

# Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Perceptions of Stakeholders in the Western Region of Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of the stakeholders in early childhood education and their perceptions affect the performance of their roles in the implementation of early childhood education programmes. Parents, community members, early childhood education teachers, members of religious organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations formed population of the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample the early childhood schools and stratified sampling technique participants in each district. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and structured interview guide. Data collected were summarised using percentages, means, standard deviations and Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient

The Stakeholder in the Western Region of Ghana have low perception of early childhood education and this adversely affects the performance of their roles to ensure effective implementation of early childhood programmes and policies in the region. There is a relationship between their perceptions and the level of performance of their roles.

It is recommended that Religious organizations, District and Municipal Assemblies as well as non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to participate actively in the implementation of early childhood programmes and policies in the region.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines early childhood as the age before the age of eight. It is the period from birth to 8 years (UNESCO, 2000). Early childhood (EC) is usually the stage before the age of normal schooling which is five years in most countries such as Ghana and the foundation stage where children develop their potentialities and capabilities for the future.

Definitions of early childhood care and education differ around the world (Swiniarski, Breitborde, & Murphy, 1999). The more industrialised nations consider early childhood to be the period from birth through age eight (8) (Essa, 1999; Wortham, 2000), while developing nations focus on from birth through age six (6) (Eville-Lo & Mbugua, 2001; UNICEF, 2002). Early childhood education is a term that refers to educational programs and strategies geared towards children from birth to the age of eight (UNESCO, 2000). It is the process or approach deliberately intended to effect developmental changes (physical, cognitive, social and emotional) for those below the age of 8 years and the foundation stage where children develop their potentialities and capabilities for the future (Ampadu, & Ofosu, 2007). ECE is the type of formal education meant for those who are within the age group of 0-8 years where the formal teaching and caring of young children is undertaken by people other than their families or in settings outside their homes. It is a period when child-centred interactive methods are used to help a child develop (Bredenkamp, 1987); a time in the lives of the children that many researchers deem as remarkable for total development because these years lay the foundation for subsequent learning. Research has shown that the development of intelligence, affective and social relation occurs in the early years of a person's life (Evans & Gruba, 2000). Abilities to think, speak, learn and reason are all rooted in the first three years of life (State of the World's Children Report, 2003). Consequently, the foundation for the development of personal values and social behaviour has been found to be dependent on the care given to children in their early years (Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998).

The early years of a child's development are very important not only because they lay the basis for human development but also because experiences children are exposed to during that period have lasting influence in childhood. Successful early childhood care and stimulation programmes lay the foundation for creativity, imagination, self-reliance and survival of the child (Asenso-Boakye, 2005). A person's future potential is better exploited when proper attention, care and support are accorded as early as possible in one's life. Empirical research findings indicate that the nature of care given to children in the first eight years is directly linked to an individual's health and productivity during childhood, and to the socio-economic development of

society as a whole (Fogel, 1994). The success of children in school to a large extent determines their success as adults, determining whether they can go to college, what professions they enter, and how much they are paid (Asenso-Boakyie, 2005). Early childhood Education provides a nurturing atmosphere which nourishes young imaginations and instils self-confidence in the children.

The objectives of Early Childhood Education according to Ampadu, & Ofori, 2007 are to:

- improve the health and physical abilities of the child.
- develop the social and emotional health of the child through the encouragement of self confidence, self discipline, curiosity and spontaneity.
- enhance the child's mental processes and skills with particular attention to conceptual and verbal skills.
- increase the ability of the child to relate well with his family and to others in a loving and supporting manner.
- establish patterns of expectations of success for the child. This will create a climate of confidence for his present or future learning efforts and overall development.
- enhance the sense of dignity and self worth with the child and his family.

Cungua *et al* (2003), on their part, summarised the objectives of Early Childhood Education as:

- To provide opportunities for overall personal development of the child through individual play and group activities, and
- To predispose the child to conditions of formal education in order to accelerate the learning process during formal schooling.

In Ghana and Africa as a whole, Early Childhood Education was previously taken as the responsibility of parents and families and not the state (The White Paper, 1995: 7). This makes it difficult for one to find tangible document and evidence on how Early Childhood Education has evolved over the years. Elements of Early Childhood Education interventions in Ghana can, however, be traced to as early as the 1950s. The focus at that time was largely on the provision of care to young children before starting class one.

