Challenges Educators Face in Incorporating Indigenous Story-Based Pedagogy (ISBP) into Classroom Instruction: Evidence from Bongo District, Ghana

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Abstract
Indigenous story-based pedagogy in early childhood education plays a significant role in knowledge construction as situated in the cultural ecosystem of learners. The study assessed early childhood educators' challenges in incorporating indigenous story-based pedagogy in the Bongo District of Ghana. The research employed a qualitative study approach. Research participants were chosen through a purposive and convenient sampling strategies to provide information for the study. Forty (40) participants of early childhood educators and headteachers were interviewed using an interview guide with questions framed from the research questions to elicit qualitative data from them. The approach was triangulated by observing educators' work in the classroom and views from key informants from the Bongo education directorate. Key findings of the research emerged that early childhood educators demonstrate inadequate knowledge of indigenous story-based pedagogy in the classroom. Insufficient skills in creative pedagogy using indigenous stories, negative attitude towards early childhood education, and indigenous stories as a tool for teaching. Others are inadequate related teaching and learning resources (TLRs), ineffective policy implementation of the KG curriculum, and the general concentration on Eurocentric-based curriculum and pedagogic approaches. Therefore, the study recommends revising training content and context for educators to incorporate indigenous based-stories in the classroom, in-service training for educators on the field on the policy. Framing training modules for educators should depict the local knowledge systems and ensure effective implementation of policies and curricula. School authorities should strengthen school-community relations and the need for educators to develop a positive attitude towards the pedagogy of indigenous knowledge systems.
Keywords: Indigenous story-based pedagogy, educators, indigenous knowledge systems, pedagogy, early childhood education.
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1. Introduction and background to the study

Learning stimulation grounded in indigenous stories form part of primary instructional strategies through which educators transmit society's values, images, ideas, cultures, and history to learners (Mello, 2001; Andrews, Hull & Donahue, 2009). Andrews, Hull, and Donahue (2009) posit that using stories as an instructional tool remains relevant in the present pedagogy systems because stories have positive instructional effects in concept appreciation in learning. Whenever children arrive home from school, they tell stories of the events during the day. Storytelling is a precursor to lessons that shape texts in books or educators' content in the classroom. In Chenu Achebe's book, Anthills of the Savannah (1987), cited in Tuwe (2016), he illuminates the relevance of stories in our daily lives as it entertains, informs, and instructs children. Stories play a critical pedagogical role in enhancing learners' language, emotional, listening, and communication skills development (Foy, 2009; Gnjatavic, 2015).

In particular, the use of indigenous stories which form part of local instructive genres in class pedagogy at the early childhood education level, has been very well recognized. According to Leautier (2004, p.4), as part of advocacy by the World Bank for indigenous capacity enhancement, expressed concern that "capacity enhancement efforts without the opportunity to apply every capacity in a local context are likely to be ineffective." The Bank, in this regard, was loud in articulating that the possibility of enhancing a community's capacity among various approaches includes incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into development drive including school curriculum and documenting them. The United Nation's declaration of International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004) aimed to strengthen international frontiers and seek remedies to the challenges facing indigenous people in various fields, including education.

Since the ancient era in Africa, stories framed in the continent's culture have passed onto generations the relevant codes, values, and acceptable behaviors to uphold the social order (Tuwe, 2016). According to Shizha (2007, p. 303), "in Africa, studies that focus on indigenous knowledge and education are growing as attested to at the SCECSAL conference of 2002, which was fully dedicated to indigenous knowledge research". Oduolowu and Oluwakemi (2014) assert that in traditional African societies, children are socialized through stories narrated to

them by uncles, grandparents, parents, and aunts. They argue that though indigenous stories are not documented, they still maintain their originality after generations as tools of disseminating knowledge. Stories are among the most valued sources of indigenous knowledge and vehicles for transmitting culturally relevant expertise in early childhood programmes (Pence & Schafer, 2006; Ng'asike, 2014). Ngugi wa Thiago (1982), a renowned Nigerian indigenous writer, argues that stories if known to their audience, inspire them to participate in the narration process actively and learn an essential aspect of their culture that can positively impact their present lives.

In the Ghanaian context, available studies support the formalization of indigenous pedagogy, hence using indigenous stories, particularly in early childhood pedagogy (Dei, 2008 & Arlo; Abdulai, 2016; Agbagbla, 2017). Various policies that undergird the provision of early childhood education across the country underpins the significance of indigenous communities and their knowledge systems as resources in learning in the classroom (ECCD, 2004; KG curriculum, 2006; Anamuah Mensah Education Review Report, 2002, KG curriculum, 2019, ECE Policy, 2020). A conducive locally-oriented learning environment is derived from the type of pedagogy employed by educators in the classroom that adapts the indigenous practices of learners. Conversation on the relevance of indigenous stories in childhood learning remains ripe in the education space as articulated in the policy prescriptions and curricula over the years in Ghana. The 2004 early childhood care and development policy and the current 2020 policy communicate the need to contextualize pedagogy using learners' indigenous local resources and the curriculum recognized the need for stories situated in the indigenous practices of learners for effective learning participation and cultural identity.

The Anamuah Mensah Education Review Report reiterated the use of learners' community resources, including stories, cultural practices, and artifacts mediated by the local language as foundational tools for teaching in the classroom. In a similar vein, Abdulai (2016), in research on indigenous play in Ghana, also supported the relevance of indigenous practices and called for a concerted effort to make them a significant part of early childhood education policy and practice. Although successive early childhood education policies and curricular in Ghana recognize indigenous stories as critical component of classroom pedagogical tools, the effectiveness of their implementation and the challenges therein is not evidenced in empirical findings. The aim of this research is to bring to bear how educators in the classroom incorporate indigenous story - based pedagogy in knowledge construction in the classroom as a means to strengthen the relationship between the school environment and the home by enhancing these indigenous strategies of pedagogy which allow learners to integrate their experiences with the school instruction.

1.1 Problem Analysis and Statement of the Problem

The significance of indigenous stories is evidenced in their effectiveness towards both cognitive skills and indigenous knowledge development (Schafer et al., 2004). A cross-cultural pedagogy that incorporates indigenous knowledge in early childhood education creates a bridge to facilitate western and indigenous perspectives (Ng'asike, 2014).

