

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF  
READING IN THE GHANAIAN KINDERGARTENS**

**BY**



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**DECLARATION**

I, Comfort Nyuiemedi Dorvlo do hereby declare that, apart from references made to the work of other people in books, theses and from the internet, which have been duly acknowledged, this project is my personal research work done under the supervision of Dr. Paul Agbedor. It has not been presented for any other degree in this or any other institution.

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## DEDICATION

With much pleasure I dedicate this work to you, my husband, Rev. Lawrence Freeman Dzakpa and our two daughters, Fafa and Dzigbordi for your great love and concern; as well as your readiness to suspend all other things for the sake of the 'Thesis'.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe my God a great debt of gratitude for seeing me through this course and endowing me with the necessary wisdom and good health. I also express my profound gratitude to my mother, Mrs. Rose Dorvlo, for her decision to send me to Teacher Training College no matter what it might cause her. That has been the springboard that has brought me this far. 'Da, akpe sia.' I wish to thank you greatly, my hardworking and dedicated supervisor, Dr. Paul Agbedor. My God will reward you. I can never forget you sister Agatha. You always surprise me with your dedication to typing this work with such great speed. As if that was not enough, you managed to get your husband, Mr. Augustt to do all the statistical work for me. You are both wonderful and selfless. I pray that my God will grant you your greatest heart desire.

I deem it very important to express my heartfelt thanks to the headteachers and teachers of PRESEC Staff Kindergarten, Hannah School Complex, La Presbyterian Early Childhood Development Centre, La Roman Catholic Kindergarten, Jesus is Alive Preparatory and Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten. Thank you for accepting me and co-operating with me in the course of this study. I equally appreciate the help I received from my lecturers at Legon and Winneba especially Mr. S.K. Amegashie. God bless you all.

To all my mates, especially Mabel Arthur, Rashid Tee and Samson Ezu, I say well done. My final gratitude is to you, Mr. Frimpong and Aunty Joyce – both of the Linguistics Department, Legon. Your contributions are well appreciated.



### ABSTRACT

This research has revealed that reading skills can be a great asset if it is acquired in early childhood. But the process is easily hampered by lack of: good readers, teaching/learning materials and parental involvement. Stressful school atmosphere, teachers' lack of knowledge and bad attitude towards work can equally hinder the reading process at this level. To these little ones, reading must be fun. Lack of oral competence of both teachers and the children in the target language equally hinder the child's reading progress. This is why it is important for policy makers to consider Anyidoho's (1999) statement that, the Ghanaian children's reading would be excellent if they are taught to read first in their L1 while they continue to gain communicative competence in the L2.

On the other hand, early reading can be facilitated by the presence of good supervision, good use of teaching and learning materials, regular drills in the learnt item and frequent refresher courses for teachers. In view of these, it has been suggested among other things that all teachers in Ghanaian kindergartens be trained at the GES Nursery Teachers Training Centre to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for their work.

It is also recommended that headteachers and education officers ensure that there is always good supervision to enable good practices to prevail. This implies that dedication and selfless commitment must be rewarded as well. The government's quick action in supplying readers and teaching learning materials as well as a

review of the kindergarten timetable will go a long way to affect the teaching and learning of reading positively.

It is hoped that the research findings would be of much interest and benefit to teachers, headteachers, curriculum planners and future researchers.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACIE	-	American Council on Immersion Education.
BUPL	-	Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators.
CSU	-	California State University
DANIDA	-	Danish International Development Agency
ECD	-	Early Childhood Development
ECE	-	Early Childhood Education
GES	-	Ghana Education Service
GNAT	-	Ghana National Association of Teachers
KG	-	Kindergarten
L1	-	First Language
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRRF	-	National Right to Read Foundation
TPR	-	Total Physical Response
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	-	United States (of America)
WAEC	-	West African Examinations Council

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction

This study is based upon the fact that there is a great outcry in the country over students' poor performance at both junior high and senior high levels. West African Examination Council (WAEC) Chief Examiner's report for Ghana Basic Education Certificate Examination 2002, states that some of the candidates were unable to answer the questions well because of their inability to read and understand the demands of the questions (Chief Examiner's Report 2002: 40, 46). This illustrates the importance of reading in relation to other school subjects. It is obvious that a child's ability to perform well in a subject does not depend only on his/her knowledge level in the subject, but also on his/her ability to read and understand. It is therefore very important to start this essential task of learning to read from the scratch so that it forms an integral part of the child.

In Aukerman (1972:53), Lloyd states that advocates of early reading have conducted a research and come out that children of today are ready for reading at an earlier age than it used to be because of exposure to vocabulary through the explosion in the communication industry. The Ghanaian child is no exception to this research findings. It will therefore be wrong to overlook his or her readiness for reading.

Ability to read and write is highly cherished by both literates and illiterates in Ghana. It is for this reason that a school's performance is judged by its students' reading and

fluency capabilities in the English language. Parents no longer see the kindergarten as the 'baby sitter' setting that it used to be. They want their children to achieve a native speaker's proficiency level in the English language. And this responsibility hangs on the shoulders of the kindergarten educators. French (2004:1) conducted a research on improving reading at primary six and concluded that reading is a tool or skill on which a child's progress in other subjects depends. Since kindergarten is the child's first level on the academic ladder, it will be appropriate to acquire this tool here.

In our modern society, reading is a very vital means to a lot of ends. In fact, it would be a pity to stay without reading skills, because we need reading to be able to carry out our daily life requirements like reading road signs, utility bills, medical inscriptions, warnings about danger, etc. It will be a great asset to acquire this skill and the love for it at a tender age. If the kindergarten child will acquire this skill with ease, there should be somebody to impart it in a 'fun-full' way. That is why the teacher and his/her approaches will be very important to this research work.

### **1.1 History of Kindergarten Education in Ghana**

Kindergarten education is part of what is known as preschool (pre formal school) education and, has, therefore, not been singled out in this history. According to Britannica Encyclopedia on line (Britannica web site), preschool education is education during the earliest phases of childhood, beginning from infancy and ending upon entering primary school at about five, six or seven years of age. In Ghana,

preschool education is from zero to six years (though some preschool children are far above this age) because the official age for entering primary one is six years.