Ghana and Africa for that matter has a well organised traditional education and welfare system. The community ensured that every child born was brought up according to its social and valued knowledge, skills and attitudes (Cungua *et al*, 2003). As a result of the importance the various communities attached to the education of their children, they contributed all the necessary resources to ensure that the children were well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for their lives (Cungua *et al*, 2003) to enable them contribute meaningfully to the social, economic, and technological development of their societies.

Unfortunately, the beliefs and values of the traditional set up have broken down due to prevailing dynamic social changes. Many young people do not benefit from what used to be available from the community. In most cases, most parents do not have sufficient knowledge, skills and proper attitudes for bringing up their children.

This situation became worse with the advent of the new economic situation where both parents are forced to rely on salaries from external employers. This forces children to be abandoned for most of the day either alone or in the care of baby-sitters who are largely untrained. Grandparents and other members of the community are not around to watch over their nuclear families. Extended families are, as a matter of fact, becoming non existent. This called for the need for the education of the children at the early stages of their lives and consequently the need for the government to be involved in Early Childhood Education at the earliest possible stage as well as the establishment of pre-schools to cater for the children.

Contentious efforts were made to kick start Early Childhood Education in Ghana and Africa as a whole. During the early years in the 1950s, UNESCO supported the Early Childhood Programmes of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, an international non-governmental organisation, focusing on children from age 0 to 8 years. In the early 1970s international efforts focused on the promotion of a child's right to education and UNESCO began to be directly involved in the field of Early Childhood Education, particularly pre-primary education and parent education.

By 1979, Early Childhood Programmes became increasingly viewed as an issue beyond the scope of formal education. More emphasis was placed on establishing a comprehensive approach to early childhood and fostering an environment conducive to a child's learning and self-expression. This led to the coining of the term 'Early Childhood Care and Education' to describe activities for pre-school children at the UNESCO-sponsored International Consultation on Pre-School Education in November 1981 (UNESCO, 2000).

At UNESCO's 25th General Conference in 1989, delegates agreed that the organisation should embark on a Young Child and the Family Environment Project to coordinate all activities undertaken by UNESCO to benefit pre-school children and their families. This project formed the basis of the Early Childhood

section within UNESCO's Division of Basic Education (UNESCO, 2000). The section has the mission to safeguard and promote the development of young children and to ensure their smooth transition from home to early childhood centres and later to primary education.

The policy development work on Early Childhood Care and Education is guided by the "1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All" held in Jomtien in Thailand, stating that learning begins at birth and that Early Childhood Care and Education is an essential component of basic education. Based on the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action, which had included the development of Early Childhood Care and Education as the first of its six main goals, UNESCO sought to expand and improve comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education for all children (UNESCO, 2000). Within this framework, UNESCO's Early Childhood Programmes focused on upstream policy work, supporting governments through policy review, capacity building and publication activities. Gracia, Vitara, and Dunkelburg (2008:24), however, reported that in spite of the great effort UNESCO put in place to ensure that more children get access to Early Childhood Education, only 12 percent of the early childhood age children were in school by 2004 in Sub-Saharan African countries including Ghana.

The Education Act of 1961 which is the principal legislation on the right to education in Ghana states in section 2 (1) that "every child who has attained school going age as determined by the Minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognised by the Minister" (Ghana Education Service, 2004). From human rights perspective children have the right to live and develop to their full potential. UNESCO (2000) indicates that education is a fundamental human right that has to be supported by all people. Every child should be recognised and supported to get education as much as possible. As such denying children a chance to participate in Early Childhood Education is in essence denying them an opportunity to get the best education for their lives.

Early Childhood Education was not a component of the Basic Education in Ghana. Before the 2007 Educational Reforms, Early Childhood Education was mainly run by private individuals even though there were Early Childhood Education Policies that have been put in place to promote Early Childhood Education. This resulted in an increase in the number of private schools or international schools in Ghana. During that period of time more than half of the entire Early Childhood Education children's enrolment was accounted for by private institutions including neighbourhood associations, churches, mosques and private providers (Garcia *et al*, 2008:24).

The provision of Early Childhood Education services by the communities and private sector alone created a chaotic situation over the years where the government had very little control or mandate for coordination, control and support of the centres. No wonder challenges of quality and access especially among children in rural communities have continued to the present time (National Statistical Office, 2008:8). In Ghana, most of the kindergarten schools were established by private individuals who wanted to do business and some NGOs. This resulted in schools sited in urban communities where enrolment was high and so majority of poor and rural communities did not benefit from their services (Ayebah, 2009). The increase in the number of private schools was partly due to the crumbling nature of public schools in the country at that time and this brought about the urgent need for the government to find an alternative form of education for Ghanaian children.