Ghana has an organized traditional way of socializing children to ensure that they are brought up according to her cultural practices' social and valued knowledge (Cungua et al., 2003 in Lemaire, Amoah, Ntsiful, Micah& Bonney, 2013). These values are articulated in other empirical evidence in the education space for children (Dei, 2010; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011; Abdulai, 2016 & Agbagbla, 2017). The Ghanaian early childhood education policy and curriculum recognize the role of indigenous resources in pedagogy, including stories and other tools educators use (ECCD policy, 2004; KG curriculum, 2006; Dei & Arlo, 2008, KG curriculum, 2019, Kg curriculum, 2020). The policies and curricular outline a framework for educators to use diverse activities, strategies, and tools to make lessons relevant to developing the psychomotor, affective, and cognitive domains of learners and appreciate their cultural environment and worldviews

However, several studies shed light that educators do not employ these cultural context-based pedagogical tools, including indigenous stories at the early childhood level (Dei, 2008 &Arlo; Nabie, 2015; Ntumi, 2016; Abdulai, 2016; Agbagbla, 2017). Even though the early childhood policy and curriculum prescribes child- centered activity-based pedagogy for children in the context of the local environment of learners (ECCD, 2004; KG Curriculum; 2006, ESP 2010-2020; ESP-2018-2030), the use of indigenous stories in classroom pedagogy remains a problem. The consequence of this experience is that, though indigenous stories are recognized as relevant tools to educate children, they are not effectively utilized in the classroom. They are gradually disappearing because they are not documented and used in the school; this is in addition to urbanization, which negatively impacts the existing values of the indigenous knowledge system (Phiri, 2008).

Given the concerns above, the problem for the study is the low and ineffective incorporation of indigenous stories into Ghana's early childhood pedagogy, which can be attributed to some underlying challenges. The research, therefore, aims to unravel the challenges that early childhood educators face towards the incorporation of indigenous story-based pedagogy in the classroom in the Bongo District in Ghana. Thus, the study seeks to explore the perceptions of early childhood educators of indigenous story-based pedagogy and the challenges they face in incorporating them into classroom pedagogy. The following questions accordingly underpinned the

research.

1.2 Research questions
1. What perceptions do early childhood educators have of indigenous story-based pedagogy?
2. What challenges do early childhood educators in the Bongo District face in incorporating indigenous story-based pedagogy into the classroom?

1.3 Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the field research exercise was to investigate how early childhood educators incorporate indigenous stories in their classroom pedagogy, focusing on the challenges they face. The findings are significant because they provide relevant information to training institutions, instructional planners, and administrators regarding framing and using indigenous stories in the classroom. Education institutions will find the outcome pertinent in preparing educators for practice. It will also suggest how school–community relations could be revitalized to share relevant knowledge towards the holistic socialization of learners. The study is expected to ignite further the debate on the position of indigenous knowledge systems in the Ghanaian education system besides the policy rhetoric.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Introduction
In the following section, literature will be reviewed on the concepts of stories, forms, importance, stories as tools for pedagogy, pedagogy of indigenous stories and indigenous knowledge inculcation, and finally, the challenges with incorporating indigenous stories in early childhood pedagogy.

2.2 The concept of stories/storytelling
Stories do not have a clear definition as a concept with multiple applications. They are intimate sharing of narration with more persons (Phillips, 1999). It is one of the earliest means of communication and part of most cultures (Boateng, 1983). "It is a method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events" (Labov, 1972 cited in Andrews, Hall & Donahue, 2009, p.7). In the era that no writing existed, stories were how societies transmitted their culture, values, and history to one other (Egan, 1989, cited in Andrews, Hall & Donahue, 2009). Stories can be narrated either from memory or from a book. Whereas storytelling refers to the narration of collection from memory, story reading involves reading a story from a book. Stories as referred to in this context is the telling other than reading. Storytelling in early childhood education uses voice and involves gestures, facial expressions, and movements that make the stories effective in both amusement and learning in schools. The use of stories, particularly indigenous-based narrations, expands the extent of knowledge assimilation to contextualize the indigenous practices of learners in various settings.

2.3 Forms and characteristics of stories
Miller (2015) has classified stories into some three forms for pedagogy:
1. Traditional stories (Folktales, epics, legends, myths, etc.).
2. Experiences from everyday life (True stories and history).
3. Original creative stories. These are genres created by educators and elders to covey a specific message to listeners.
     In Roslan's (2008) view, from a science pedagogy perspective, stories can be classified into fairy tales, stories about the history of scientific discovery, traditional stories, children's stories, and stories for teaching and learning science. Characteristically, stories capitalize on learners' interest to talk and interact with one another in class (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008). The authors argue that stories enable people to appreciate one another because listeners can relate and empathize with the character and events in the story (Miller & Pennycuff,2008). Stories are aural, oral expressions by humans to explain who we are, how we come to know and make meaning and communicate; they are the natural human strategy to relate to our world (Vitali, 2016). Stories are crafted and sequentially narrated using the language of everyday life in a setting with a defined theme involving the teller and listener (Phillips, 1999). Phillips further argues from an early childhood development perspective that stories should be meaningful and reflective of listeners' social and cultural experiences. Community elders remain the primary source of indigenous stories (Maina, 1997; Van Wyk, 2014).

2.4 Importance of stories in childhood learning stimulation
The body of available literature demonstrates the value of storytelling as helpful to learners in the classroom (Craig, Hull, Haggart & Crowder, 2001; Kalantari & Hashemian, 2016). Stories serve as a source of entertainment and traditional knowledge for a society's different generations to learn (Kalantari & Hashemian,2016). Stories contribute to moral education among children, introduce values, and create space to exercise reasoning (Rahim &

Rahiem, 2012). The authors argue that activities involving stories build in children a sense of familiarity with acts classified as good or bad and the repercussions of such deeds (Rahim & Rahiem, 2012). These are possible because stories reinforce listening skills in children (Oduolowu & Oluwakemi, 2014). Stories inculcate in learners' pertinent social values inherent in the social fabric of life. As exemplified in storytelling in classroom interaction, these values shape learners' perspectives to perpetuate them as active members of society. Stories are the springboard upon which we perceive the world and its people (Craig, Hull, Haggart & Crowder, 2001; Vitali, 2016).

Storytelling enables learning to occur in a more natural, meaningful, and interactive manner, enhancing learners' creative powers and subsequently propelling them into English language learning (Kalantari & Hashemian,2016). It is an effective pedagogical strategy because the academic skills of learners who receive knowledge through storytelling enhance their vocabulary skills, visual imagery, and cultural awareness (Mello, 2001). Stories engage learners' attention in the class and help their academic performance (Moon, 2017; Ladson Billings, [1995] cited in Iriogbe-Efionayi, 2016). One critical relevance of storytelling is the extent to which it reinforces meaningful pedagogy in the classroom and bridges the gap between abstract instruction and practical life experiences (Andrews, Hall & Donahue, 2009).

In Africa for that matter the Ghanaian context, Tuwe (2016) argues that indigenous stories crafted out of the lived experiences of the people offer explanations of issues of life, teach morality, critical lessons of daily living, and offer space for self-identity concerning characters described in the stories. These are situated in the lived practices of learners' families and communities.

Various educators recognize indigenous stories in early childhood pedagogy in their practice. According to Pence and Schafer (2006), educators at the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) programme collected indigenous stories from Malawi, Lesotho, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanzania to teach children at the early childhood level. The project aimed at preparing learners for moral values, social, memory development, and cultural propagation. For instance, in Uganda, it was found that the use of indigenous stories by educators helped children to distinguish between good and evil, promotion of children's education in particular social values (Pence & Schafer, 2006).