As Morrison (2001) rightly puts it, formal education at preschool level was not common in the Gold Coast. However, preschool, also known as Early Childhood Development (ECD) education, began in Ghana as far back as 1843 by the Basel Mission who attached kindergarten to some of their primary schools (GNAT-BUPL 2003:12). This Basel ideology had infested other missionaries by 1920, hence the establishment of the Prince of Wales School at Achimota. As frankly stated at Vibe Ghana website, preschool was desirable but not compulsory in Ghana because government could not fund them. It was, therefore, left in the hands of private individuals, communities, churches and non-governmental organizations with a few public ones in the regions and districts. The first public preschool in Ghana is Queen Elizabeth's Early Years Development Centre in Accra. This school was opened in 1951 to mark Queen Elizabeth's visit to Ghana.

Early childhood education remained with the aforementioned stakeholders till 1961 when the then Education Act placed it under the Ministry of Education. A Nursery Unit was established within the Ghana Education Service (GES) in 1965 to facilitate registration, control and evaluation of nurseries and kindergartens in the country (Antwi 1992; Opong 1993 cited by Morrison 2001). The unit was also responsible for training personnel for the sector. As a result, the National Nursery Teachers Training Centre was established in Accra with a model nursery school in 1969 under the sponsorship of the Danish Government.

Meanwhile preschool education was limited to the cities, urban and mission areas till the Djobo Report of 1974 recommended that kindergarten education be extended to all parts of the country to benefit all children (4-6 years). The recommendation was however not implemented (due to financial restraints) till a year later when the Evans-Anform Report recommended that private participation be encouraged in the sector (GNAT 2003:13). This led to an increase in the number of ECD centres in the country and was boosted by the Commissioner of Education's directives in 1977 that preschools be attached to all primary schools in the country (GNAT 2003:13). Many communities attached preschools to their primary schools between 1977 and 1989, and by 1996 there were 5441 public kindergartens in the country (Education State University website). The communities could, however, not employ or pay teachers hence the need for GES to absorb the centres. Primary teachers were posted to these kindergartens but were later withdrawn and replaced by unqualified teachers. This work seeks to find out the effects this has had on the teaching and learning of reading.

A recent ECD policy was formulated and code-named The Accra Declaration (GNAT 2003:13). It calls on government departments, agencies, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and individuals to help expand the ECD vision from preschool concept to a broader early Childhood Development centre to cater for all children including the poor. As a result, Early Childhood Education has been mainstreamed into the Basic Education system in the 2007 Educational Reform. Other steps taken to boost ECD centres include the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) – Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators

(BUPL) partnership in a three -year project to raise the image of ECD in Ghana. The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and other NGOs are also assisting the sector in diverse ways.

In Ghana, preschool consists of crèche (0-2 years), Toddlers (2-3 years), Nursery (3-4 years) and Kindergarten (5-6 years). The government offers two years kindergarten education for 4-6 years while the private stakeholders take care of the rest. Data has shown that we presently have about 10,016 public preschools in the country (GES-Nursery Unit Report - 2008).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The WAEC Chief Examiner's Report (on BECE results) complains year after year about the poor performance of school children. This is normally associated with their inability to read and understand the questions before attempting them; bringing to the fore the fact that there is a loophole in the reading life of these children. What is the cause? Is the problem with teachers, students, parents or the government? Are there some factors that help some children to read well but militate against others? Talking on children's ability to read, French (2004:4) attributed the weak foundation in children's reading to their inability to read and follow instructions. If we want to strengthen this 'weak foundation', it must be no where else than at the kindergarten level. Laying a solid foundation for a life-long reading habit takes more than books and a classroom. We need teachers who are well informed about the learning process of each child, a concerned government, and parents, in addition to ready-to-read

children among other factors. This is why it is necessary to investigate the factors that affect the teaching and learning of reading at this early stage.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

This study is intended to carry out a heuristic research with the main purpose of finding out how reading instruction is carried out in the Ghanaian kindergartens, what challenges are faced by teachers, pupils, parents and heads of schools, and how these challenges can be addressed or minimized, using modern methods of teaching reading at the kindergarten level.

Someone may ask, “Why talk about reading at this age?” Balwin and Tomasello (1998) conducted a research which proves that infants at the age of 12 months possess some basic abilities that facilitate word learning. This basic ability is in each child and should be awakened and motivated early enough to progress into reading habit formation. This is why reading at the kindergarten level is regarded as very important by this work. An awareness of the factors that affect reading at this level will be a means to an end. This is not to say that reading should be forced on the child. No, children learn when they are interested in what they do because it is fun.

The research questions that will guide the study include:

- What does reading at this level entail?
- What kind of approaches are the teachers using?
- What is the caliber of teachers in the Ghanaian kindergarten?
- What is the parental role in promoting reading at this level?

- What role is assigned to the government (the policy makers) regarding reading by the kindergarten child?
- How can reading be made interesting and fun at this level?
- To whom should early reading instruction be given?

#### 1.4 Significance of the study

As a teacher, I have observed that the acquisition of reading ability brings great joy and a sense of self-fulfilment to children. While teaching in a private kindergarten in Ghana, a young girl brought me a parcel on her sixth birthday. Attached to this parcel was a short note which read, "Auntie Connie, thank you for teaching me to read and write." Though quite short, this note is powerful and keeps me wondering, 'How important is reading to this girl?' What about those who cannot read? Do they feel cut off from the rest and is there anything I can do to help them too? Are there some factors that help child 'A' to read so quickly but do not favour child 'B'? These and many others are the questions that have kept torturing me from that day. I find this time very appropriate to investigate these factors to help add value to our work as teachers at this important level of the academic ladder. This study hopes to equip teachers and curriculum developers with valuable knowledge that will enable them perform their task with much ease.