During that period of time there seemed to be no standard curricula or activities, nor was there any guideline from the Ministry of Education on pre-school education in Ghana. Even in the elementary school section these private schools followed no guidelines from the Education Ministry; it was free for all and very chaotic indeed with respect to what is taught and how it is taught.

In January, 2002 the government set up a committee to review the entire educational system of the country with the view to arriving at decisions that would make the educational system responsive to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Working under the theme "Meeting the Challenges of Education in the Twenty First Century," the Committee came out with a comprehensive report dealing with current issues affecting access to quality and relevant education in the country (Ghana Education Service, 2004). The President's Education Review Committee was of the view that "The philosophy underlying the educational system in Ghana should be the creation of well balanced (intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically) individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills, values and aptitudes for self-actualisation and for the socio-economic and political transformation of the nation". The basic education underwent drastic reforms to include the basic compulsory education system (Ghana Education Service, 2004). Consequently, education for children aged 4-6 years became an integral part of the formal educational system in Ghana in 2003, following recommendations from the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms about the importance of early childhood development. Early Childhood Education therefore has become an integral part of our basic education for teaching pre-school children (Donkor, 2011) and has been made compulsory before proceeding to

primary school.

The government in his bid to enhance quality pre-school education in the country and to improve the developmental readiness for learning of children aged 4-5 years, has mandated the District Assemblies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) churches and communities to provide resources to support the expansion of kindergarten facilities. It was the aim of the government that every child in Ghana has access to quality kindergarten education and to ensure that all primary school children have basic education that is rooted in good kindergarten training.

Pre-school education aims at helping children in the early childhood stage to develop their skills especially using their hands in making things, thus unearthing and developing their hidden talents. This lays foundation for writing which is a fundamental skill they need in later years. Pre-school education teaches very important skills like hand washing to prevent diseases, teeth brushing after meals to prevent tooth decay and developing cavities, and also cleanliness in general because it promotes healthy life. This is done in an interactive way through story telling, reading books, and also through videos and drama and skit put together by the kids with their teachers' guidance (Donkor, 2011). More importantly, pre-school education teaches children human relations. These include the importance of living together, working together, playing together, giving and sharing, loving themselves and loving others. This teaches the children the importance of life, how precious it is and the need not to harm, neither kick nor hit anyone. Children are also taught how to show appreciation to their parents, teachers, friends, and how and when to say sorry if they offend their friends, parents, and teachers. The basic life skills that define human society bind us together; enable society to work in cohesion so that we can enjoy our God given life in peace. At such an early age the emphasis is not on competition and there is less individual work but more cooperative effort. It is based on cooperating to do things together. Children are put in pairs and groups to cooperate to solve simple tasks. This helps to develop the spirit of cooperation and helping each other. More outdoor activities designed for the children help them build cooperative skill quickly instead of confining them to the classroom for long hours.

The Western region of Ghana has made a great stride in establishing and running pre-schools. The region which is made up of seventeen (17) districts has one hundred and twenty six (126) educational circuits. Currently there are one thousand five hundred and one (1,501) pre-schools consisting of nurseries, and Kindergartens. The 2010/2011 academic year's statistics shows that the enrolment of children in the pre-school stands at 145, 371 comprising of 72, 649 boys and 72, 729 girls. Kindergarten one (KG1) enrolment in the region has a total enrolment of 84, 834 comprising of 42, 266 boys and 42, 568 girls while kindergarten two enrolment stands at 60463. Wassa Amenfi West District has the largest enrolment (15,651) and Tarkwa Nsuaem District the least (5,303) enrolment for pre-school children in the region.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is very important as far as the government's quest to provide quality education and care, and free and compulsory primary Education for children in this country. Early Childhood development is a foundation on which our education for all and especially basic education should be founded (Mwai, 2003).

Consequently, it is the responsibility of the stakeholders to create congenial learning environment for laying strong foundation for our basic education by providing early childhood schools with appropriate learning environment and relevant materials to facilitate the development of skills and successful implementation of early childhood programmes to ensure easy integration of early childhood children in primary schools.