The report from Uganda and the other countries in the sub-region validates Sifuna's (2006) view that Africans before entry of the colonial masters had their form of education, which though informal, characterized their way of socialization and perpetuated as their identity and history. Stories are among the many indigenous tools used in classroom pedagogy to bridge the gap between Eurocentric and Indigenous pedagogies (Foy, 2009).

Omolewa (2007) argues that African indigenous culture and history are stored in people's memories and are predominantly transmitted through various modes, including languages, music, dance, proverbs, myths, and stories. Indigenous stories inculcate values, good attributes such as honesty, integrity, accountability, and transparency in daily lifestyles as children listen to elders and emulate them accordingly (Omolewa, 2007). Indigenous stories convey amusements and instruct learners to imbibe the ideal form of behaviour and morality (Omolewa, 2007; Tuwe, 2016). "The main lesson behind these African oral stories is to teach and impart principles of morality and provide youngsters with a sense of identity and belonging" (Tuwe, 2016, p.6). These empirical evidences affirm that the significance of indigenous stories remain critically sustained to the extent to which it inculcates in children the values of society, ethics of life and provides a platform for learning to perpetuate these values.

2.5 Indigenous story-based pedagogy and knowledge construction in early childhood education

Storytelling within indigenous communities is mainly narrated by the elderly, parents, and grandparents (Oduolowu & Oluwakemi, 2014). During storytelling, listeners (children) sit at the feet of the elders to listen to the series of narration of events from the imagination of experience. The stories mostly depict caring for one another, good deeds, giving, greed, and selfishness as relevant attributes for life. These stories are primarily narrated in simulating a character. For example, in the Akan setting in Ghana, the Spider (locally called Kwaku Ananse) is a popular character synonymous with childhood stories to demonstrate acts of greed, wisdom, and love. In the current research setting among the people of Bongo District in northern Ghana, stories are called 'Solma' and narrated using the Rat (Sɔɔŋa)as a popular character in the local language of the Grunsis and Bosis.

Such stories are believed to convey educative messages meant to socialize learners to portray attributes such as honesty, respect, and adulthood responsibilities (Amos, 2013).

Several available pieces of literature support the significance of oral literature in instilling traditional values and etiquette but remain an essential tool in formal education content (Boateng, 1983; Schafer et al., 2004; Ngara, 2007; Mawere, 2015; Nsamenang &Tchombe, 2011). In Ghana, Anansi stories reign as ancient and still relevant folktales for many educators in the classroom as part of their pedagogical tools. Indigenous stories that reflect culture teach learners the history of the old generations; the tale orient children of their communities' customs, traditions, and history (Rahim & Rahiem, 2012). These stories are told to enhance the appreciation of the cultural knowledge of a particular people. Many indigenous learners ascertain cultural identity through stories narrated to them in their first language (Vitali, 2016). Evidence abounds that we come from different cultural worlds rooted

in the power of oral tradition and face–to–face storytelling (Deschenie, 2007 cited in Vitali, 2016).

Stories shared with children enable them to define the family tradition; these family traditions in stories are incorporated in content and context for learning in school (Moayeri & Smith, 2010 cited in Vitali, 2016). The authors demonstrate that indigenous stories are a valuable educational resource in delivering science lessons. Ulluwesiha, Kaloko, and Hairuni (1997), cited in Roslan (2008), argue that the people of Kedayan and Penan use indigenous stories to illuminate the wisdom of the native knowledge about how to live peacefully in a community. The stories shape people's perspectives to appreciate the relevance of peaceful coexistence amid disagreements. These stories are passed on from the ancestral generations and learned by children listening to elders to emulate the morality and the accepted forms of behavior (Majoni & Chinyanganya, 2014).

From oral history, stories and songs in the view of Maina (1997) are among effective pedagogical techniques to incorporate cultural elements in the classroom work. In early childhood education, indigenous stories are essential in preserving valuable artistic practice and contributing to achieving psychosocial and cognitive goals (Schafer et al., 2004). Indigenous stories as rooted products of communities' socialization principles of indigenous pedagogy are shared by the elderly or the older generations (Van Wyk, 2014). Van Wyk further argues that stories about the past narrated in the present reflect tangible realities that educators can employ as tools for indigenous knowledge pedagogy. Stories are a means to keep learners informed about cultural issues that connect with nature and the environment; Afrocentric pedagogy can be effectively formalized through the pedagogy of stories in the classroom (Van Wyk, 2014).

2.6 Challenges of incorporating indigenous story-based pedagogy into early childhood education
The challenges as identified from the literature are reviewed under the sub-headings below:

2.7 Low recognition of indigenous knowledge systems by educators
Incorporating indigenous stories into formal education is reported low due to poor recognition of indigenous knowledge systems and related practices as tools for pedagogy in the educational system (Shizha, 2007; Dei, 2011). Many educators do not regard indigenous stories in pedagogy and knowledge construction (Dei, 2011). One of the influencing factors for incorporating indigenous story-based pedagogy in the classroom is the extent to which educators value the contribution of these knowledge systems to formal knowledge production. Evidence abounds that many educators place low value on indigenous story-based pedagogy in the school setting. Owuor (2007) reports that educators in Kenya do not trust the significance of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping knowledge construction and national development. Shizha (2007) and Ngara (2007) also observed from separate research contexts from Zimbabwe that primary school educators perceive indigenous knowledge as backward, not authentic, and scientific. The authors think that these perceptions held by educators, to a greater extent, have clouded their ability to recognize learners who demonstrate these indigenous skills and to support them in that regard. The literature above brings to bear the view that many early childhood educators, for various reasons, are constraint in their inability to recognize the contextual relevance of indigenous story-based pedagogy in the knowledge construction process in the classroom.

2.8 Educators lack adequate knowledge and skills of creative pedagogy.
The act of narrating stories is premised on several factors that make them practically relevant tools for learning interaction. The conception of the story, the type of story, and the mode of narrating it with a clear purpose remain critical to actualizing the relevance of storytelling in learning. Baker and Gower (2010) believe that establishing the definition of a story, the audience, the type of story, and the tone of voice to use in the narration process makes storytelling effective to optimize its purpose. However, the challenge for some educators is how to bring to reality the abstract logic of stories narrated to learners in the practical context of their everyday living. Though stories are described as easy interactive strategies in pedagogy, one rarely observes their use in many kindergarten classroom settings because it involves a lot of mental processes (Craig, 1996). This has to do with creating or recollecting the story and narrating it to fit the learning situation of the learners; many educators essentially are deficient in this area of their professional work. It is pretty ironic to note that educators who are custodians of the learning process at the school setting do not demonstrate adequate knowledge of indigenous stories of their communities as the foundation to stimulate learners to imbibe knowledge using them (Dei, 2011). Miller and Pennycuff (2008), in research on the power of story to improve literacy, identified appropriate stories, ability to tell the story, and the purpose of using the story in the classroom as the challenging areas for many educators. There is more to employing stories in every learning setting, and educators will need the required skills to actualize it effectively.