#### 1.5 The Scope of the Study

This work is meant to cover the importance of starting reading at the early years of education in Ghana. It will look at teaching/learning of reading at the kindergarten level, and the factors that inhibit or promote it. It will also look at how reading at this

level can be made more interesting bearing in mind children's individual differences, social and psychological needs, socio-economic background, learning styles and other characteristics of children. Reading lessons will be observed to investigate the approaches being used and their effectiveness and suitability to children of this stage. There will be three intervention lessons testing the effectiveness of approaches in the Ghanaian context.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

Much research has been done world wide on teaching and learning of reading at the early years level but just a little attention has been directed to the factors that affect the teaching and learning of reading in Ghana. In this chapter the researcher intends to review the literature on what reading at this level entails, the factors that inhibit or promote learning and teaching of reading, methods of teaching reading, and some research findings about teaching and learning of reading.

#### 2.1 What is Reading

Reading is a very crucial issue in the whole world, and the Ghanaian society is no exception. Both literates and illiterates consider the ability to read as the key word in education. That was why the late Mr. T.A. Dorvlo (PC) never called anyone a scholar unless he saw the person read a printed material. What then is reading?

According to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary, reading is the act of:

- (i) looking at and understanding printed or written words.
- (ii) speaking words which are printed or written.

These definitions imply that reading involves looking at or speaking words as well as understanding of them.

Maggart and Zintz (1992:8) also give some definitions of reading, three of them say:

- (i) Reading is decoding of written words so that they can be produced orally.
- (ii) Reading is understanding the language of the author of a printed passage.
- (iii) Reading is the ability to anticipate meaning in lines of a print so that the reader is not concerned with the mechanical details but with grasping ideas from groups of words that convey meaning.

The keywords in these definitions are decoding, understanding and meaning. This means that for reading to take place there is the need to decode the text into readable units for better understanding. As Maggart and Zintz (1992) rightly put it, the application of any of these definitions depends greatly on what the teacher lays emphasis on.

#### **2.1.1 Reading at kindergarten level**

Reading at this stage should aim at inculcating key skills in children that will lead to reading success in future, (US National Reading Panel 2000). Purcell-Gates (1997) associates early years reading with recognition of print, letters and then words. Gough (1972) and Adam (1990) refer to this type of reading as a letter by letter and word by word process. This implies that the type of reading done by the early years learners has to do with letters to sounds, then to words.

The reading process at kindergarten level should not be any strenuous academic exercise that would result in boredom. It should be done in a fun-full manner, creating the awareness that print has meaning, and can make the learner happy as well as give him/her information. Under normal circumstances kindergarten students are

given initial reading which is the type of instruction given to those who cannot read. In the Ghanaian educational set up, initial reading can extend to primary two or three.

The US National Reading Panel (2000) carried out an evidence-based review on research on how children learn to read. They concluded that effective reading instruction includes teaching children to break apart and manipulate the sounds in words (phonemic awareness).

In Ghana, reading at the kindergarten level differs from school to school. Most private schools practice 'phonic' reading – decoding words, while the public schools are at home with the 'Look and Say' way of learning to read. Each category precedes the actual reading with the acquisition of pre-reading skills like visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, oral language development, visual motor skills, visual memory and visual comprehension skills. This is done through activities like matching similar shapes, sizes and colours, spotting the odd ones out, spotting the difference in pictures, finding and adding missing parts etc.

The US National Right to Read Foundation developed a primer that should be used to teach initial reading to children and adults. The primer lists 44 sounds in the English language which are very essential for beginning reading. These consist of: (i) 5 short vowels; (ii) 18 consonants; (iii) 7 digraphs; (iv) 6 long vowels; (v) 3 'r'-controlled vowel sounds (vi) 5 diphthongs and other special sounds.

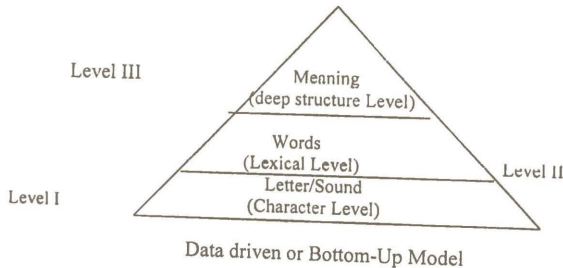
## 2.2 Theoretical Views on the Reading Process

There has been a great controversy among reading authorities as to which method to adopt in teaching initial reading. The bone of contention is whether word recognition (phonics) should be taught first or meaning should. There are two major schools of thought.

The first group believes that the process of reading begins with letters and their sounds (phonics). They use the term, 'Bottom-Up' Model to explain the reading process. The other group opposes this view so much and proclaims that reading is chiefly 'external guided'. They believe in a hypothesis-test or the 'Top-Down' Model of the reading process (Zakaluk, 1996). The former group advocates the 'phonics' approach to teaching initial reading while the later group subscribes to the 'Look and Say' approach.

### 2.2.1 The Bottom-Up Model

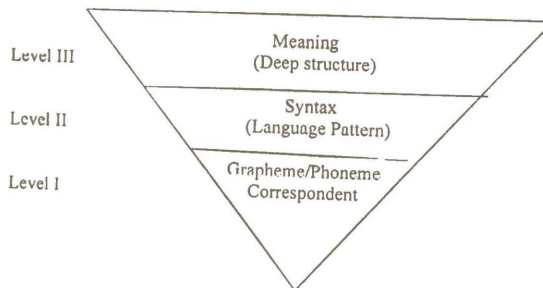
According to Zakaluk (1996), Gough (1972) is the proponent of the phonic based or the 'Bottom-Up' Model of the reading process. Gough (1972) says that the reading process should proceed in a serial fashion from letters to sounds, to words, to meaning in the progression shown below.



### 2.2.2 The Top-Down Model

The theorists in the second group disagree with Gough's view-on the reading process. According to Goodman (1970), efficient reading does not depend on precise identification of all the elements in a word. It rather comes from the skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary. To them, readers have prior knowledge of what could be meaningful in a text, and this knowledge is based upon the reader's previous experiences and knowledge about language.

