly seen as an indicator of successful classroom instruction, and as a valued outcome of school reform (Fletcher, 2005). Gilbert (2007), Claxton (2007), and Taylor and Parson (2011) argue that 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. Thus, PSTs expression in their capacity to engage early learners will positively influence the implementation of the kindergarten curriculum. Pianta, Hamre and Allen (2012) highlights this by arguing that learners' engagement has been found as a critical component of any teaching and learning interaction and is even more crucial for early learners. Early learners by their nature are very fidgety and playful as such they cannot be treated like adults by asking them to remain seated and be attentive. Thus, the only way this category of learners can be handled is to meaningfully engage them by providing them with resources and involving them in activities which are developmentally appropriate.

The data measuring PSTs efficacy in using various instructional strategies to teach early learners shows that they can adjust their lessons much to suit the level for individual children (4.11). They reacted similarly to providing alternative explanation or examples when children are confused (4.09) and crafting good questions for their children (4.00). Though, PSTs ability to provide appropriate challenges for very capable children was the least, it received the same response. Summarily, the aggregated mean of 3.98 implies that early childhood education PSTs have a high efficacy in using various instructional strategies for early learners. This is consistent with Guskey (1988), and Saklofske, Michayluk and Randhawa (1988) opinion that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy appear more likely to be receptive to the implementation of new instructional practices. Such teachers are more likely to concentrate on individualized instruction and to adapt teaching practices more readily (Minke, Bear, Deemer and Griffen, 1996; Wertheim and Leyser, 2002).

It is therefore expected that the PSTs with their level of efficacy will be more organized, try to find better ways of teaching, they will be willing to experiment and to use new instructional material, innovative strategies and be more enthusiastic about teaching early learners (Allinder, 1994). It may be deduced from the data that PSTs opined that firstly, they will much be able to get children to follow classroom rules (4.09). Besides, they will also be able to establish routines to keep activities running smoothly (3.98) and can also make their expectations much clear about children's behavior (3.89). However, PSTs ability to calm a child who is disruptive and noisy was considered the least in ranking (3.74). In sum, the cumulative mean of 3.89 denoted PSTs have a high efficacy in managing early learners in their classroom. Such a level of efficacy in classroom management has implications for ECE teacher's class control, learner's behavior and the success of the entire teaching and learning venture since handling early learners is daunting. This supports earlier positions by Hughes, Grossman and Barker (1990) that teachers with high efficacy are more willing to take personal responsibility for addressing learners' behavioral issues with individual learners than are teachers with low efficacy and also have the ability to develop positive interactions with and among learners (Rich, Lev and Fisher, 1996). 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 and Wong, 2009). PSTs efficacy in involving parents in the education of early learners was also ascertained. It came to light that PSTs will be able to communicate much to parents about their child's progress in school (3.94). They would also be able to assist parents to help their children at home with homework and other related activities (3.83) and further get parents in making decisions about their wards (3.78). However, PSTs indicated they will be able to enlist parents' support in the classroom, trips and related activities (3.48). This was ranked lowest. PSTs may anticipate a difficulty with this due to the increasing participation of parents, especially, mothers in the labor force as a result of recent economic pressures (Boocock, 1995). On the whole, the mean of means of 3.72 suggests that PSTs have a high efficacy in involving parents in the education of their young children. This is considered encouraging since parental involvement is linked to children's total learning. The greater parents get involved in children's learning, the higher it positively affects performance (Yan and Lin, 2002). Fagbemi (2011) adds that children whose parents are involved in their education do better academically over a period of time. Parental involvement not only improves a child's morale, attitude and academic achievement but it also promotes better behavior and social adjustment.