In Ghana, it is common knowledge that early childhood educators are primarily consumed in meeting the predetermined learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy skills. Hence, they employ strategies focused on cognitive development to socialize learners for primary school work (Dzamesi & Heerden, 2020). Educators who are influenced by the contemporary conception of knowledge construction as validated by the world knowledge systems remain fixated at conceptualizing school knowledge with a narrow lens of looking to socialize learners to

master their cognitive powers other than any other skills for life. This is why the low incorporation of indigenous education in schools, as argued by Dei (2011).

In the view of Dei (2011), some professional educators in Ghana are not conditioned with the knowledge that is adequately embodied in indigenous perspectives of their learners, hence their inability to deploy these local genres in early childhood education effectively. Other research findings support the position that most early childhood educators generally lack the requisite knowledge of the field and practice (Dei, 2011; Oluwafemi, Osita & Olugbenga, 2014; Ukala & Agabi, 2017; Abuom, Gudo & Nyatuka, 2018). The consequence of this is the extent to which such educators fail to appreciate indigenous story-based pedagogy, which is broadly participatory. Very little is done in the Ghanaian Kindergarten syllabus to orient educators to practically instill such knowledge to learners (Owuor, 2007). This challenge is evidenced in the educator's experience, attitudes, and poor pedagogical strategies that affect learners' participation in storytelling (Owuor, 2007; Ejekwu & Berezi, 2018).

2.8 Inadequate pedagogical resources

Appropriate resources to support educators in most educational institutions are either lacking or unavailable in the right quantities and forms in some countries. For example, in Nigeria, Oluwafemi et al., (2014) report that only 30% of schools had furniture for early childhood education while the other essential teaching and learning materials were not available. In a similar case, Abuom, Gudo, and Nyatuka (2018) found that teachers were inadequate for their workload; this affects the required learner-centered interaction expected within a lesson period. The lack of an efficient documentation system negatively affects the availability and the preservation of these resources to perpetuate indigenous stories as pedagogical tools (Phiri, 2008). Phiri (2008) attributes this challenge to the continuous migration of the working population to the urban centers where socialization is devoid of indigenous worldviews such as stories that need to be documented for use by the future generation.

2.9 The dominance of western worldviews in school policies and curriculum design

The need for early childhood education to contextualize indigenous pedagogical strategies is the subject of many research results globally and across cultures (Boateng, 1983; Battiste, 2002; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011; Dei, 2004; 2011; Soudee, 2009; Ukala & Agabi, 2017; Kinzel, 2020).

The challenge of the African early childhood education curriculum is the continuous premise on the western worldview, which hamper the effective incorporation of indigenous perspectives in school knowledge construction (Ng'asike, 2014; Ukala & Agabi, 2017). From Nigeria, Ukala and Agabi (2017) observed that the content of the school curriculum as practiced in the River State public schools are not the same as stipulated in the national policy for early childhood education, which expects pedagogy to be based on the indigenous culture of learners and the authors describe this to have persisted over the years. Report from Kenya also suggests that this tradition has mainly survived in many British colonized nations. The colonial masters dominate educational construction and development through technical support and personnel (Owuor,2007). The author thinks that the Kenyan government's plan to construct school curriculum, unfortunately, focused on enhancing the prestige of western epistemologies, which subjugated indigenous worldviews in the formal education policy and practice. Most educators hold to this prevailing colonially adopted pedagogical style, hence remain locked in the Eurocentric model of pedagogy (Shizha, 2007). This practice has failed to allow adequate and supportive space to incorporate indigenous-based stories in classroom pedagogy.

Education in many African nations has generally been rooted on the ideas of foreign nations as the conceptual position of what is relevant knowledge for development and Ghana is no exception to this knowledge construction and identity entrapment. Although there have been some education policies and curricular in Ghana, Key examples and focus of knowledge conception remain influenced by cultivating learners for knowledge which largely falls in the domain of cognitive development influenced by western worldviews of relevant knowledge. It is common knowledge that the Ghanaian early childhood education policy and curriculum is largely premised on knowledge development that is yet to clearly and effectively ensure incorporation in classroom practice the Ghanaian indigenous stories as relevant pedagogical strategies.

2.10 Ineffective use of Ghanaian language in school instruction

The primary tool for cultural transmission and preservation is language. UNESCO (2003, p.17) 'opines that those local languages are the means for preserving, transmitting, and applying traditional knowledge in schools. The organization believes in multilingual education because it allows for free participation in the learning process as learners can compare their community knowledge and that of the external world. However, the Ghanaian education system keeps holding on to the colonial logic of education hence continues to uphold the English language as the dominant language of instruction despite a policy prescription that favors the use of the local language. Literature abounds that, though policies have called for the benefit of mother-tongue instruction at the lower primary level (KG to class 3), the enforcement has been checkered with excuses such as lack of teachers and teaching and learning materials (Owu-Ewie, 2017). Owu-Ewie (2017), in a study on the linguistic rights of learners in Ghana,

opines that learners at the lower primary level are still taught using the English language despite the policy directive to shift to local language, this, the author describes as a violation of the children's linguistic human rights.

A synthesis of the literature clarifies the very foundational challenges with incorporating indigenous knowledge systems; for that matter, stories in Ghanaian schools go beyond the lack of expert educators and pedagogical materials. Educators inadequate knowledge and skills, negative attitude, inadequate resources and the laxity in using learner's language for instruction remain critical barriers to incorporation of indigenous story-based pedagogy in early childhood education. The use of local language, which remains the channel of articulating indigenous narratives in the classroom, has been a contested subject for many years, placed within the circles of elite capture. Some scholars influenced by their orientation view local language instruction in Ghana as backward.

The elites in Ghanaian education administration and framers of policies continue to draw from the tap of western logic of education that has failed to recognize the totality of the indigenous knowledge systems of school communities. This position has negatively affected the implementation of the language policy as a conduit for deployment of strategies including incorporation of indigenous story-based pedagogy into school learning. Unfortunately, the literature reviewed show inadequacy of related findings on challenges educators face with the deployment of indigenous stories as tools in class, particularly that which reflects the geographical context of Ghana. This makes the research in the Bongo District particularly relevant and critical to fill in this knowledge gap and stir the debate on the subject.

3.0. Theoretical Framework for the Study: The Sociocultural theory
The research sheds light on the pertinent challenges that impede the effective incorporation of indigenous based-stories into early childhood pedagogy in the Bongo District in Ghana. Findings from the reviewed literature concretize that educators' incorporation of indigenous stories into classroom pedagogy exposes learners to construct knowledge anchored on their social and cultural backgrounds. The research is underpinned by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory on this score. The sociocultural theory was postulated by Lev S. Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who placed education between individual learner s and their culture. Vygotsky argues that learning among children is premised on interaction with informed people around the learners as facilitators (Panhwar & Ansari, 2016).