The view of these theorists is that readers are not confined to letters that they see. They have two other kinds of information that they can use. These are the semantic cue (meaning) and the syntactic (grammatical or sentence sense). In other words, the reader's prior knowledge of the topic and their knowledge about language assist them to predict what the new word will be (Zakaluk 1996). This is known as the Top-Down Model. In this model, information flows in a top-down word order, so that the process of reading depends on meaning first – as shown below:



### 2.2.3 Critique on the Reading Models

There are criticisms of the two models. Rummelhart (1977) sees an essential flaw in the bottom-up model. He says it processes reading in only one direction – and the implication is that no higher level information ever modifies or changes lower level analysis. In refuting the idea that readers depend on bottom-up processing in reading, he explains that it takes only higher level semantic and syntactic processing to identify some words in their varied forms, eg. ‘read’ in the following sentences:

I read that book yesterday.

I am going to read a new book today.

In the above, he claims the reader can only draw from world knowledge as well as grammatical sense to pronounce the first ‘read’ correctly. He concluded that reading seems more interactive rather than a linear process based on letter perception.

Huey (1968) and Pillsbury (1897) are other theorists that support this idea. To these theorists, a letter is more accurate in a word than when it stands alone.

Stanovich (1980) also challenged the top-down model of using the cognitive processing to facilitate word recognition. Stanovich (1980) discredited the assumption that readers read so fast that they don’t depend on phonemic code. Zakaluk (1996) also states that theorists that oppose the idea include Mitchell and Green (1978).

Mitchell and Green (1978) argue that while reading speed was faster for texts containing more frequently occurring words and words with fewer letters, readers show no tendency to increase rate as they progress through textual material. According to them, reading speed is rather determined largely by both word recognition rate and access to word meaning. Obviously, Mitchell and Green are drawing attention to the need for the combination of approaches.

### **2.3 Methods for Teaching early Reading**

There are lots of methods for teaching early years reading skills. Gray (1969:75) puts the methods under two broad headings. These are the early Specialised Methods and the Recent Trends also known as the Eclectic Approach. Sadoski (2004) refers to this grouping as a summary of what was in practice in Huey's (1908) days. He then gives the 'Alphabetic,' 'Phonics', 'Phonetics', 'word', 'sentence' and combination of methods as the commonly used methods for now. Gray (1969:75) further divides the early specialized methods into analytic and synthetic groups. According to Gray (1969:76), and Sadoski (2004) the analytic group refers to the mental process of breaking down large structures – sentences, phrases and words into their constituent elements. The synthetic group on the other hand refers to the mental process of combining the detailed elements of language – sounds and syllables, into larger units. They put the Alphabetic, Phonics and Syllabic methods of teaching initial reading under the synthetic group while the analytic group covers the word, phrase, sentence and the story methods. Maggart and Zintz (1992) refer to the analytic and the synthetic grouping as the top-down and the bottom-up methods.

### 2.3.1 The Synthetic Group

This group is made up of the alphabetic, phonic and the syllabic methods. The alphabetic method is an old one which uses letters in an attempt to recognize and pronounce words (Gray 1969; Sadoski 2004). Farris et. al. (2004) also see this method as the one that enables children to link sounds to written letters by simply reading and discussing alphabetic books.

The phonic method refers to the relationship between letters and sounds in written words (Farris 2004: 110). Adams (1990), cited in Farris et. al. (2004.), states that the 'phonic' method is a build up on the 'alphabetic' principle. The method combines sounds to form syllables and then words, phrases etc. (Gray 1969 and Halvorson 1992).

The 'syllabic' method is the last in the synthetic group. This method teaches reading using combination of syllables. After syllables are learnt and mastered, they are combined to form words and sentences (Gray 1969, Halvorson 1992).

### 2.3.2 The Analytic Group

The analytic group emphasizes word meaning. It comprises the Word, Phrase, Sentence and Story Methods. The 'Word' Method is also referred to as the 'Whole Word' Method. Users present words in meaningful settings through the 'Look and Say' techniques (Gray 1969; Gudschinsky 1973 and Halvorson 1992). Thus the words are often accompanied by pictures to aid meaning.

The 'Phrase' Method is based on the assumption that phrases are more interesting than words and have added emphasis on meaning. On the other hand, the 'Sentence' Method views sentences as the true unit in language because they express whole thoughts which are the unit in thinking. Huey (1912) cited in Gray (1969:85) argues that the students learn to recognize a sentence and then break it into the individual words that make it up.

The last method in Gray's (1969) analytic group is the 'Story' Method. It refers to the use of variety of sentences to form a story which will help spark students' interest in the reading process. This method can be seen as an expansion of the sentence method.

### **2.3.3 The Eclectic Method**

According to Gray (1969) and Halvorson (1992), the Eclectic Method is a new approach to teaching initial reading brought out by the International Bureau of Education at Geneva. They further explain that this method uses the advantages of the other methods and point out that the major concern of the Eclectic Method is to combine the methods so that the strength of a method could cover up the weaknesses of the other.

This work desires to see the effects that a combination of reading approaches could have in our Ghanaian settings.

#### 2.3.4 Other Research Findings

Farris et al (2004:110) also point out two other instrumental approaches that could be used to help children develop their local knowledge of reading. These are Phonological and Phonemic awareness.

Phonological awareness refers to children being aware of how sounds combine in words. According to them, children develop this awareness before coming to school and demonstrate it through their love for poems, rhyming songs, etc. According to Anyidoho (1999), Sarig (1987) conducted a research on the transferability of reading skills from L1 to L2, and concluded that reading processes in the first language can be transferred into the second language. This shows that the child's home language is equally important for gaining reading competence in L2. It is therefore possible for a child to transfer his phonological awareness skills from L1 to the English language.

Phonemic awareness also refers to the ability to distinguish between the different sounds that one hears in a word, eg. Book → /b/ + /ʊ/ + /k/. Farrik et al (2004) supported their argument on the importance of phonemic awareness by stating that many studies have shown that acquisition of phonemic awareness leads to success in early reading.

The US Teaching Treasures database also recommends four basic approaches to parents and teachers. Two of them are very popular – 'Phonics' and the 'Look and Say' Methods. The other two are:

- (i) The Language Experience Approach: This approach introduces the child to reading based upon only the words that the child knows already. As the child's vocabulary increases, his reading materials are adjusted to include the new words.
- (ii) The Context Support Method: With this method, the teacher or the parent observes the child to see what interests him/her most. Reading materials that contain such objects are obtained to help build up the child's interest in reading since he is reading what interests him/her.