However, it is common to see a lot of early childhood children learning in dilapidated and ill-equipped classrooms. It is a wonder how stakeholders in early childhood education who are supposed to provide congenial learning environment and ensure successful implementation of early childhood programmes perceive early childhood education. Their perception of early childhood education reflects the way they perform their roles in the implementation of early childhood programmes and policies in the region. It is therefore pertinent to find out the perceptions of the stakeholders and how their perceptions influence the performance of their roles in the implementation of early childhood programmes and policies.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of the stakeholders in early childhood education in the western region of Ghana. It was also to determine how their perceptions affect the performance of their roles in the implementation of early childhood education programmes in the Western Region of Ghana.

#### **Research Questions**

- Which of the stakeholders are actively involved in the implementation of early childhood education programmes in the Western Region?
- What are the perceptions of the stakeholders in early childhood education in the western region?

- How do the perceptions of the stakeholders affect the implementation of early childhood education programmes in the Western Region?
- Is there a relationship between the stakeholders perceptions and the level at which they play their roles in the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies in the region?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study would help identify the stakeholders that are actively involved in the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies in the region. Also, the findings of the study would reveal the stakeholders' perception of early childhood education and how these perceptions influence the performance of their roles to ensure successful implementation of early childhood education policies and programmes. This would help policy planners to plan relevant policies and programmes that would promote early childhood education in the region.

It would also help the government to design pragmatic strategies to educate other stakeholders on the relevance of early childhood education in the region so that they would all put their hands together to ensure successful implementation of early childhood education programmes and quality primary education in the region.

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology frame of the study was under:

#### **Research Design**

The study was designed as a quantitative inquiry to determine the stakeholders' perceptions of early childhood education and how their perceptions affected the performance of their roles in the implementations of early childhood programmes and policies in the Western Region of Ghana. Qualitative designs are naturalist to the extent that the research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon. The phenomenon of interest unfold naturally (Patton, 2002).

#### **Study Population**

Parents who have their children in early childhood schools, community members, early childhood education teachers, members of religious organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations who are involved in early childhood education activities in the Western Region formed the population of the study. Early childhood education teachers who have taught in pre-schools for at least two years and were abreast with trends in early childhood education in the region were selected for the study.

#### **Sampling Procedure**

Eight districts out of the thirteen districts of the Western Region where early childhood education takes place were randomly selected for the study using the lottery type of simple random sampling technique. The stratified sampling technique was used to sample the participants in each of the 8 districts. The sample size was one thousand two hundred (1200).

#### **Research Instrument**

Two types of instrument were used to gather information for the study. The instruments were self devised questionnaire and structured interview guide. The questionnaire was designed for the literate respondents and interview guide for the illiterate parents to ensure gathering adequate and relevant information for the study. Patton (2002) stated that an interview guide provides topic or subsets areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. A guide is essential in conducting focus group interviews for it keeps the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge. The tools were designed in relations to the research questions set for the study.

The questionnaire was designed into three main parts; part one was on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second and third parts were on the stakeholders' perceptions and the effects of their perceptions on the implementation of early childhood programmes and policies in the region. The items were of the closed ended type to ensure easy and rapid response to the items.

#### **Data Collection**

The participants were interviewed at their places of work with the help of the interview guide. The questionnaires were distributed personally by the researchers to the participants in the selected districts after taking permission from the respective headteachers. With the aid of the pre-school teachers who directed the researchers to the various homes and workplaces of the parents, the researchers personally interviewed the selected parents and members in the community with the aid of the interview guide.

#### **Data Analysis**

Statistical tools used to summarise the data were percentages, mean, standard deviation and Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. Tabulation and calculation of percentages, means, and standard deviations were

used to determine the perceptions of the stakeholders in early childhood education as well as the effects of the stakeholders' perceptions on the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies in the region. Pearson moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the stakeholders' perceptions and the level of performance of their roles in the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies.

### Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents respondents' responses on stakeholders who actively participate in the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies in the region.

**Table 1: Stakeholders Who Actively Participate in Early Childhood Education in the Western Region**

Stakeholders	Number	Percentage
Government	401	33.4
Parents	300	25.0
Teachers	342	28.5
Non-Governmental Organisations	15	1.3
Religious Organisations	3	0.3
community	111	9.3
District and Municipal Assemblies	28	2.3
Total	1200	100.0

The results of the study show that stakeholders who are actively involved in the implementation of early childhood education policies and programmes in the region are the government (33.4%), parents (25.0%), teachers (28.5%) and the members of community (9.3%). Religious organisations, non-governmental organisations do not actively participate in early childhood education activities in the region. They contribute very little if not any to the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies, hence their presence is not much felt in the region as far as early childhood education programmes and policies are concerned.

