

Early Childhood Education Pre-Service Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Teaching Psychosocial Skills Across the Kindergarten Curriculum in Ghana

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Abstract

The study sought to assess Early Childhood Education Pre-service Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Teaching Psychosocial skills across the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana. A mixed method approach was used. The study comprised 123 conveniently selected regular final year pre-service teachers pursuing a degree in early childhood education in a public university in Ghana, who have completed their internship programme. Questionnaires were administered after which five students were selected for a focused group discussion. Data were analysed using means, standard deviation and narratives. The study showed that Pre-service teachers had enough knowledge in achieving two goals of the KG curriculum and were also more familiar with the use of fieldtrips and demonstration. They also had enough knowledge in the use of observation and conversation among others. A thorough examination of the KG curriculum by pre-service teachers during pre and post internship was recommended.

Key words: pedagogical content knowledge, psychosocial skills, kindergarten

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Introduction

Research on teachers' subject-matter knowledge indicates that many teachers lack conceptual understanding of their subject-matter (Ball, Lubienski, & Mewborn, 2001). Having strong subject-matter knowledge is essential for a teacher, but it is not sufficient for effective teaching (Ball & Bass, 2000). Teachers are expected to know how to teach subject-matter and also be aware of other factors like the curriculum, learners, teaching techniques and strategies that might influence their teaching. Shulman (1987) identified seven knowledge domains for teachers: namely, subject-matter knowledge; general pedagogical knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; knowledge of learners and learning; curriculum knowledge; knowledge of educational contexts; and knowledge of educational philosophies, goals, and objectives. According to him, a teacher should know the content, pedagogy, curriculum, and how they interact. One of the most important aspects of being a teacher is to know how to create a conducive learning environment to facilitate students' understanding of a particular concept and to contribute to their intellectual development. Shulman (1986) named this kind of knowledge "pedagogical content knowledge." He explains pedagogical content knowledge as "the ways of representing and formulating the subject that makes it comprehensible to others" (p. 9). He stated that this includes teachers' knowledge about specific topics that might be easy or difficult for learners and possible conceptions or misconceptions that they might have related to the topic.

The harmonization of all types of teacher knowledge might yield effective teaching practices. However, a teacher does not immediately achieve that harmony among all types of knowledge that would facilitate their teaching practices as well as enhance their learners' learning. It requires continuous efforts to be able to balance content, learners, curriculum, educational goals, and assessment tools (Kilic, 2009). Pedagogical content knowledge is essential in establishing such balance because the knowledge of content, learners, and curriculum is embedded in that knowledge (Gess-Newsome, 1999; Grossman, 1990). Although pedagogical content knowledge is assumed to be developed as teachers gain more experience in teaching (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Calderhead, 1996), pre-service teachers should know about it and try to make sense of it through their methods courses and field

experiences during internship in order to be ready for their first year of teaching. Studies of pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills related to teaching have revealed that methods courses and field experiences are likely to contribute to the development of pedagogical content knowledge to some extent (Ball, 1991; Grossman, 1990). The acquisition of appreciable levels of this knowledge is primarily dependent on what a teacher education programme or curriculum offers and exposes pre-service teachers to. This provides a background for pre-service teachers to better conceptualise, understand and relate with various experiences during their internship. For early childhood pre-service teachers, this is very critical considering the role they play in the formative life or early years of a developing child.

Developing children's psychosocial skills is considered very critical to their total development. This affords them the opportunity to develop positive self concept and confidence; appreciate and understand themselves and others; relate positively with others; make group and individual decisions and solve problems; and cope with emotions (CRDD, 2004). According to Mize and Abell (1996) a growing body of research supports the belief, held by many early childhood professionals, that young children's peer relationships are important for their development and adjustment to school. Preschool-aged children who have positive peer relationships are likely to maintain positive peer interactions in grade school, while children who have a hard time getting along with age mates in the preschool years are more likely to experience later academic difficulties and rejection or neglect by their elementary-school peers (Ladd, 1990; Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988). Without the skills to play constructively and develop friendships with age mates, children become excluded from opportunities to develop additional and more complex skills important for future peer interaction (Eisenberg, Cameron, Tryon, & Dodez, 1981; Howes, 1988).