#### **2.4 The Dominant Methods in Ghana**

In Ghana, the most commonly used methods are the 'Phonics' and the 'Look and Say' Methods. The private schools practice the 'Phonics' Method, while the public schools are more at home with the 'Look and Say' Method. Some of the public kindergartens are now going eclectic – combining the 'Look and Say' Method with the 'Phonics' Method.

##### **2.4.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Methods**

Each of the above approaches to teaching initial reading has its strengths and weaknesses. The ideal thing to do therefore is to combine the approaches so that the strength of one will make up for the weaknesses of the other.

##### **2.4.2 Phonic Method**

Huey (1912), cited in Gray (1969:79) gives the most prominent strength of the 'Phonic' Method, that is, its use of the sounds of letters in word recognition. They

explain that this enables the students to pronounce any new word that follows the normal trend. Adams (1990) confirms this by saying 'Phonics' allows children to use the system of language to read rather than to guess. They also claim that 'phonics' instruction enables the learner to decode words on his own and become an independent reader quickly.

Nevertheless the 'phonic' method has some weaknesses. It has been criticized for being unable to help children understand what they read. Maggart and Zintz (1992:162) and Wren (2001) points out that the greatest weakness of 'phonics' is its dependency on explicit rules. Some others also think that phonic reading is too formal and can degenerate into lack of interest for reading (Fianu 2005). Other weaknesses of the 'phonics' method listed by Maggart and Zintz (1992) include:

1. It is regarded as a decoding technique rather than an approach.
2. Reading books may not be interesting enough for children.
3. Too much emphasis is on decoding of words to the detriment of meaning.
4. There are too many rules and too many exceptions to the rules.
5. The approach may not benefit deaf children.

#### **2.4.3 The Look and Say Method**

Fianu (2005) describes this method as the one that implies looking at an alphabet, word, sentence etc. and saying what you see. The main objective of this method is to help learners recognize words. It encompasses all the methods in the analytic group – the word, phrase, sentence and story methods. The method encourages whole word recognition and memorization, without dealing with letters.

LeDoux (2007) and Fianu (2005) see the following strengths in the Look and Say method.

1. It makes reading easy and interesting.
2. It enhances faster reading and instills love for reading in children as well as boost children's confidence level in reading.
3. It enables pupils to build up sight vocabulary quickly.

The method is, however, not free from criticism. Fianu (2005) says the method is inadequate as a technique since it does not help the pupils to read unfamiliar words. He also criticizes it as being unable to encourage learners to analyse new words on their own, as such, it encourages over-dependency on the teacher. Gray (1969) also criticizes the method of placing so much emphasis on meaning that word recognition is neglected. Dewey (1999) criticizes the method of encouraging rote learning which later renders students poor readers.

Wren (2001) points out that no single method is complete on its own. There is therefore the need for the combination of 'Phonics' and 'Whole Language' (Look and Say) methods. The combination will allow the strengths of one method to cover up the weaknesses of the other and vice versa. Wren (2001) concluded that it might be teaching 'phonics' first and then graduating to 'Whole language' approaches.

## 2.5 Factors that Can Affect the Teaching and Learning of Reading at Kindergarten Level

Research has shown that there are factors that can inhibit or promote the teaching and learning of reading at kindergarten level (just as at the other levels) of the educational ladder. Among these factors are parental participation, teachers' role, learner characteristics, educational policies and national initiatives, teaching methods, and many others. This study seeks to find out which of these factors or which others affect reading in the Ghanaian kindergarten.

### 2.5.1 Parental Involvement

Children in the kindergarten grade, obviously spend more time at home than they do at school. It will be in their interest to get their parents involved in their school work especially in the reading process. This is easier if parents are literates Korppi (2003), in the ACIE Newsletter, reports on a heuristic research she conducted for MA thesis entitled, 'Reading Instruction in Early Foreign Language Immersion.' She explored reading through educated parents, teachers and an early year education centre. Her research reveals that there is the need to educate parents on how to support their children's reading programme. This expresses the importance of parental involvement in the child's reading process.

Farris et al. (2004) mention phonological awareness as one of the approaches for helping children develop their local knowledge of reading. They say that children gain this knowledge through caregivers, parents, and childhood educators' rhymes, stories, poems, songs, etc. that they share with them. In this case, it appears that

children who have literate parents to do the above for them can be more successful than those with illiterate parents. Where parents have little or no literacy abilities, Community Reading Centres could be established to take care of children's reading needs. Illiterate parents could be encouraged to support their children's reading readiness through sharing of folk songs and tales, local tongue twisters, etc. with them.

Miedel and Reynolds (1999) carried out a research to investigate the association between parent involvement in early intervention and children's later school competence. Results indicate that the number of activities in which parents participate in pre-school and kindergarten was significantly associated with higher reading achievement. Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) also conducted a shared reading intervention for six weeks for children three to four years old; they came from low income families and attended a subsidized childcare. All the children entered the programme with oral language skills that were below their age levels. They were put into four groups as follows:

- (a) No treatment control
- (b) A school condition where only teacher reads to children in small groups.
- (c) A home condition in which parents read to children.
- (d) A combined home and school condition.

At the end of the period, all students were tested and the result proved that children in the groups with home condition scored higher marks. That parental involvement is very important in the child's reading process cannot be overemphasized.

### **2.5.2 The Role of Teachers**

Another vital factor that can inhibit or promote the child's reading process is the teacher. In Ghana and most African countries, teachers are 'gods' in the child's eye and are more important than anyone else, including parents.

In Korppi's (2003) research, she found out that the teachers were very knowledgeable about the many factors that affect reading in the L1 and L2, and have been using a combination of methods in teaching reading. This implies that the teacher's knowledge about recent reading issues can help him/her to understand children's problem areas and to choose better teaching approaches.

Davis et al. (1994) notice how crucial the teacher's role is in the teaching and learning of reading and say that it is true that teachers cannot turn majority of the students into enthusiastic readers, but the greatest part of reading problems that students have can be traced down to teachers. They have in one way or the other, turned students away from reading through their approach to teaching this aspect of the language. In other words, these researchers are saying that students' love or hatred for reading comes from the teacher.