This presupposes that it has implications for the total wellbeing and development of the child. With regard to early childhood education PSTs efficacy in the use of varying assessment procedures, they indicated their ability to interact a great deal with children very closely to elicit relevant information from them (4.78). This is a clinical form of interview which requires a lot of skill from teachers to enable them interact individually with children in order to access information about them. PSTs further expressed their ability to much observe children in order to gather relevant information (4.05) and similarly use children's appreciation of each other's work (gallery work) to assess them (3.92). Also, PSTs asserted they will be able to use anecdotal records to gather information about children. Though, this was ranked lowest, generally the reactions of respondents yielded an aggregated mean of 3.92 suggesting their ability to use various assessment processes is high. The ability of teachers to employ multiple tools and techniques in gathering relevant information about early learners for decision making is considered crucial. At this level, informal or non-conventional procedures are deemed appropriate since early childhood assessment cannot follow the strictly formal standardized testing or learner's assessment model (Zumwalt, 2012). Zumwalt and NCCA (2008) refers to them as authentic or performance assessment.

One way between group multivariate analysis of variance was used to investigate gender differences in pre-service early childhood education teachers' self-efficacy. Six dependent Variables in the table were used. Preliminary assumptions tested indicated no serious violations. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female pre-service teachers on the combined variable (total efficacy): Wilks' Lambda = .924; $F(1, 134) = 6.100$, $P = .015$; Partial eta squared = .044. This implies that the magnitude of the difference is small based on the recommendation of Cohen (1988). A review of the means indicated that females had a slightly higher level of efficacy ($\bar{x} = 190.760$, $SD = 21.962$) than males ($\bar{x} = 180.450$, $SD = 22.708$). When the dependent variables were considered separately, it came to light that out of the six

factors, male and female pre-service teachers' efficacy differed on:

Classroom management: $p = .023$,
 Partial eta squared = .038, $\bar{x} = m$ (29.78), f (31.69)
 Parental involvement: $p = .004$,
 Partial eta squared = .060, $\bar{x} = m$ (24.30), f (27.17)
 Assessment techniques: $p = .040$,
 Partial eta squared = .031, $\bar{x} = m$ (33.10), f (35.19)

Female pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in these three areas were slightly or marginally higher than their male counterparts. The investigation thus showed that generally female PSTs had a slightly higher self-efficacy than males. This corroborated Klassen and Chiu's (2010) finding that female teachers teaching young children (in elementary grades and kindergarten) had higher levels of self-efficacy for classroom management and learner's engagement. This trend may be attributed to the passion females have for children which is borne out of their nurturing and caring nature.

Conclusion and Curriculum Implications

From the foregoing discussion, it may be concluded that;

Early childhood education pre-service teachers have a high efficacy to engage early learners in class, use instructional strategies, manage early learners, involve parents in their wards' education and use various assessment strategies in gathering information about children. Generally, early childhood education PSTs, therefore have a high level of self-efficacy to enable them implement the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana. Teacher preparation and education programmes have to make provision for modules that would enhance the development of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. Pre-service teachers' exposure to such valuable teacher prerequisites which have been found to relate positively to many teaching learning variables including learning outcomes, especially during their pre- and post-internship programmes and seminars would influence curriculum implementation. Such provisions would help prepare pre-service teachers psychologically since in Ghana it is a common knowledge that most people become teachers not because they are interested and passionate about it. This influences their perception, attitude and commitment to teaching and learning in general. It is important to bear in mind that pre-service teachers' beliefs affect their transfer of knowledge about the teaching profession and the eventual application of successful teacher practices in the classroom (Anderson, 2007; Richardson, 2003; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, and James, 2002).