Kilic (2009) intimate that although PCK is assumed to be developed as teachers gain more experience in teaching, it is believed that pre-service teachers should possess some level of it and improve upon it while gaining experience in the field during internship. It is therefore expected that those pursuing early childhood education in teacher education colleges and universities are exposed to adequate PCK in psychosocial skills since it is one of the six core components of the early childhood education programme in Ghana. Psychosocial development is considered one of the most significant aspects of the

development of children. It involves the development of emotions, temperament and all other characteristics borne out of experiences with parents and significant others in the environment of the growing child. Principally, psychosocial development is considered a premise for the development of other domains of an individual. Papalia, Olds and Feldman (1999) intimate that “ the development and expression of various emotions are tied to brain maturation and cognitive development, including the development of self-awareness” (p. 272). This suggests that children’s intellectual, social and emotional development seem to have a relationship with their development of psychosocial skills which is also known to have implications for adult life. The development of relevant psychosocial skills in children, however, is heavily dependent on the kind of attention provided by parents, caregivers or early childhood educators.

In the last few decades, changes in the global economy influenced by industrialization in the Americas, Asia and Europe, on one hand, and economic depression in Africa, on the other hand, has brought in its wake the need for working female spouses who traditionally took care of children at home. This has necessitated the need for non-parental child care which has consequently fueled the introduction of early childhood education in most parts of the world including Ghana. The provision of attention and the development of psychosocial skills in children, which focuses primarily on the development of the affective domain, are now left in the hands of caregivers and early childhood educators who act as ‘*surrogate parentis*’. It is therefore, important that this kind of service is provided by well trained caregivers and early childhood educators if children are to maximize the benefits. It is on this score that higher educational institutions such as some colleges of education and universities in some countries including Ghana have introduced programmes in early childhood education to provide pre-service teachers with the requisite skills and competencies to support children’s learning.

McCubbins (2004) however, reports that early childhood education curricula have become more academic, suggesting that there is an over emphasis on the development of the cognitive to the detriment of the affective which is heavily influenced by the development of the psychosocial skills in children. This has introduced a rigid formal learning into the content of programmes contrary to child development principles (Sackey, 2009). Earlier, Hancock and Wingert (1998) proposed that the primary focus of early

childhood education is about providing learners with the opportunity to form relationships with others and feeling competent exploring the world. They further intimate that with these skills reinforced...reading, writing and mathematics will come more easily when children are ready.

Logically, early childhood education programmes that pre-service teachers are taken through must provide them with relevant competencies and expertise tailored to meet the demands of the various components of the early childhood education curriculum prescribed for the nation for which in Ghana's case the development of psychosocial skills in early learners is key. It is therefore, important to find out whether the former is consistent with the latter. For instance, teacher education programmes should equip pre-service teachers with competencies in the use of highly interactive teaching strategies and assessment procedures.

The use of effective instructional strategies lies at the heart of engaging learners and instruction in early childhood education. Teaching early learners requires the use of developmentally appropriate strategies that are interactive in order to generate varying affective elements. In a study, Wertheim and Leyser (2002) argued that teachers with high self-efficacy were more likely to concentrate on individualized instruction and to adapt teaching practices more readily by employing varying instructional strategies like role play, dramatization, simulation etc. Besides, such teachers work with smaller groups with more ease and flexibility and also spent more time with learners. This naturally fosters an interplay that produces a network of relationships: between and among agents at work; teacher-learner, learner-learner; learner-learning resources that breed tolerance, confidence, cooperation and the like among young learners. More so, making assessment meaningful for children involves using tools that are appropriate for the child to use (Copple & Bredekamp, 2006). This includes measures which allow for the full range of children's competencies to be recorded in a natural environment (Bagnato, 2007). This is what Zumwalt (2012) calls authentic assessment. Teachers' ability to do authentic assessment requires the use of informal and everyday tools such as observation, conversation, listening to children's opinion about themselves among others. Though, these are meant for teachers to gather relevant information about children, they lend themselves to interactions between teachers and early learners which help in developing a myriad of psychosocial skills. Since

feedback is embedded in assessment practices, Wertheim and Leyser (2002) explain that with regard to feedback patterns, high-efficacy teachers offer more praise for appropriate responses and persist longer with longer with learners who are slow by providing necessary props. These may engender positive self esteem, confidence, honesty and openness in early learners.