Weaver (1993) sees the importance of teachers in the acquisition of early reading skills and encourages them to help children acquire phonics knowledge by:

- (a) having faith in children that they are able to grasp letter/sound relationship with little direct instruction.
- (b) discussing interesting patterns of onset and rimes of the syllable structure while making sure that stories, poems, rhymes etc/ that are chosen to be shared with the young children are rich in alliteration and rhyme.
- (c) engaging children in a number of activities that reinforce natural learning of letter/sound relationship and patterns.

Weaver's (1993) message is that teachers are a core part of the early reading process. They must go all out, turning every activity in and around the classroom into a stepping stone for the success of the reading process.

Talking on children's literacy habits, Smith (1986), cited in Maggart and Zintz (1992), cautions that children acquire this habit at a very tender age and it is the duty of the teacher to be sensitive enough to this learning so as to assess, acknowledge and build on it. Maggart and Zintz (1992) also state that many unfortunate children come to school with little understanding of the purposes of print and its pleasures. The teachers must provide many opportunities to help such children. Teachers' role is clearly defined here. They must be vigilant facilitators and planners of the reading process.

Baynham (1995) states that the proponents of the phonemic awareness approach broadly argue that a generation of teachers have failed to impart the basic skills of the 3Rs to the school children and that this pedagogic failure will be set right by a return

to the basics of instruction. This means that teachers, as well as their teaching methods, are very important in the reading process.

Good and Brophy (1987), cited in Davis et al. (1994:1), talk about four essential preconditions involved in the framework to motivate children's reading. The first of them is that the classroom environment must be supportive. This means the teacher should be a patient and encouraging person who supports the student's learning efforts. The implication here is that the teacher's personality traits are equally important in ensuring early reading success.

Adler and Fisher (1999) reported on a research carried out by the National Assessment of Educational Progress to find out the status of early reading achievement for children living in poverty, with special reference to the Emerald Elementary School. Their findings reveal that there must be a 'school operation' towards achieving reading success. They state five key elements of this operation as follows:

- (1) a veteran, knowledgeable staff,
- (2) a strong leadership at school and classroom levels,
- (3) focus on student learning outcomes,
- (4) multiple reading programmes in every classroom; and
- (5) shared responsibility for student success.

These elements form part of the duties expected of teachers and headteachers in a school and since Ghana is not yet above the poverty line, the above factors can equally apply in our situation.

### **2.5.3 Characteristics of Learner Needs**

Harris and Sipay (1990) point out that it is impossible for a teacher to turn every student or the majority of the class into keen readers. Some effort is expected from the students. Though Davis et al. (1994) agree only in principle with Harris and Sipay (1990), they also believe that the saying that a horse could be taken to the water but cannot be forced to drink, is applicable to students and books.

Davis et al. (1994) also say the early reading process can be inhibited by students' negative attitude towards reading. Thus, when a student views reading as a difficult thing and makes no effort to acquire it, s/he will have reading problem. Apart from this attitude, other factors affect learner's reading progress.

#### **2.5.3.1 Mental Ability**

Rog (2001) sees the reading readiness concept as the one that denotes that there is an appropriate mental age at which children would naturally learn to read. She disagrees with this concept and cites Teale and Sulzby (1986) who argue that children gain literacy development long before starting formal instruction.

Tollitt and Trevor (1995) are of the view that though it was a fashionable practice for children not to read until they reached 6½ years, it is now proven that children read before reaching the mental age of 6½ years. They also state that with favourable

environmental factors children can read at age 2½ - 3½ years. These factors include good linguistics background, motivation towards reading and sound intellectual abilities. It is therefore not surprising to know that children as young as 4 years can start reading in Montessori settings (Montessori explorer).

Gray (1969) also proposes that children who have developed normally can learn to read at the age of 5 years if instruction is adapted to their level of maturity. In other words, growth retarded or handicapped children may fail to read despite their 'ripe' mental age. This comment stresses the importance of personal development in the child's reading process.

It would also be good to follow the recommendation of the Australian Council for Educational Research (cited in Gray 1969) which states that children should not be pressed to read until they are mentally and experientially ready for it. This is to ensure that they don't fail in reading when they come to school. This waiting period is to be used for inculcating phonological and phonemes awareness in these children (Yopp 1992, and Adams 1990).

#### **2.5.3.2 Background Experience**

Maggart and Zintz (1992) point out another factor that can affect the child's reading progress as his/her home background experience of print. According to them, children begin literacy as infants and continue throughout preschool, and that children from 'print-rich' environments learn through observation that reading and writing are so important in life because they give enjoyment and information.

Reyhner (2008) also refers to Vygostsky's 'Zone of proximal' development where children can learn new things that are a little above their current understanding with the help of more knowledgeable peers or adults. He said students who come from 'high literacy' homes where they are read to on a regular basis, with lots of books in their environment, tend to read well regardless of their teachers' teaching methods.

Maggart and Zintz (1992) also recognize that parents' ability to read is a very dynamic promoter of the child's reading success because it determines the value the child places on reading. They continue and say that the presence of books at home, and reading books to children encourage them to turn over pages as well as read the pictures in the 'shared books.' The absence of this factor could be a threat to early reading success in Ghana since most children in the rural areas lack that print-rich environment.

#### **2.5.3.3 Use and Command of Language**

Maggart and Zintz (1992) talk about facilities for language games as being very useful for children's quick access to language use. And also, children develop language faster if the adult that associates with them regularly encourages them to express themselves by answering their questions and engaging them in conversations in the target language.

Anyidoho (1999) states that reading researchers agree that reading has its root in oral language proficiency, so reading must be preceded by a background language experience. She suggests that modern methods like the Total Physical Response

(TPR) should be used to help the Ghanaian children to gain oral proficiency in English before teaching them to read. She also adds that, while acquiring this proficiency, they should be taught to read first in their L1. This skill could aid the L2 reading later.

Hoff (2001) gives an elaborate chronological overview of language development in children. She states that from birth to one year, children change in terms of the sounds they produce in communicativeness of their behaviour. In the second year, they develop in the domain of vocabulary acquisition and become more communicative. As the child develops, his/her acquisition increases from sounds to words and to two word sentences. And by the end of the third year, children begin to develop language (L1). This process is what Gray (1969) and others are calling on teachers and all that deal with children, to help speed up to promote good reading interest.