### Stakeholders' Perception of Early Childhood Education in Western Region

Table 2 presents respondents' responses on the perceptions of stakeholders in early childhood education in the Western Region of Ghana. Their perception was measured on a four point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (SD) through disagree (D), agree (A) to strongly agreed (SA).

The stakeholders agreed to the statement that teaching at the pre-school can be done by any teacher whether the person is a professional teacher or not (mean =3.2). There was no variation in their responses (standard deviation =0.51). Teachers, by virtue of their training, are to guide and direct the total growth and development of children (Mankoe, 2000). This indicates the respondents are not aware of what pre-school education entails and the requisite skills and knowledge needed for handling the pre-school children. The large number of untrained teachers in the early childhood schools in the region may be due to this perception. Also, it is sad to note that because they perceive that any teacher can teach pre-school children, some officials at the District, Municipal or Metropolitan Education Offices post teachers who did not specialise in Early Childhood Education to the pre-schools. Even though such teachers are trained, they lack the skills and methodologies for handling pre-school children. Such teachers become frustrated in the classroom and do not know exactly what to do. This low level of perception of pre-school teachers has invariably adversely affected the implementation of Early Childhood Education Programmes and Policies in the region.

Besides, the stakeholders were of the view that the pre-school is only a place where children play but do not do serious learning (mean = 3.1). However, there was variation in their responses (standard deviation =1.04). This implies that while some of the stakeholders perceive early childhood to be associated with only playing other were of the view that it is a place for serious learning where relevant skills are acquired early in the lives of the children which they cannot temper with. The perception the stakeholders have that pre-school is a place where children play has influence on the way children are taught in the schools. Most pre-school teachers associate Early Childhood Education with ordinary singing and dancing. The initiative to improvise some of the

unavailable materials for effective teaching and learning is not there and they deliberately refuse to make frantic effort to look for such instructional materials for their lessons to promote the development of skills and acquisition of knowledge.

Also, the stakeholders perceive the primary and Junior High Schools to be more important than the pre-school and as a result they need special attention than the pre-schools (mean =3.9). This perception of the stakeholders reflects the way they treat the early childhood children in the region. It is very common to see the officers of the district, municipal and metropolitan educational directorate assigning better classroom facilities to the primary and junior high schools while the early childhood children are in dilapidated classrooms full of sand and dust. This perception has adverse effects on pre-school teachers' performance of their duties as well as pre-school children's acquisition of skills for effective primary education.

In addition, as many as 51.2 percent of the respondents, who were the majority, disagreed that pre-school provides the foundation for all round development of children. This was the perception of almost all the respondents as a standard deviation of 0.87 shows. Asenso-Boakye (2005) perceived pre-school education differently. To him successful early childhood care and stimulation programmes lay the foundation for creativity, imagination, self-reliance and survival of the child. The success of children in school to a large extent determines their success as adults, determining whether they can go to college, what professions they enter, and how much they are paid. Because they perceive the pre-school not to be the foundation of their children's education they do not have the urge to help provide the necessary materials and equipment needed to promote effective pre-school education in the region.

Furthermore, the respondents disagreed that parents' involvement in early childhood education has little effects on the child's performance in School. The implication was that they perceive that parents' involvement in early childhood education has great impact on their children's education. This perception should rather urge the stakeholders to do their utmost best to help create suitable environment in the school to promote early childhood education in the region for the smooth provision of early childhood education for the children because children who receive quality pre-school education are more likely to succeed in the school and life (Nord & Lenmon (2000).

Finally, the stakeholders perceived that pre-school education has little effect on the child's behaviour and academic achievement (mean = 3.4). There was no variation in their responses. The implication of their responses is that pre-school has little influence in shaping the behaviour of children; meaning whether they would be of good behaviour or not is not influenced by the initial training they receive at pre-school. It also means that pre-school does not affect their academic performance of the early childhood pupils later in the life. However, it must be noted that pre-school is the foundation of children's academic performance and moral behaviour are determined by the nature of pre-school education they receive at childhood. Donkor (2011) reported that pre-school education lays foundation for writing which is a fundamental skill they need in later years. Pre-school education teaches very important skills like hand washing to prevent diseases, teeth brushing after meals to prevent tooth decay and developing cavities, and also cleanliness in general because it promotes healthy life.