In Ghana, psychosocial skills are supposed to be taught across the curriculum. This means that early childhood educators must be well equipped to develop these skills in early learners by providing them with relevant opportunities when teaching language and literacy, number work, environmental studies among others to enable them imbibe such values. Further, it seems almost all studies conducted on teachers' PCK so far focused on components that promoted the development of the cognitive domain. This has thus necessitated an examination of the pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service early childhood educators in the teaching of psychosocial skills across the curriculum which maybe primarily responsible for the generation of values and attitudes for developing the affective elements in early learners.

Purpose of the Study

The study therefore explored pre-service early childhood teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in implementing psychosocial skills across the kindergarten curriculum. It sought to examine the extent to which the bachelor of education early childhood education programme provided pre-service teachers with the requisite competencies and skills that could be used to generate various affective elements across the kindergarten curriculum for early learners to imbibe. Specifically, the study was driven by the following research questions in order to gather relevant data.

1. How adequate is pre-service teachers' knowledge in the constituents of psychosocial skills in the curriculum?
2. How adequate is pre-service teachers' knowledge in the use of interactive techniques in inculcating psychosocial skills across the curriculum?
3. How adequate is pre-service teachers' knowledge in the use of assessment procedures in inculcating psychosocial skills across the curriculum?

Methodology

A descriptive survey which allowed the use of a dominant status explanatory sequential design located within the mixed method paradigm was employed for the study. This design enabled the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate enough data for the study, validate and interpret using systematic principles (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The design helped to generate enough relevant data to provide answers to the broad and complete range of research questions and also generated stronger evidence for corroboration of findings and conclusion. The population of the study comprised all final year pre-service teachers pursuing a degree in early childhood education, in a public university in Ghana, who had completed the internship programme. In all 123 students were conveniently selected for the study. These were final year (4th) university students who were out for the first semester to practice teaching (internship) in kindergartens across the country and have completed. These pre-service teachers were back on campus in the second semester for post internship seminars. They were therefore in the position to provide relevant information. Questionnaires were administered to these students out of which five were selected for a focused group interview. Items in the questionnaire were close ended with some on a three and four point Likert-type scale.

Two gentlemen and three ladies were involved in this exercise. The interview focused on the five major themes on which quantitative data were gathered. The researcher served as the moderator and posed questions consistent to the themes. Any of the five participants were given the opportunity to react to questions posed and hear the views of others to enable them consider their own views accordingly (Frankael, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). It helped in drawing out different perspectives to tease out varying opinions about the issues under discussion. The session lasted for about an hour and a half and was recorded with the consent of the students. This generated enough qualitative data for triangulation and expanding results for quantitative data. However, Quantitative data gathered with questionnaire were coded 3, 2, 1 and 4, 3, 2, 1 and analysed using means and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

Data gathered indicated that there were more female students (67.5%) pursuing early childhood education than male students (32.5%). This reflects what exists across students at the lower levels and also among practicing teachers at large. According to the International Labour Organization (2012), both national (93%) and global statistics (94%) show that there are more female early childhood practitioners than males. (Sanders, 2002) posits that the field of early childhood is an overwhelmingly female one. The argument has been that women are naturally predisposed to caring for young children, and men are not (Sanders, 2002; Cunningham & Dorsey, 2004). This belief is borne out of the prevailing practice in most cultures, including Ghana's, that the nature of women makes them better placed to handle the responsibility of raising and nurturing children, both in the home and in collective approaches (Wardle, 2004).