In a holistic characterization, the theory is based on the concept that human activities are primarily underpinned on cultural contexts mediated by language, systems, and symbols that have historical antecedents (John- Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory then posits that education and development for children at the early childhood level should be framed in the context of their environmental and cultural practice under the experiences of specific social and cultural relations as the foundation. In agreement with Vygotsky, Rogoff (2003), in her book Cultural Nature of Human Development, argues that children learn with the support of experienced persons in their communities who guide the process. Rogoff recognizes the power of parents and other agents of socialization, including educators, through pedagogical practices in school. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory asserts that the learner's community's social and cultural practices define their development and learning process; the community embodies knowledge and beliefs developed over a period that influences the socialization process of children (Edwards, 2009). Therefore, the sociocultural theory sees learners' social and cultural backgrounds as critical components in their development and learning (Edwards, 2009).

This view of the theory concretizes the concept where learners are welcomed as participants in knowledge creation by educators and use the learner's daily experiences that are found relevant in classroom activities (Gray, 1997 cited in Panhwar & Ansari, 2016). Stories are seen as one of such daily experiences that children are exposed to as they interact with their adult guardians at home. Educators adopt these genres at the early childhood education level; they become a valuable springboard to classroom pedagogy, including the Bongo District in Ghana.

4.0 Methodology
4.1 Research Design methodology and methods
The study was conducted in the Bongo District in Ghana using a qualitative research design. The qualitative method has been selected to understand the perspectives of the early childhood educators who form the central unit of analysis. Qualitative research involves collecting data from participants in their natural settings where the social phenomenon under study is experienced (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002; Creswell, 2014). A qualitative researcher adopts a naturalistic approach to understand phenomena in a context-specific setting, a "real-world setting, and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). In this context, the real world of early childhood educators in the use of indigenous-based- stories in classroom pedagogy is unearthed through qualitative research design to solicit for their expressed views as the primary data source for the research.

4.2 Study population/participants
The population for the study comprised early childhood educators, headteachers, and the district early childhood

coordinator. Trained educators who have been teaching at the early childhood education level in the public schools for the past five years were selected for the study as the unit of analysis. The public sector educators based on the professional standards, are guided by a pedagogical approach prescribed by policy to use learner's indigenous community resources, including stories contextualized in the local languages in classroom pedagogy in line with the Ghana Education Service requirements for teachers practice.

4.3. Sample and sampling Procedure

Bongo District was conveniently selected for the study based on proximity and access to the population. On the other hand, the purposive sampling method was used to determine the respondents consisting of 34 early childhood educators in the classroom, 5KG headteachers, and 1 district early childhood coordinator as publics within the early childhood education delivery chain. The purposive sampling technique involves a deliberate selection of particular units of the universe that constitute a sample representing the universe (Kothari, 2004). Creswell (2012) state that purposive sampling of sites and respondents lead to rich information and experiences during data collection. The headteachers and District early childhood coordinator were selected because they embody the relevant knowledge of teacher professionalism and pedagogical practice in the classroom. The 34-sample size of the early childhood educators who formed the primary respondents was reached based on data saturation. Data saturation is when qualitative information is collected from respondents until no new insight emerges from the data, then saturation is reached.

4.4. Research instruments and data collection

The study employed an interview and observation as the main instruments to solicit responses from the primary study sample. Policy documents and related empirical studies were also reviewed to understand policy position and other findings related to the use of indigenous stories by early childhood educators. The interview guide provided the context to frame the questions to elicit expressed perspectives from respondents. This was a face-to-face interaction with respondents where opinions were recorded by a digital recorder and by hand in a field notebook. The non-participant observation was done to practically understand how educators conduct learning in the classroom using strategies including indigenous-based stories. The session afforded me the rare opportunity to witness pedagogical activities with 5 educators as a triangulation of their expressed views during the interviews. On average, each interview session lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, while the observation lasted 35 and 45 minutes.

4.5. Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns as themes from data. It is a means of making sense of patterns that emerge from data set as categories of relationships for analysis that respond to research questions.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings, issues of credibility and dependability transferability was addressed adequately during the research. The credibility of the respondents' views was demonstrated by representing the original views of respondents transparently and openly with the use of quotations in many situations. The identity of respondents was equally protected while reporting the findings through the use of symbols to hold the confidentiality clause as research ethics require.

5.0. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Presentation of the research findings aligns with themes and sub-themes distilled from the research questions as evidence of new knowledge and validation of the existing conclusions.

These are evident in the respondents' interpreted descriptions and direct quotations on the research theme.

5.1. Early childhood educators' perception of indigenous story-based pedagogy

Responses from early childhood educators demonstrate the level of their perception of indigenous story-based pedagogy and its value in childhood learning stimulation. The educators, in their responses, unanimously recognized that indigenous story-based pedagogy involves the use of local stories framed in the language and cultural setting of learners in classroom learning. They perceive indigenous stories as relevant participatory-oriented pedagogical strategies for learners at the early childhood level because they contribute to effective learning. The educators described indigenous story-based pedagogy as a tool that facilitates playful learning, built on the learners' indigenous home socialization practice, and enhances learners' appreciation of the cultural values the stories from their home environment characterize. They also acknowledge that indigenous stories are recognized as interactive activities that instill cultural appreciation among learners at the early stages. Stories, in their view, convey relevant information and knowledge in a practical way to learners in their context. Educators agreed that they must employ these indigenous genres as part of their classroom pedagogical strategies as holders and transmitting channels of learning. In specific response, some of the educators said that:

"If stories are well-crafted and narrated, they are practical tools in classroom learning activities for the KG learners; the children learn their cultural and general moral values in their communities" Educator 3.

"Learning at the KG level is playful and child-centered, using various interactive strategies. The use of indigenous stories in teaching effectively helps the children to learn fast, listen to one another, and generally develop their oral skills" Educator 11.

The KG headteachers corroborated the views of the educators. In their responses, the headteachers identify storytelling as a strategy for teaching children to develop their speech and listening skills. They placed value on indigenous-story-based pedagogy as critical in bringing to awareness some relevant cultural practices of learners that contribute to their full development as informed citizens of their communities. The respondents acknowledged that indigenous-story-based pedagogy is part of the learning stimulating tools expected to be employed in all classrooms, particularly early childhood education. This is how one headteacher put his response:

"Indigenous based-stories are recognized tools that all teachers must use in their classroom teaching. Stories form concrete and practical strategies that make learning fun, interactive and playful for the children to participate in the process effectively" Headteacher, 3

5.2. What challenges do early childhood educators face in incorporating indigenous story-based pedagogy into the classroom?

Responses to research question two focused on unearthing the challenges that early childhood educators face in incorporating indigenous story-based pedagogy into the classroom in the Bongo District. The research found some predominantly germane challenges that educators face in their effort to integrate indigenous story-based pedagogy; weak knowledge and skills set, educators' attitudes towards pedagogy at the early childhood education level, ineffective implementation of early childhood education policy and curriculum, and institutional challenges including Eurocentric centered curriculum and weak school- and community relationships.