**Table 2: Stakeholders' perception of Early Childhood Education in Western Region**

Statement	SD		D		A		SA		Mean	Stand. dev.
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Teaching at the pre-school can be done by teacher	51	4.3	401	33.4	518	43.2	230	19.2	3.6	0.51
The pre-school is only a place where child play but do not do serious learning	43	3.6	513	42.8	403	33.6	241	20.1	3.1	1.04
The primary and JHS are more important than the pre-school	82	6.9	102	.5	795	66.3	220	18.3	3.9	0.93
Pre-school provides the foundation for all round development of the children	206	17.2	614	51.2	282	23.5	98	8.2	2.4	0.87
Parents' involvement in early childhood education has little effects on the child's performance in School.	120	10.0	508	42.3	500	41.7	72	6.0	2.01	1.02
Pre-school education has little effect on child's behaviour and academic achievement.	79	6.6	100	8.3	639	53.3	382	31.8	3.4	0.94

**Effects of Stakeholders' Perception on the Performance of Their Roles in the Implementation of Early Childhood Education Policies and Programmes in the Region**

Table 3 shows the extent to which stakeholders' perceptions influence the performance of their roles in the implementation of early childhood education policies and programmes in the region. The respondents' responses were measured on a four point likert scale ranging from Very Good, Good, Fair, to poor.

From Table 3, it was observed that assistance given to pre-school teachers in the preparation of teaching and learning materials was rated poor (mean= 1.9). It was a unanimous response provided by the respondents (standard deviation = 0.54), implying the other stakeholders rarely assist the pre-school teachers in the preparation of teaching and learning materials for effective teaching and learning in the region. Teaching and learning materials are very important in the transmission of knowledge and development of skills at the pre-school. The poor rating of stakeholders' contribution in the preparation of instructional materials implies the early childhood schools have inadequate teaching and learning materials for effective teaching and learning since the teachers alone cannot prepare all the instructional material needed for teaching and learning. Successful implementation of early childhood programmes depends to a large extent on the level of availability of instructional materials. Cungua *et al*, (2003) indicated 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 necessary. Parents and other stakeholders are expected to assist the teachers in the preparation of teaching and learning materials for the pre-schools and contribute ideas and resources for the curriculum of the pre-school children.

Then also, the stakeholders' contribution of financial resources to finance implementation of early childhood programmes and polices in the region was rated fair (mean = 2.7). There was variation in respondents' responses (standard deviation = 1.91); meaning some of the respondents were of the view that stakeholders provide adequate financial resources for financing early childhood programmes and policies while other do not. An adequate financial resource is needed for effective implementation of early childhood policies and programmes. For example schools that are not captured by the school feeding programme, it is the responsibility of the parents to cater for their children's snack and lunch. In such schools, each child is expected to pay GH¢0.40 for snack and lunch daily. Also, where the government has not employed a cook for the school, the parents have to pay additional GH¢0.10 for the payment of the cook. Most parents refuse to pay this amount of money for the up keep of their children. The kindergarten teachers have to find possible means to provide snack and lunch for the children. This reflects the perception the parents have about Early Childhood Education and this has serious repercussion on the administration and management of the pre-schools. Kathyanga, (2011) similarly reported that there are indications that the funds are not enough to provide adequate resources for all the Early Childhood for effective implementation of early childhood programmes in Malawi.

Also, on the maintenance of structures in the school, the stakeholders were rated fair (mean = 2.51). However, they varied in their responses (standard deviation = 1.16). Most of the early childhood schools



especially those in the rural areas have structures made of local materials and such structures need periodic maintenance to keep them in good position for effective teaching and learning. The respondents' responses show that the stakeholders have not been performing this role effectively and this has resulted in dilapidated classrooms. Such classrooms have pot holes which render instructional materials, early childhood children and the pre-school teachers as well as their day care assistants dusty daily. Some of the Early Childhood Centres have no toilet and urinal facilities for the children and pre-school teachers so they attend nature's call in the bushes. It is a well know fact that early childhood children have very short attention span and keeping them in dilapidated structures where they are easily attracted by objects in the environment make them loose concentration, hence adversely affecting teaching and learning as well as development of skills.