Adequacy of Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge in Teaching Psychosocial Skills

This section sought to find out pre-service teachers' opinion about how much knowledge they think they would have acquired at the end of the degree programme to enable them assist early learners to exhibit various skills and values. With regard to adequacy of pre-service early childhood teachers' knowledge in teaching psychosocial skills, it came to light that pre-service teachers' believe they will have enough knowledge to enable them assist early learners exhibit various psychosocial skills captured in the goals. This was implied by the mean of means of 2.88. However, skills in knowing and living with oneself, appreciating self and others and developing self confidence seem to be the most achievable for PSTs

Members of the focus group discussion also provided the following responses when asked the extent to which they felt they will be able to get children to develop psychosocial skills. Some of them responded that;

PST 1: *I think that some of the topics themselves will make it possible for the children to develop some of these things. Especially, a topic like parts of the body. I feel that most of us will be able to teach this so that the children can know the parts of the body, appreciate their usefulness etc.*

Table 1. *Adequacy of Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge in Teaching Psychosocial Skills*

Skills and values	SA Freq. %	SWA Freq. %	DA Freq. %	X	SD
Skills in knowing and living with oneself	116 (94.3)	7 (5.7)	-	2.94	.23
Self appreciation and appreciating others	116 (94.3)	7 (5.7)	-	2.94	.23
Self confidence	115 (93.5)	8 (6.5)	-	2.93	.25
Skills of being responsible	111(90.2)	12 (9.8)	-	2.90	.30
Coping with emotions	95 (77.2)	28 (22.8)	-	2.77	.42
Decision making skills	99 (80.5)	24 (19.5)	-	2.80	.40

SA-strongly agree; SWA-Some what agree; DA-Disagree

PST 2: *To add to what my friend said. The teaching practice we just came back from has at least taught some of us, that is those of us who were not teachers, that children need to be encouraged even when they make mistakes. You don't shout on them since it may kill their confidence.*

The responses from the discussion indicated that PSTs sounded confident that they will be able to help children demonstrate psychosocial skills. This is considered a very positive sign, since it seems pre-service teachers are poised to assist learners. A subtle revelation that emerged from the responses is that these pre-service teachers do not appreciate the complexities involved in getting learners to acquire such skills and imbibe the values they come along with. For instance, the response from PST 1 suggests that as the topic mentioned is taught children will automatically come to appreciate themselves. This kind of understanding seems quite superficial. The implication is that some of these topics might be taught without recourse to these skills and values. The signal this sends is that in spite of pre-service teachers' confidence, it is as if they are still deficient in what it takes to make early learners exhibit the various psychosocial skills. Further, a critical study of the degree programme PSTs are taken through reveals scanty information on experiences that will equip them with skills to enable them facilitate learning for children to acquire psychosocial skills except 'appreciation of self and others' and 'knowing oneself' under two of the courses, which probably explains their competence in that area. However, a study of the kindergarten curriculum discloses a variety of such activities and experiences. A thorough

study of the curriculum during preparation for internship (on-campus teaching practice) would have enabled PSTs to monitor closely what in-service teachers do in this regard.

The evidence gathered indicates that PSTs do not possess adequate skills to enable them take early learners through activities and experiences out of which they would inculcate psychosocial skills or values and attitudes such as confidence, honesty, taking responsibility, coping with anger, fears etc necessary for their total development. This seems to be consistent with Chu and Park's (1996) finding that most pre-service and in-service elementary school teachers lack the necessary skills for effective teaching of values. In the US, Forlow (2002) also intimates that teachers say their preparation in various teacher education programmes lack adequate training in character education. This is quite a worrying trend since character, moral, values education and the teaching of psychosocial skills are all geared towards equipping learners with attitudes that would enable children relate well with people and grow to become responsible adults. Since 85% of the human brain develops by age five (Garcia and Neuman, 2010) it is critical that young learners are exposed to worthwhile values so that as they '*grow old they would not depart from them*'. This therefore, requires a teacher education programme that equips and prepares PSTs adequately by creating effective avenues for them to develop their PCK to an appreciable level to enable them play their roles effectively. Borko & Putnam (1996) explain that although PCK is assumed to be developed as teachers gain more experience in teaching, PSTs should know about it and try to make sense of it through their methods courses and field experiences during internship (both on and off-campus) in order to be ready for their first year of teaching since the quality of skills and knowledge of a teacher have been identified as a factor that influence successful implementation of a curriculum (Abroampa, 2008).

