

**Enhancing Ghanaian kindergarten teachers'
implementation of indigenous play-based pedagogy
through a professional development programme**

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In 2011, the government of Ghana in response to the recommendations of the Dakar World Forum for Education, the Millennium development goals and Education Strategic Plan 2010-2020, prioritised the expansion and improvement of comprehensive early childhood care and education. To this end, the Ghana Education Service in collaboration with the Ministry of Education undertook a nation-wide review of the entire kindergarten (KG) education. Findings from the review revealed that kindergarten teachers are performing poorly in the delivery of play pedagogy (Ministry of Education, 2012). Teachers still used the traditional way of teaching which is largely teacher-centred as opposed to the child-centred one. This situation was due to the fact that the teachers lacked the necessary competencies (skills, ability, attitudes and knowledge) relevant for delivering play pedagogy (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Although play pedagogy is regarded as important for kindergarten teaching and learning, various studies world-wide have shown that it is difficult for preschool teachers to implement it in the classroom context (Rogers 2011; Hyvonen, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2012; Lord & McFarland, 2010). One reason for the difficulty is the inadequate training of teachers (Hyvonen, 2011; Fleer 2015; Hakkarainen, Bredikyte, Jakkula, & Munter, 2013).

In Ghana little is known about teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about the use of play pedagogy in the kindergarten learning environment. Since there is a link between what teachers know and how they teach, the proposed study investigates Ghanaian kindergarten teachers' understanding and implementation of indigenous play-based pedagogy. In exploring Ghanaian teachers' understanding, I aim to find out whether a developed indigenous play-based professional development programme will facilitate teachers' delivery of the kindergarten curriculum. Participants for this study will include 12 kindergarten teachers purposively selected from six kindergarten schools in a municipality of the Eastern region of Ghana. After the initial information meeting, participants will be taking through eight weeks of workshop sessions on relevant topics in the Ghanaian kindergarten curriculum. Experts in indigenous Ghanaian play will be invited to demonstrate and explain how to use such play forms in kindergarten teaching and learning. Participants

will be guided to design teaching learning materials and approaches they will employ when using indigenous play-based pedagogy. The theoretical framework that underlines this study is Fleer's theory of conceptual play. This theory is considered most relevant for the study because it sees play as a cultural construct where different forms of play expressions can be profitably used in children's learning and development (Fleer, 2011; Fleer, 2013; Göncü & Gaskin, 2011; Awopegba, Oduolowu & Nsamenang, 2013; Tagoe, 2013; Joseph, Ramani, Tlowane & Mashatole, 2014; Gelisli & Yazicib, 2015; Makaudze & Gudhlanga, 201). Furthermore, this theory emphasizes the important role of adults in children's learning and development. In other words the teachers' role and responsibilities will be clearly defined in developing the materials and approaches for the delivery of the indigenous play-based pedagogy. The study will essentially use a qualitative research approach, employing a participatory action research design (Creswell, 2014). Data for the study will be collected from different sources such as field notes, interviews, observations and participants' reflective journals. Transcribed interviews together with data from the other sources will be thematically analysed at two levels; at the first level participants will be involved in the initial coding and identification of themes from interviews, observations and participants' reflective journals. Further analysis will be done by the researcher.

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