#### **2.5.3.4 Emotional/Social Maturity**

Gay (1969) and Anyidoho (1999) are of the view that a child who is emotionally disturbed will not progress in reading. This implies that teachers should ensure that their classroom atmosphere is free from any strains and ill-feelings. This is why it is very important to establish a cordial relationship between teacher and pupils, and among pupils themselves.

Maggart and Zintz (1992) draw attention to the fact that many activities contribute to a child's emotional and social growth. It takes a sensitive teacher to trace traits like

timidity, aggression, and fear, and be able to meet each child's needs. They advise that children be allowed to play in groups and talk to each other to enable them understand each other better.

#### **2.5.3.5 Physical Conditions**

As Anyidoho (1999) rightly puts it, physical conditions like hunger, fatigue, bodily pain or abuse and under-nourishment have great influence on reading progress. This is why the time of the day that reading is done matters a lot. For instance, if reading is done in the initial periods of the morning, children's concentration level may be higher than when it is done after mid-day, (when hunger and tiredness may set in).

Maggart and Zintz (1992) also see visual and hearing impairments as hindrances to the reading process. According to them visual and auditory discrimination are very important skills. This is because reading requires the ability to see clearly at close range for a period of time; and also the ability to distinguish between sounds heard. They suggest that young children be given a lot of opportunities at home and school to learn these skills like noticing the difference in shapes, colours, sizes, etc. Also identifying and discriminating between sounds, words and objects seen, as well as showing interest in books and turning pages of books.

#### **2.6 Educational Policies/State Initiatives**

The success of early reading in our schools will definitely lead to success in other academic subjects. It is therefore important for the government to get involved in determining steps that would lead to every child acquiring reading skills. It is

obvious that Americans and the British have realized this responsibility, hence the formation of numerous groups of reading researchers to review researches on reading so as to come out with the best ways of making sure every child reads (National Rights to Read Foundation, Reading Rockets, the National Reading Panel, the National Institute for Child Health etc. websites). Asenso-Boakye (2005) also says that the NPP government has a policy of upgrading all schools to the level of first-class school status. This is to enable every Ghanaian child, irrespective of where he or she is, to access quality education which includes good reading skills.

#### **2.6.1 School and Its Environment**

Hoffman and Rutherford (1984), cited by Adler and Fisher (1999), reviewed several studies on the effects of schools on reading and concluded that three categories of characteristics contribute to the reading process. These are:

- (i) programme characteristics which refer to explicitly defined objectives and roles expectations, provision for continuous student progress, flexibility in matching materials and instruction to student needs, and stability of programmes over several years.
- (ii) leadership behaviours, thus to establish reading improvement as a school priority;
- (iii) psychological condition: This has to do with high expectations for students, calm and businesslike school climate, staff commitment to the reading programme, parental involvement, etc. By this, Hoffman and Rutherford are telling us that there is the need for schools to come out with

a reading policy which should be supported by all and sundry (including even parents), and monitored throughout its implementation keenly for success.

Adler and Fisher (1999), reporting on the Reading Panel's research on reading success in schools in poor environments, state that focusing on student learning outcome is one of the five key factors that aided Emerald Elementary School to succeed in their reading programme. According to them, the school placed its emphasis on student learning outcomes to the extent that student learning was more important compared with curriculum and instruction. As a result, teachers keep changing methods to enable students make progress.

Maggart and Zintz (1992) also express their views on the school environment. According to them, the kindergarten environment must be a literate environment, rich with books of many types, displayed for children to see their front covers and titles. They also advocate for words, phrases and sentences to be found in many places in the room and should serve varied purposes. Also all objects in the room should be labeled.

#### **2.6.1.1 Class Size**

It is possible that the number of students in a class can either promote or impede the reading progress of the kindergarten child. While the extroverts can operate in all environments, the introvert on the other hand, needs lots of encouragement and

individual attention to be able to operate. This might not be possible when the class size is large because the teacher's attention will be sought by others.

Pikulski (1994) states that early intervention in reading, and the Boulder Project Program, present evidence that many children can make significant progress when instruction is given to small groups of students.

### **2.6.2 Time Allocation**

Another important issue for the school to consider is the number of times reading is allowed on the timetable. Maggart and Zintz (1992) refer to Ebbinghaus' (1885) historical study on forgetting which states that 66.3% of what is learnt is forgotten within 24 hours. Stairway Reading Program confirms this finding by stating that reading concepts should be taught and practised over and over until they become over-learnt. In fact young children need time to practise. This is probably the main reason why Elam (2006) in the US National Right to Read Foundation recommends that phonics be learnt at least 15 minutes a day for five days in a week.

### **2.6.3 Reading Resources**

Reading resources are very vital to the success of the reading process. In the past, reading resources refer to books and flash cards. Presently other resources like computer games, language games, video games and electronic toys are equally good for teaching reading. Most reading researchers advocate reading to children at home and at school.

Gray (1969) notices that one of the factors that can promote reading is the type and availability of reading books. He says if books are few or are not in the system at all, it is impossible to achieve reading success. This is because skills learnt in class cannot be practiced. He further states that countries such as Brazil lack supplementary readers and since only small amount of reading is done, pupils fail to acquire either fluency or keen interest in reading. The worst of all is the fact that the few books that exist are relating to history, geography and nature. He argues that the reader cannot enjoy reading if the materials to be read relate to things, events or activities that are beyond his immediate environment. Gray (1969) concluded that reading books for children must be of small booklet size rather than the large and broad ones. According to him, books that contain too many vocabulary for a lesson may be inappropriate for children to grasp. This factor is likely to affect the reading process of Ghanaian children because there isn't much literature appropriate to their background.

The US National Right to Read Foundation suggests that children's formal reading be graded in such a way that decodable stories precede easy to read books.

#### **2.6.4 Staff Development**

As we have already seen, the teacher's role in the reading process is very vital and cannot be underestimated. It is therefore very important to make sure the teacher knows what he/she is doing.