The Extent to Which Psychosocial Skills Can Be Taught Across the Curriculum

Data in Table 2 Displays the extent to which pre-service teachers think they get children to inculcate psychosocial skills as they teach each of the components of the kindergarten curriculum. The data shows that, to a large extent, early childhood pre-service teachers will be able to help learners acquire various psychosocial skills as they take them through the

other five learning experiences that make up the kindergarten curriculum. This is reflected by the mean of means of 2.74. Ideally, as teachers take early learners through these five experiences, they are supposed to involve learners in activities that would make them acquire the necessary skills, values and attitudes by integrating the experiences. The expression of the ability of PSTs to do that is commendable. Though, they seem to be more prepared to assist learners acquire these skills through language and literacy, environmental studies and number work.

Table 2. *The Extent to Which Psychosocial Skills can be Taught Across the Curriculum*

Components	TLE	TSE	NAA	X	SD
	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %		
Language and literacy	100 (81.3)	23 (18.70)		2.81	.39
Environmental studies	97 (79.9)	26 (21.1)		2.79	.41
Number work	102 (82.9)	16 (13.0)	5 (4.1)	2.79	.50
Creative activities	84 (68.3)	37 (30.1)	2 (1.6)	2.66	.51
Physical development	78 (63.4)	45 (36.6)		2.63	.48

TLE-To a large extent; TSE-To some extent; NAA-Not at all

However, it was evident in the responses of PSTs during the focused group discussion that they would have difficulties integrating some of these skills when teaching number work for instance. This reflected in responses such as;

PST 2: *It is possible to teach children some of these skills in all the five subjects or areas but I think sometimes it will be very difficult when teaching mathematics. For example how will you teach them how to cope with their emotions when teaching them maths.* To add to this another respondent indicated that;

PST 5: *Even if you check the syllabus, the section for psychosocial skills nothing has been provided for maths because they (designers of the curriculum) themselves are aware that it will be difficult for these children to acquire some of these values.*

It appeared all the PSTs agreed to these positions. Truly, a gleaning of the section on psychosocial skills, specifically, aspects on the various values that can be integrated during teaching across the five areas revealed that only 'getting along with others' has been ticked as an attitude that early learners can acquire through number work out of about fourteen

values and attitudes. Creative art has two (*self description and self awareness*) while six values and attitudes have been suggested for music and dance. It is thus obvious that though what the syllabus covers may be suggestions, adequate information on activities and experiences early learners can be taken through and values and attitudes they can acquire through the five areas have not been provided. Besides, PSTs, in the course of their training, might not have been exposed to the fact that all subjects and experiences learners are taken through provide them with some values and attitudes meant to develop their affective domain. Since there is the danger that, especially, novice teachers will restrict themselves to the syllabus while on the field, such lapses may inhibit the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Getting learners to acquire values and attitudes in various subjects require a lot of skill from the teacher. According to Halstead and Taylor (2000) this has generated a lot of controversy as to whether the subjects can legitimately be used. They, however argue that when learners study subjects they are inevitably introduced to, they imbibe the values implicit within them. Opportunities must therefore be provided to instill values and attitudes which can be drawn from the teaching of these subjects. Such opportunities can only be created when teachers have an understanding of content in subjects they teach. For instance, PSTs can explore various ways to enable early learners appreciate and acquire the implicit values and attitudes mathematics or number work offers, when they understand how children learn mathematics.