REFERENCES

- Allinder, R. M. 1994. The relationship between efficacy and the instructional practices of special education teachers and consultants. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 17, 86-95.
- Anamuah-Mensah Committee Report, 2002. *Meeting the challenges of the Twenty-first century*. Accra: Adwinsa Publications (Gh) Ltd
- Bandura, A. 1986. *Social foundation of thought and action: A social cognitive view*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. 1993. Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28, 117-148.
- Bandura, A. 1997. *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Barnett, W. S. 2008. *Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications*. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center and EducationPolicy Research Unit
- Boocock, S.S. 1995. Early childhood programmes in other nations: Goals and outcomes. *Long-Term Outcomes Of Early Childhood Programs* Vol. 5. No. 3
- Claxton, G. 2007. Expanding young people's capacity to learn. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 55(2), 1-20.
- Cunningham, B., and Dorsey, B. 2004. Out of site but not out of mind: The harmful absence of men. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 165, 42-43.
- Duffy-Hester, A. 1999. Teaching struggling readers in elementary school classroom: A review of classroom reading programs and principles for instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(5), 480-495.
- Dyer, J.A., Ortlieb, E and Cheek, E.H. 2013. An Analysis of Teacher Efficacy and Perspectives about Elementary Literacy Instruction. *Current Issues in Education*, 16 (3), 35-50
- Fagbeminiyi, F.F. 2011. The role of parents in early childhood education: A case study of Ikeja Lagos State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*. Vol. 11 issue 2. Version 1.0
- Fleer, M. and Raban, B. 2007. *Early childhood literacy and numeracy: Building Good Practice, Commonwealth of Australia*
- Fletcher, A. 2005. *Meaningful student involvement: Guide to students as partners in school change*.
- Fraenkel, J. R. and Wallen, N. E. and Hyun, H.H. 2012. *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw Hill Inc.
- French, G. 2012. Early Literacy and Numeracy Matters: Enriching Literacy and Numeracy Experiences in Early Childhood. Dublin: Barnardos.
- Hitchens-Smith, C., Ortlieb, E., and Cheek, E. H. 2011. Perceptions of struggling readers in a developmental reading course. *Global Education*, (1), 2-24.
- ILO, 2012. *Right beginnings: Early childhood education and educations*. Geneva. International Labor Organization
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2005). *Education at a Glance*. Paris, OECD.
- Klassen, R.M. and Chiu, M.M. 2010. Effect on teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Teacher gender, years of experience and job stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 741-756
- McCubbins, J. L. 2004. *Transition into kindergarten: A collaboration of family and educational perspectives*. Unpublished master's thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.
- Minke, K. M., Bear, G. G., Deemer, S. A., and Griffin, S. M. 1996. Teachers' experiences with inclusive classrooms: Implications for special education reform. *Journal of Special Education*, 30, 152-186.
- Pianta, R.C., Hamre, B.K. and Allen, J.P. 2012. Teacher-student relationship and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In S.L. Christenson (Ed. *Handbook of Research in Student Engagement*. Virginia: Springer Science and Business Media
- Rao, N. and Pearson, V. 2009. Early childhood education in Cambodia. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 3 (1), 13-26

- Rich, Y., Lev, S. and Fischer, S. 1996. Extending the concept and assessment of teacher efficacy. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 56, 1015-1025.
- Sackey, M. M. 2009. *An Examination of Preschool Services in Selected Communities in Tema Municipality (Ghana)*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Ohio University
- Saklofske, D. H., Michayluk, J. O. and Randhawa, B. S. 1988. Teachers' efficacy and teaching behaviors. *Psychological Reports*, 63, 407-414.
- Sanders, K. 2002. Viewpoint: Men don't care? *Young Children*, 57 (6), 44-48.
- Soodak, L. C., and Podell, D. M. 1996. Teacher efficacy and student problem as factors in special education referral. *Journal of Special Education*, 27, 66-81.
- Stein, M. K., and Wang, M. C. 1988. Teacher development and school improvement: The process of teacher change. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 4, 171-187.
- Taylor, L. and Parsons, J. 2011. Improving Student Engagement. *Current Issues in Education*, 14 (1). Retrieved from <http://cie.asu.edu/>
- Tschannen-Moran, M., and Hoy, A. W. 2001. Teacher efficacy: capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 783-805.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., and Hoy, A. W. 2007. The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 944-956.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., Hoy, A. W., and Hoy, W. K. 1998. Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research*, 68, 202-248.
- Wardle, F. 2004. The challenge of boys in our early childhood programs. *Early Childhood NEWS*. 16 (1), 16-21.
- Wong, H. and Wong, R. 2009. *The first days of school: how to be an effective classroom manager*. Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications.
- Yan, W. and Lin, Q. 2002. Parent Involvement and Children's Achievement, Race and Income Differences. New Orleans, LA. *Paper presented at the Annual conference of American Educational Research Association*, New Orleans, LA.
- Zumwalt, C. 2012. Authentic assessment and early childhood education-an update and resources. *A publication of the Illinois State Board of Education*. Vol.6, Issue 1.