In addition, the stakeholders' role in the provision of play kits and other materials resources to the pre-schools was rated poor (mean = 1.51). There was no variation in their responses (standard deviation = 0.89). It must be noted that early childhood teachers and children need adequate resources for effective teaching and learning. Consequently, a well established centre should have activity area, play ground, school garden and out door equipment. The issue of not providing the early childhood schools with adequate resources create a great challenge for effective teaching and learning as well as development of skill (Kathyanga, 2011). The Government through the Ministry of Education commit resources for Early Childhood services in the region. However, there are indications that the funds are not enough to provide adequate resources for all the Early Childhood Centres in the region. It is therefore the responsibility of other stakeholders to supplement what the government provides but these stakeholders such as parents and the NGOs have not been doing much to equip early childhood school with adequate resources. The play kit which seems to be available in most Day Care Centres is the "See Saw." Other play kits such as the "Swing", "Merry Go Round", etc are virtually unavailable. If they are at all, they are out of use. In addition, most Day Care centres do not have even school gardens where these play kits can be displayed for the children to play with.

Furthermore, for attendance of Parent Teacher Association meetings (means =3.14) and graduation ceremonies (mean = 3.01), the stakeholders were rated good; while there was no variation in the respondents' responses on attendance of PTA meeting, there was variation in the respondents' response on attendance of graduation ceremonies. This implies stakeholders have been attending PTA meetings to take vital decisions on the welfare of the early childhood children and how to promote implementation of early childhood education programmes in the region. They also have been gracing graduation ceremonies to give such ceremonies the importance they deserve so that parents will see the need to send their children to early childhood schools. Through such meeting they are able to identify the needs of the pre-schools and assist create conducive atmosphere in the pre-schools to facilitate teaching and learning as well as development of skills by providing them with the needed support and logistics. For example, Tanokrom Metropolitan Assembly Day Care Centre in the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly has a vibrant and functional Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC) that provide the centre with some educational materials for effective teaching and learning.

Finally, the stakeholders' assistance in the administration and management of the pre-schools was rated poor (mean =1.27). The teachers and other stakeholders are responsible for running the day to day affairs of the pre-schools by ensuring that there are adequate material and financial resources for effective teaching and learning and development of skills such as writing, reading etc. Their partial involvement in the day to day administration and management of the pre-schools implies there are inadequate material and financial resources for the pre-schools. This has the tendency of adversely affecting teaching and learning in the pre-schools. Consequently development of relevant skills to ensure quality primary education in the region would certainly be very difficult to achieve.

**Table 3: Effects of Stakeholders Perception on Performance of Their Roles in the Implementation of Early Childhood Programmes Polices**

Performance of Stakeholder's roles	Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Mean	Stand. dev.
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Assisting in preparation of teaching aids	945	78.7	103	8.6	87	7.3	65	5.4	1.9	0.54
Contribution of financial resources to finance early childhood programmes	37	3.1	762	63.5	371	30.8	30	2.5	2.7	1.91
Maintenance of structures in the school	105	8.8	497	41.4	352	29.2	201	16.8	2.51	1.67
Provision of play kits and other material resources to the school	792	66.0	261	21.8	93	7.8	54	4.4	1.51	0.89
Attendance of PTA meetings.	15	1.3	70	5.8	908	75.6	207	17.3	3.14	0.15
Attendance of graduation ceremonies	105	8.8	463	38.5	512	42.6	120	10.0	3.01	1.43
Assisting in the administration and management of the pre-schools.	869	72.4	124	10.2	200	16.7	12	1.0	1.27	0.92

### Relationship between Stakeholders' Perception of Early Childhood Education and their level of Performance of their Roles

Table 4 shows the results of Pearson Moment Correlation coefficients between the stakeholders' level of perception of early childhood education and the performance of the roles in promoting successful implementation of early childhood programmes and polices in the region. The relationship was measured at 0.05 alpha level.

There was a positive and strong relationship between stakeholders' level of perception and provision of play kits and other material resources to the pre-schools ( $r=0.810$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This implies that when the stakeholders' perception of early childhood education is raised it would lead to a corresponding increase in the provision of play kits and other material resources to the early childhood centres for effective teaching and learning which eventually leads to quality primary education.

Also, the relationship between stakeholders' perception and their contribution of financial resources to finance early childhood programmes and policies was positive and substantial ( $r= 0.627$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) implying high perception of early childhood education in the region would result in massive contribution of financial resources for the day to day administration of early childhood programmes and policies. Adequate financial resources would ensure provision of adequate infrastructural and material resources for successful development of skills in the early childhood children

Furthermore, the relationship between the stakeholders' level of perception of early childhood education and their ability to main structures in the school was found to be positive but moderate ( $r=0.584$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This means the stakeholders would able to maintain structures in the early childhood centres if they have high perception of early education.