Knowledge in the Use of Interactive Techniques

Table 3 shows how adequate pre-service teachers' think they were prepared to use various techniques in teaching psychosocial skills across the curriculum. Since an integration of psychosocial skills across the early childhood curriculum can be achieved through the effective use of varying interactive techniques, pre-service early childhood teachers' expression that they have very adequate knowledge in the use of interactive techniques was deemed impressive. This was depicted by the mean of means of 3.58. At the early childhood level children are explorative and would like to engage the resources in their environment using their senses. Teaching techniques must thus be interactive enough

to provide opportunities for purposeful play to enable them interact with themselves and other resources. Though, all the techniques lend themselves to interactive engagements, the extent of interactiveness may depend on how well teachers use them. It appears PSTs are better prepared in the use of demonstration and fieldtrips. This is quite surprising since dramatization and role play are common techniques and seem more engaging for early learners. The use of demonstration might not be out of place but may be teacher centred if care is not taken.

Table 3. *Knowledge in the Use of Interactive Techniques*

Interactive techniques	VA Freq. %	AD Freq. %	IA Freq. %	NAA Freq. %	X	SD
Dramatization	58 (47.2)	58 (47.2)	7 (5.7)		3.41	.60
Role play	74 (60.2)	49 (39.8)			3.60	.49
Simulation	40 (32.5)	73 (59.3)	7 (5.7)	3 (2.4)	3.25	.65
Demonstration	90 (73.2)	30 (24.4)	3 (2.4)		3.73	.49
Fieldtrips/nature walk	58 (47.2)	58 (47.2)	7 (5.7)		3.67	.71
Integrated approach	82 (66.7)	39 (31.7)	2 (1.6)		3.65	.51
Cooperative learning	84 (68.3)	35 (28.5)	4 (3.3)		3.65	.54
Experiential learning	74 (60.2)	43 (35.0)	6 (4.9)		3.55	.58

VA-Very adequate; AD-Adequate; IA-Inadequate; NAA- Not at all

Though, PSTs reaction again suggested their adequate preparation in the use of integrative, cooperative and experiential learning approaches with means of 3.65, responses from the group discussions revealed otherwise. Some of the respondents said;

PST 1: *We were taught some of these methods at college and I also came to meet them here. I mean were also taught here. Methods like role play, demonstration, dramatization and fieldtrip. So I can use them well but I don't know about the experiential and cooperative approach...*

Another discussant explained that;

PST 4: *Under methods of teaching we were also taught the eclectic approach which I think is similar to the integrated approach or...there are others also like the play way, discussion and so on...which we can use in teaching children.*

The foregoing expositions indicated that PSTs rather had a better idea and perhaps a fair understanding of the use of commonly used techniques than what was suggested by the quantitative data. This was confirmed by evidence gathered from the programme they have been taken through. Aside these known techniques it is important that student teachers are exposed to and should be made to explore the use of other techniques which are more engaging for early learners to enable them interact better with and among themselves which will result in the acquisition of some of these values and attitudes. Since each of them generates some amount of affective elements.

The choice of teaching method or techniques itself is value laden (Halstead and Taylor, 2000). The way content or knowledge is manipulated and exploited to enable learners acquire values is critical. For instance, apart from acquiring problem solving skills and being patient to go through various steps and approaches in arriving at solutions in mathematics, getting early learners to work in groups may also provide them an opportunity to learn how to cooperate with others and share ideas to find solutions to problems or achieve targets set. According to Halstead *et al.* other techniques which have usually been employed to influence learner's attitude and behaviour are discussion, role play, drama, educational games, simulation exercises, cooperative learning, project work, peer mediation among others. It is thus important for PSTs to understand the use of these tools bearing in mind their inherent skills, values and attitudes.

The discourse suggests that there are varying methods used comprising discussion-based approaches and other student centred active learning strategies. However, more experiential and less didactic teaching and learning approaches are considered appropriate for generating and developing psychosocial skills among early learners.

The Use of Assessment Procedures

This section provided data on the adequacy of pre-service teachers' knowledge in the use of Assessment procedures to enable children develop psychosocial skills. Data in Table 4 gathered with respect to pre-service teachers' knowledge in the use of various assessment procedures generated a mean of means of 3.58 implying that they have very adequate knowledge of how these assessment procedures can be used in gathering

sufficient information about learners to enable them make informed instructional decisions. In spite of this, it appears they are more conversant with conversing with children, observation and closely interacting with children (clinical interviews) as a means of gathering information from early learners. These are considered important if early learners would have to develop values and attitudes like confidence, honesty, appreciation of self and the like.