5.3 Educator's qualification and knowledge of indigenous story-based pedagogy.

The study revealed that educators in the Bongo District have the essential qualification of Diplomas and degrees in basic education from the accredited teacher training institutions. They have taught for between 3 to 5 years in the Bongo district at the KG level. The educator's responses revealed that most of them are unable to deliver lessons using indigenous stories as pedagogical strategies. The answers show that, first, many educators are inadequately empowered with general pedagogical skills for the KG class and the knowledge of indigenous stories as a concept in particular. Second, the few who have the ability are challenged with how to situate the stories in a classroom pedagogy context to stimulate learning among KG learners.

Findings from the classroom observation show a significant deficiency among educators in their ability to demonstrate indigenous stories in learning stimulation. For instance, during a storytelling lesson on the timetable, 12 educators made an effort, with only four narrating stories using the local language and involving the learners. The rest of the educators read stories from a textbook in the English language and explained them to the learners in English and local languages.

The educators' inadequacy in knowledge and skills exemplifies the extent of their deficiency in creating stories in learners' language and culture. Respondents attributed such shortcomings to the training institutions' weak pre-service training they received. Educators described the skills at the colleges of education and the universities as inadequate and not responsive enough to the required professional skills and indigenous knowledge systems in classroom interaction. The training content and context contributed little to shaping their minds on the community's indigenous knowledge systems, creating stories from learners' cultural practices, and incorporating such knowledge systems into their classroom pedagogy. This is how some educators put their response to the question.

"The fact is that during our training in the university, very little was covered on indigenous knowledge systems or culture and how stories can be used in classroom teaching. What we studied in language and culture was not enough to enable us to teach effectively by creating stories from the cultural practices of learners. Again, some of us are not well familiar with some of the local cultural traditions and how to create stories from them" Educator 1.

"It is challenging to use stories in our local culture to teach in the class because I don't know them neither was, I taught at the college. Though I am from Bongo here, I don't know everything about the culture to create stories to teach my learners. Moreover, it appears our old mothers no longer narrate stories as they used to do. I did not see my parents tell us stories in my house, so it is difficult to relate to them in my teaching in the classroom" Educator 6.

To validate the perspective of educators, I sought the views of headteachers and the early childhood coordinator. They agreed that teaching at the colleges of education in recent times appear to focus on the academic and cognitive capabilities of trainees more than the practical skills they are required to reflect in the classroom,

particularly the ability to use the community knowledge and resources of the school. The headteachers' responses further echoed that the pre-service training curriculum and training process are skewed towards trainees demonstrating cognitive abilities, which turn to be rooted in the existing western grammar model. Unfortunately, this model has little consideration for the practical pedagogical skills teachers are expected to show in the classroom, which will characterize the learner's cultural environment for knowledge production. Respondents described these as challenges that inhibit many educators from representing their learners' local and practical knowledge in classroom interaction.

5.4 Educators' attitude towards indigenous story-based pedagogy

Educators' attitudes towards the deployment of a pedagogical strategy in the class remain critical to its effectiveness or otherwise. A significant number of the educators (23) showed in their responses an unfavorable attitude towards the general professional practice at the early childhood education level itself, particularly how it is contextualized in learners' indigenous stories as frameworks for pedagogy. Their responses concretize that educators do not value using indigenous knowledge strategies in knowledge construction. To explore further why educators show such an unfavorable attitude towards their work and indigenous story-based pedagogy, in particular, it revealed that they see more value in the knowledge that positions learners with a 'capital' to respond to the contemporary life demands which is largely framed towards developing the cognitive skills hence remain consumed in that perception and strive to facilitate child learning in fulfillment of that expectation. Educators' responses also pointed out that parents of learners at the KG level expect their children to demonstrate cognitive skills as learning outcomes. They expressed that most parents expect KG educators to teach learners to speak English and compute numeracy. This, to an extent, influences educators' pedagogical attitude towards socializing learners in that regard, allowing no space and time to incorporate indigenous-based stories in learning that require time and additional skills. This is what some educators said in their response;

> *"We all need the English language to be more productive in modern Ghana now. Again, the children are brought to the school by their parents to be prepared for the primary school work to prepare them for their future careers. If I am to engage them using the local language and stories, it will slow down the process" Educator, 20.*

> *"At the KG level, we ensure that children can develop attitudes towards speaking English especially. That is the expectation most parents have. All these contribute to the neglect of using the local language and cultural-related ideas in our teaching" Educator 19.*

In sharing their perspectives on the subject, the headteachers acknowledged that educators' weakness in adapting indigenous story-based pedagogy was attributable to parents' misinterpretation of KG education concerning what children learn based on the policy and curriculum as teachers' attitude towards indigenous- based pedagogical strategies. Most of the respondents think that KG educators are clouded in the deception that cultural perspectives are not relevant in contemporary education, hence the seeming disregard for their incorporation into formal classroom pedagogy. It was further revealed that many KG educators are not ready for the work; they describe teaching the KG class as an indication of demotion, hence showing a poor attitude to teaching at that level.

5.5 Ineffective implementation of early childhood education policy and curriculum by educators

The outcome of every education policy is achieved to the extent to how it is implemented. Although most of the early childhood educators interviewed acknowledged the deficiencies in their knowledge and skills to create indigenous stories as tools for pedagogy in the classroom, they attribute part of the challenge to the erratic manner in which the early childhood education policies have been implemented Ghana. The curriculum spells out the need to situate learning stimulation in the context of learners' community indigenous resources and practices (ECCD, 2004, 2019). However, very little is done to empower educators with the appropriate and adequate pedagogical skills with the requisite interactive tools to actualize this in the classroom. Many educators (19) out of the 34 research participants are not professionally trained for early childhood education, coupled with inadequate professional development programmes (In-service education and training) in the Bongo District for the past four years for practicing KG educators. Responses from some educators were captured as below:

> *"One of the problems we face as early childhood educators is the poor implementation of the policies and the curriculum. There are no resource materials for teachers to use. I was posted here to teach KG class, which I was not trained for in the first place either have I received any in-service training for the past four years that I have been teaching here, so how can I be effective"? Educator 4.*

> *"There is always a rush to implement some of these policies without essential preparations, such as providing teachers with the appropriate skills and logistics. Teaching at the KG class requires special skills to engage the children in play activities using the mother tongue. Still, many of us have not adequately received the training except to read the curriculum and the resource books. I can do this because I had the training; what about many of my colleagues who painfully don't know how to create stories except to read from textbooks" Educator 21.*

The views by educators were substantiated by the headteachers and the early childhood development coordinator from the Bongo education office, their views corroborated the statements of the educators to say that implementation of the early childhood policy in Ghana and the accompanying curriculum has been a rush without the appropriate preparation, including practical training of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, provision of teaching and learning materials/resources and readers that are responsive to the social and cultural context of learners have not been coming and in the right quantities for effective learning in the classroom. One headteacher had this to say:

> *"Though the curriculum says we should use the local language, the government is not even paying attention to the local language and culture because it does not appear to be very relevant now" Headteacher, 2*

5.6 Weak school-community relations

The weak relationship between schools and school communities was consistent in educators' responses as a neglected factor in school management and classroom learning stimulation among children and in the context of incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems. There is an imaginary barrier between the school educators and community members, many of whom constitute relevant Bank of indigenous knowledge systems of the school communities. A teacher who has been in a school for over four years admitted how bad she felt for not saying hello to members of the compound located close to the school. However, she has often asked pupils to collect one thing or the other from the family for learning purposes. She said that:

> *"I have sent children to the women in the house behind the school severally to collect various items for classroom demonstration, but shamefully, I have not even gone there to say hello to them. I think there is a lot that parents and community members can do. If the relationship is strong and they feel recognized as partners in children's education, they can be helpful with these stories. But, as teachers, we have failed in this". Educators 23.*

Educators admitted that the long-held perception among many educators is that rural communities, for that matter, families have nothing to complement their classroom work to impart knowledge to the learners continues to cloud their minds from seeing the potentials in the community members as key partners in knowledge production for the children. They acknowledged their insufficient knowledge of the indigenous knowledge systems of the school communities in which they work. One such educator said that;

> *"I think as educators, we need to humble ourselves and make parents part of us to be able to learn some of the cultural knowledge from them, I am a teacher, but I don't know much about the culture of the village in which the school is located though it is important in the classroom lessons like the local stories." Educator 33*

5.7 Eurocentric based curriculum and approaches to pedagogy

Every classroom knowledge is premised on a curriculum that characterizes the knowledge therein. Respondents (23 out of the 34) believe that the early childhood education curriculum is framed to reflect the perspective of the European and western world conceptualization of school knowledge for the nation. Educators were loud in their response that the early childhood education curriculum appears focused more on stimulating learners and predisposing them to the core academic disciplines in the context geared towards preparing them for the global knowledge market requirements beyond Ghana. They agreed that though the curriculum identifies community resources and culture as relevant frameworks for learning, very little attention is paid to that because educators must impart in learners' skills that seek to shape their minds more for the eternal world. The content of the text they use reflects events outside of Ghana; educators remain preoccupied with socializing children to speak good English language more than the local language of the school community. So, the issue of the local language and cultural content and context is not considered. Again, children come to school to learn and be prepared for formal schoolwork, making the use of cultural knowledge and values irrelevant to many teachers and parents. Some educators testified that:

> *"In the context of formal school, knowledge is valuable and cherished to the extent to which it prepares and places learners to   exemplify global and contemporary knowledge systems; the curriculum is dominantly rooted in the cognitive development of learners for their participation in formal primary school learning with major content which is Eurocentric in nature .KG. Educator 9*

> *"These days, teaching in the school is geared more towards preparing the child for a higher grade for them to develop prospects for a better future outside Ghana, so the issues of cultural-related content are not given much priority" KG. Educator 30*

6.0. DISCUSSION

Findings from the study give credence to the significance of indigenous stories in classroom pedagogy. Early

childhood educators From the Bongo District of Ghana recognize indigenous stories in enhancing effective learning stimulation and the development of relevant social skills among learners. The findings support the available reviewed literature (Roslan, 2008; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011; Rahim & Rahiem, 2012; Boateng, 2013; Mawere, 2015; Vitali & 2016; Amoah, 2020) that indigenous story-based pedagogy enhances learning, expose learners to the history of their older generations, their customs, and traditions. The findings reinforce the position that indigenous stories are grounded in the informal education delivery regarding knowledge construction rooted in the indigenous knowledge systems of the learners. Nsamenang (2011) thinks this type of education is suitable because it conditions the African child to be relevant to their community and competitive on the global front.

However, despite the educator's admittance of the significance of indigenous story-based pedagogy in early childhood education, the study found them with deficiencies in incorporating these forms of pedagogy in the classroom, which are attributable to inadequate knowledge and skills. The revelation from the classroom observation concretizes the testimonies from the educators in terms of their ability to demonstrate the indigenous knowledge systems of the school communities. Educators contend that the content and context of the training they received at the training institutions have also not been adequate to position them to demonstrate indigenous knowledge systems in the classroom.

It is critical to note that educators' background knowledge forms a relevant foundation of their indigenous knowledge systems as a leap to their professional competence. Most of the educators in the study come from communities in the Bongo District. This suggests that they epitomize the indigenous cultural practices of the communities and can effectively apply them in pedagogy. Unfortunately, besides the local language, revelations from the study do not support this opinion. Most of the educators though natives of the Bongo District, don't adequately represent the pertinent indigenous knowledge systems of the District. This makes it groundless the perception that the nativity of educators remains the pinnacle for their embodiment of the indigenous knowledge systems (Amoah, 2020). Amoah (2020), therefore, question the validity of this long-held policy assumption held by the Ghana Education Service that educators from a community are well placed to appreciate communities' cultural practices and adapt such practices as capital for classroom pedagogy.

Furthermore, findings from the study underscore the point that early childhood educators show a repulsive attitude towards incorporating indigenous pedagogical approaches hence the subjugation of indigenous based-stories in the classroom practice. This is typified in the literature that educators' perspectives play a critical role in the pedagogical tools they adapt in the classroom (Belet & Dal, 2010; Moon, 2017; Dzamesi & Heerden, 2020). Educators perceive knowledge as valid only when rooted in the Eurocentric epistemology, a practice promoted by the world culture theory in universalizing knowledge construction for the global market (Spring, 2009). Educators with this Eurocentric conceptualization are of knowledge remain trapped in cognitive dissonance regarding effectively operationalizing indigenous story-based pedagogy for classroom learning (Moon, 2017), especially when the policy does not strictly demand them to use the indigenous community resources frameworks for pedagogy. This was observed more with the young educators, and they described any conversation related to the indigenous knowledge systems of the communities in the district as backward and unproductive in the contemporary education and knowledge production.

From a policy strategy perspective, the desire for identification with the universal bandwagon of globalization and world culture theory continues to direct many African education policy framers and administrators, including Ghana, to construct education programmes in that line in order to be part of that system. As a country, Ghana has continuously remained locked in the Grammar model of education since independence over the years. These continuous reliance on the western and multinational nations as the architects and funders of the nation's educational policies and delivery to an extent largely contribute to influence the little attention on the nations indigenous knowledge systems for that matter indigenous stories in KG pedagogy. Some of these privileged relationships often place funders to influence the context and content of the national education policies.