However, the relationship between stakeholders perception of early childhood education and assistance giving in the preparation of teaching aids was positive but weak ( $0.219$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Similar positive but weak relationship was found to exist between stakeholders' perception and their attendance of PTA meetings ( $r=0.391$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and graduation ceremonies ( $r=0.197$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

Also, assistance giving by the stakeholders in the administration and management of the early childhood schools correlate positively but weakly with their perception of early childhood education ( $r=0.019$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Generally, stakeholders' perception of early childhood education correlates positively with the performance of their roles in the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies.

**Table 4: Relationship between Stakeholders' Perception of Early Childhood Education and their level of Performance of their Roles**

<b>Roles of stakeholders in early childhood education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>(r)</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Provision of play kits and other material resources to the school	1200	.000	0.810**	Significant
Contribution of financial resources to finance early childhood programmes	1200	.000	0.627**	Significant
Maintenance of structures in the school	1200	.000	0.584**	Significant
Assisting in preparation of teaching aids	1200	.000	0.219**	Significant
Attendance of PTA meetings	1200	.000	0.391**	Significant
Attendance of graduation ceremonies	1200	.003	0.197**	Significant
Assisting in the administration and management of the pre-schools.	1200	.003	0.019**	Significant

### Summary

The findings of the study show that the government, parents, teachers and community members actively participate in early childhood education activities in the region.

The stakeholders' perceived that teaching at the pre-school can be done by any teacher irrespective of one's level of training and academic qualification. Therefore they were of the view that teachers with Middle School Certificate and Senior High School/Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination/ West African Secondary School Certificate Examination can effectively teach in the pre-school. They also perceived that pre-school is a place where parents can conveniently leave their children to enable them have adequate time to attend to other important issues and come for the children after the days' work. They were of the view that parents' involvement in early childhood education has little effects on the child's performance in School; Primary and Junior High schools are perceived to be of much importance to the stakeholder than the pre-school.

The stakeholders have been attending PTA meetings and graduation ceremonies to help take vital decisions on the activities of early childhood education in the region. However, they have not been assisting the teachers in the preparation of teaching and learning materials for teaching and learning. They have not been contributing financial resources to finance implementation of early childhood programmes and polices as well as maintaining structures such as classrooms, toilets, and urinals. In addition, they have not been providing adequate play kits and other material resources for teaching and learning and development of skills. Similarly, their participation in the administration and management of pre-schools in the region is relatively low.

### Conclusion

The Stakeholder in the Western Region of Ghana have low perception of early childhood education and this adversely affects the way they play their roles in the implementation of early childhood education polices and programmes in the region. Their low perception of early childhood education also has adverse effects on the performance of their roles to ensure effective implementation of early childhood programmes and policies in the region.

### Recommendations

Based on the results of the study the following recommendations were made:

Religious organisations, District and Municipal Assemblies as well as non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to participate actively in the implementation of early childhood programmes and policies in the region. Their active participation in early childhood educational activities would help promote early childhood education in the region so that solid foundation could be laid for the child to have high quality education.

The government through the Regional and District Directors of Education should increase the level of awareness of the other stakeholders that teaching in the pre-school can be effectively carried out by teachers who have specially been trained in early childhood education and as such have been equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge in early childhood education. Increasing their level of awareness would help them to do every thing possible to support such teachers to effectively teach the pre-school children to promote early childhood education in the region.

The government and teachers should educate the other stakeholders to perform their roles effectively to promote effective implementation of early childhood programmes and policies in the region. By so doing would

ensure that adequate material and financial resources would be provided to help the pre-schools have adequate materials and play kits for effective teaching and learning and development of skills.

The teachers should periodically organise open days to sensitise parents and other stakeholders on the importance of early childhood education in the mental, physical, emotional and behavioural development of the pre-school children and the need for them to effectively play their parts for successful implementation of early childhood programmes and policies and promote early childhood education in the region and Ghana as a whole.

The government and teacher need to educate the parents and other stakeholders that it is their responsibility to assist in the administration of the pre-schools in the region. Such education could be done through the electronic media, mass media, and forums. This would help them appreciate the importance of early childhood education in our educational system. They would see the need for them to join hands in the administration and management of early childhood schools in the region to help train early childhood children effectively and lay solid foundations for the primary schools

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