Table 4. *The Use of Assessment Procedures*

Assessment Procedures	VA	AD	IA	NAA	X	SD
Children's opinion of themselves and their work to gather information about them.	84(68.3)	36 (29.3)	3 (2.4)		3.65	.53
Conversation with children in order to gather information from them to assist them.	90(73.2)	31(25.2)	2(1.6)		3.72	.49
Observation of children in order to gather relevant information?	93(75.6)	25 (20.3)	5 (4.1)		3.71	.54
Close interaction with children to elicit relevant information from them.	86(69.9)	35(28.5)	2(1.6)		3.68	.50
Tasks setting for children to enable you gather information from them.	67(54.5)	51 (41.5)	5 (4.1)		3.50	.58
Children's appreciation of each other's work to assess them.	75(61.0)	43 (35.0)	5(4.1)		3.57	.57
Checklist to gather information about learners.	61(49.6)	55 (44.7)	5(4.1)	2(1.6)	3.42	.65
Anecdotal records to gather information about children.	60(48.8)	54 (43.9)	9(7.3)		3.41	.63
Tests to gather information from children in order to assess them.	76(61.8)	40 (32.5)	7 (5.7)		3.56	.60

VA-Very adequate; AD-Adequate; IA-Inadequate; NAA- Not at all

The focus group discussion revealed that PSTs are familiar with the use of tools or procedures like observation which they favoured highly as reflected in the quantitative data. They also knew about tests, checklist and tasks (projects) which were rated lower. Evidence from their programme of study did not reveal information on various procedures used in gathering information about children. The danger is that teachers may

resort to the use of conventional procedures like the use of tests and exercises which may not be appropriate for early learners though the kindergarten curriculum (2004) suggests the use of informal techniques such as observation, conversation and gallery work. This thus, reveals a gap between the kindergarten curriculum and the programme PSTs are taken through.

Literature supports the use of various methods of assessment such as oral story, free composition with stimulus materials, interviews, reportage of others performance, contrived or free observed behaviour, informal self reporting and test and a checklist for recording observation (Himsl & Lambert, 1993). Drummond and others intimate that in making assessment work among young children teachers need to use observation-based assessment and record-keeping.

Implications for the Early Childhood Curriculum

From the analysis of both qualitative, quantitative data and the analysis of curriculum documents, it came to light that;

On completing the programme, PSTs would have adequate knowledge to enable them assist early learners to exhibit psychosocial skills in two out of the six goals which are skills in knowing and living with oneself and appreciation of self and others. It is clear that not much attention has been given this critical aspect of the curriculum (psychosocial skills) during the preparation of pre-service teachers. A lack of consciousness and understanding of what is expected of learners will result in teachers restricting themselves and concentrating on pure content that will enable learners read and write. It is therefore recommended that:

An early childhood teacher education programme should create opportunities for PSTs to examine the goals of the various components of the curriculum during their pre-internship engagements and explore ways by which early learners can imbibe the values and attitudes implicit in them.

PSTs were exposed to varying teaching learning techniques but were more familiar with known ones like demonstration and fieldtrips. It is expected that PSTs will be trained by the

Early Childhood Education Departments to use and apply techniques that are interactive and engaging since they lend themselves more easily to the acquisition of values and attitudes as learners interact.

Various assessment procedures were recommended for use by PSTs however they were more familiar with observation and conversation as procedures for gathering information from children. It is recommended that since at the early childhood level authentic or performance assessment is more feasible, early childhood education programmes should provide PSTs with opportunities to practice the use of varying informal techniques and tools within children's natural learning settings to enable them monitor the development and evolution of behaviours, values and attitudes so as to provide relevant support. Generally, PSTs should be made to examine the KG curriculum critically during their pre- and post internship seminars before getting into the teaching field.

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