The study further revealed the extent to which educators lament the ineffective implementation of education policies in Ghana, in which the Bongo District is included. The findings suggest that most education policies in Ghana are implemented erratically with little consideration for the required resources, social and cultural backgrounds, and context of learners to make them effective in achieving the desired outcome. Send Ghana, a civil society organization, reports that Ghana is failing to fulfill its outputs for KG education due to inadequate support for the implementation of the policy. Reports of performance from various schools show disparities concerning the policy prescription and practice (MoE-GES, 2012, Dzamesi & Heerden, 2020). The Anamuah–Mensah education review report in 2002 informed the formal framing of the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy in 2004 and the subsequent Kindergarten curriculum in 2006. These two instruments recommended for educators to use either the local language or English language with other indigenous resources of learners as means of instruction at the early childhood level. The recommendation sought to provide a window of convenience for educators to use the two languages as a medium of teaching at the KG level as appropriate, bearing in mind that the formal language of instruction at the KG level is the learners' mother tongue or the local language of the school

community. However, incorporating learners' mother tongue as a blended medium of instruction at the early childhood level remains complex and problematic. As a result, educators safely skewed towards the English language, which they find comfortable. This, to a greater extent, has contributed to the neglect of learners' mother tongue, which characterizes the indigenous knowledge systems, including stories in classroom pedagogy.

Educators from the study have decried the scanty literature and documented content in the GrunnƐ/Bonne language to guide instruction in the classroom. Availability of recommended readers that reflect the local ecosystem are necessary resources for educators in the classroom to adapt. The evidence of this was seen during a class observation. The few reading books used in the class were authored by foreign writers, with the stories reflecting life and events of different countries other than Ghana. The research findings show that the 2004 early childhood care and development policy, the 2006 KG and the current 2019 curriculum have not specified appropriate culturally oriented reading materials, how educators can use such materials and ensured their availability in the schools for educators. Evidence supports the extent to which unclear policy prescriptions have failed to cause change in the system, for that matter, educators to adopt/adapt the local language in classroom instructions. In Zimbabwe, Shizha (2007) observed how the education Act of 1987 identified English as an official language of instruction for primary schools provided an escape route for educators to subjugate the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems into school pedagogy. Evidence abounds that the few readers for KG learning in Ghana are largely culturally unrelated hence not fit for purpose. We have yet to have any readers for the GrunnƐ Language for KG learners.

Communities and families are critical stakeholders in education delivery in the Ghanaian society, including Bongo District. Available studies support the current research that school communities and families play a complementary role in the holistic education of children (Maina, 1997; Soudee, 2009; Dei, 2011; Amoah, 2020; Kinzel, 2020). One of the common challenges that the study found is that the relationship between schools and communities in the Bongo district continues to weaken despite the complementary role of parents in the education of children in the formal school setting. It was evident in several schools that parents(mothers) as volunteers on the lively minds programme are instrumental in childhood learning, especially in storytelling and games. Amoah (2020) established that parents' participation in their children's education is critical and practically possible; they provide a supportive environment for children to assimilate some of these local genres through play. However, this is anchored on how schools and communities collectively appreciate this concept and support it. The current system does not allow a productive synergy between schools and communities to see themselves as partners for children's education.

7.0. CONCLUSIONS

The qualitative study in the Bongo District in Ghana has revealed that early childhood educators' perception of indigenous story-based pedagogy is high as they recognize the indigenous knowledge system as a critical component of school pedagogical strategies. As educators acknowledge, its relevance is evidenced in its effective childhood learning stimulation and increased cultural knowledge for life. The study concludes that, though educators recognize the relevance of Indigenous-based story pedagogy, their competence level to incorporate such knowledge in the classroom pedagogy remains inadequate.

Educators remain fixated on conceiving and constructing school knowledge in the western paradigm, this attitude continues to undermine the value of indigenous knowledge systems in formal school learning. Educators remain locked in the western hegemonic drive to development which focuses on developing cognitive domains of children in the context of disciplinary knowledge. The current educational curriculum for early childhood education in Ghana is primarily influenced by the prevailing dominant western hegemony of socialization which focus on the economic gains from education other than holistic learning.

An educational policy is only effective to the extent to which its implementation is strongly supported by clear legislation and administrative systems. In related research on policy content coherence in early childhood education curriculum practice in New Zealand, Wood and Hedges (2016) conclude that clarity and coherence in policy documents and curriculum are problematic due to inconsistencies between the policy and practice. This is evident in the current research findings that the early childhood education policy and curriculum shows a greater lack of support for its implementation and worsened by unclear prescriptions for a clearer direction (Send Ghana Report, 2018).

Indigenous practices and norms of people are articulated through their language of interaction, the ineffective use of the local language in the learning interaction remains a challenge to incorporate the indigenous based- stories in the classroom pedagogy.

Educators attitude is a precursor to their success or failure. Evidence from the research show that early childhood educators from the Bongo District of Ghana do not demonstrate a receptive attitude to work at the KG level and the use indigenous genres in classroom, this is based on a various reason including disregard for them. The extent to which early childhood educators can succeed in incorporating indigenous story-based pedagogy is based on a positive and receptive attitude to the work and not only on training background. The nativity of

educators of a place is no longer a determinant factor in terms of level of indigenous knowledge system they can demonstrate.

It is empirically evident that the research has shed enough light on how critical early childhood education pedagogy is contextualized in the indigenous stories of learners and the challenges educators face as a result. It is believed that this research will inform, trigger and shape the debate for policy clarity to actualize practical and intentional plan to effectively incorporate indigenous knowledge systems in early childhood education pedagogy in the Bongo District and Ghana as a whole.

8.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bongo District Directorate of Education should make provisions to support the effective implementation of the early childhood and development policy, considering the need to incorporate indigenous resources of communities in pedagogical approaches in classroom learning. Teacher continuous development Programmes (In-service education and training) should be intensified and focus on integrating indigenous knowledge systems to empower KG educators. As a matter of priority, the Ghana Education Service should also ensure that adequate technical, logistical provisions are made towards this plan, especially those at the KG level. Continuous and effective professional development programmes and logistical support by both the central government and the Bongo district directorate are critical for educators in the KG classroom.

Education philosophy and construction in the country should be devoid of the current dependency attitude of wholly adopting educational systems and pedagogical approaches of the western world and make space to incorporate the Ghanaian indigenous knowledge systems in school learning practice.

Teacher training institutions should strategically integrate culturally responsive pedagogical approaches in the content and context of teacher training process. This must be supported by a decisive policy target beyond the usual rhetoric. Educators should be supported with appropriate teaching and learning resources to actualize their skills in the classroom.

Early childhood educators should make it a responsibility for cultivating a positive attitude towards their chosen profession. Second, they ought to appreciate the critical role of indigenous knowledge systems in holistically constructing knowledge for KG learners. The Ghana Education Service at the Bongo Directorate must ensure equal recognition of educators across the various levels of education delivery irrespective of the class a teacher teaches.

The Bongo education directorate should endeavor to revisit the idea of school-community relations. This is an excellent way to use knowledgeable parents to share their experiences in relevant indigenous practices to complement educators' efforts in constructing knowledge in the classroom context of indigenous knowledge systems.

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