Talking about the diverse needs of children in the classroom, Farris et al. (2004) establish that each individual student will come to the teacher with strengths and weaknesses, and it is the teacher's responsibility to be knowledgeable in the area of reading and writing development and skilled in assessment and intervention techniques. It is in this vein that Ghanaian teacher trainees study child psychology and English methodology. But as to whether this is enough to equip them for this great task is what this study seeks to find out. In American and most European countries the basic qualification for becoming a teacher is first degree in relevant subjects, including Education.

Yopp (1992) and Adams (1990) of the Reading Task Force (CSU database) agitate for the creation of phonological and phonemic awareness in children as a way of preparing them for reading. This calls for teachers being knowledgeable in phoneme manipulation such as phoneme blending and segregation.

According to Adler and Fisher (1992), teachers from Emerald School were interviewed on what led to their reading progress and each of them talked about the principal's support for staff development. There, kindergarten teachers were allowed to attend several professional development activities during the year. And most of these activities were directed towards instructional practices. The panel also talk about mentoring newly trained teachers by experienced staff members so as to give them assistance in local practices. Also worth noting is the use of the internet to expand teachers' knowledge at Emerald. Some of these practices may take place in the Ghanaian private schools, but the public schools are yet to see this daylight.

### **2.6.5 Curriculum Development**

At this juncture, it is necessary for educational policy makers to undertake curriculum enrichment programmes to include staff development and new issues concerning early years reading.

Curriculum enrichment is defined at the United Kingdom Education Standards' website as a guidance to the practitioners and it should have a balanced reading curriculum that includes reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading for children at different stages of learning to read. In other words, the curriculum enrichment calls for availability of the appropriate books (possibly very colourful), and well equipped teachers who are abreast of recent reading issues.

Also very important to the success of the reading process is the language policy of a nation. In Ghana, the language policy is to use the most dominant local language as the medium of instruction from kindergarten through basic three, while English is taught as a subject. Whilst the private schools do not comply with this regulation, the public schools have started combining both local languages and the English language as media of instruction. The possible cause might be the realization that children need a good level of oral proficiency in a language to be able to read.

### **2.7 Summary**

It is an undeniable fact that reading is a very important tool in the life of everybody, irrespective of age, and the earlier the skill is acquired the better.

Adler and Fisher (1999) rightly say that learning to read is a gradual process that occurs in several years; and it is difficult to say when the process begins or ends. This implies that teachers, as well as the other stakeholders, have the responsibility of being vigilant about the slightest thing or event that can enhance or impede the child's reading process. This includes paying attention to minor details like children's confusion of alphabet (e.g. 'b' for 'd') and correct pronunciation of sounds right up to bigger issues like word recognition and meaning making. The ability to give immediate feedback – praising correct responses and correcting mistakes, in addition to gearing all initial language work (including picture reading) towards phonemic and phonological awareness, will go a long way to speed up the learning process.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods used in data collection for the study. The research was conducted mostly in school environments. The researcher undertook a six-week survey of how reading is organized in Ghanaian kindergartens. Since reading assessment can vary from place to place, the researcher engaged six schools. Four of them are from an urban area while the other two are from a rural area. The main purpose for the selection of two pairs of schools from the urban area was to compare one pair with the rural schools to find out whether factors that affect reading in the rural areas could exist anywhere in the city.

#### 3.1 Population and Sample

Six Ghanaian kindergartens were selected for the study. The study was meant to investigate the factors that impede or promote children's reading progress at the kindergarten level.

The population consisted of a whole class of each of the six schools. Four of these schools are in the Greater Accra Region – only their first year pupils (KG One) were focused on. The remaining two schools were selected from the Volta Region. Here, the second year (KG Two) pupils were the focus. Refer to Table 3.1 for detail about the schools.

**Table 3.1**  
**Schools and Background of Teachers**

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Location/Region</b>	<b>Qualification of Teachers</b>	<b>No. of Years Taught</b>
PRESEC Staff Kindergarten	Madina, Greater Accra	Diploma	13 years
Hannah School Complex	Madina, Greater Accra	SSCE	4 years
La Presbyterian Early Childhood Development Centre	La, Greater Accra	Cert 'A' 3-years post secondary	2 years
La Roman Catholic Kindergarten	La, Greater Accra	Cert 'A'	6 years
Jesus is Alive Preparatory	Anyirawase, Volta Region	SSCE	1 year
Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten	Anyirawase, Volta Region	Cert A	2 years

In totality, three private schools were paired with three public schools. The pairing was to enable the researcher find out the methods that each category uses and how that affects the teaching/learning process of reading. It was also to allow the researcher to compare the effects of each approach to see if a combination of approaches could yield a better result. Each pair is chosen from the same geographical locality. The detail is shown in Table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2**  
**Pairing of the Schools**

Private School	Public School	Location of Each Pair
1. Hannah Schools Complex	PRESEC Staff Kindergarten	Madina
2. La Presbyterian Early Childhood Development Centre	La Roman Catholic Kindergarten	La
3. Jesus Is Alive Preparatory	Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten	Anyirawase

From Table 3.2 above, it is clear that the schools are put in three geographical categories. The Madina schools are chosen as a representation for the ‘Model’ Kindertartens in Ghana. The pupils are mostly from elite homes. There are lots of literates in such homes with plenty of books that children are free to handle right from infancy. The choice of these schools: PRESEC Staff and Hannah School Complex Kindertartens was influenced by the fact that their Junior High Schools perform creditably at the country’s Basic Education Certificate Examination level. It was also because of proximity since the researcher was teaching at Madina at that time.

The La schools were chosen to represent schools that are situated in the environment of the mid-income group. The schools are situated in the heart of La township and are attended mostly by children of the average working class in the community. Some of these parents are traders, farmers, mechanics, fishermen and the like.

The Anyirawase (Volta) schools form a representation of schools located within the rural and deprived zones of Ghana. Anyirawase is a small village along the Accra –

Ho main road. A majority of the inhabitants are farmers. Teachers, Middle School leavers, Senior High and Junior High graduates are the main literates in the society.

KG one pupils were used in the Greater Accra schools because they were starters and could be given remedial action towards a better acquisition of reading skills. The use of KG two pupils for the main study is due to the fact that they are at the exit point of this level and all meaningful reading is best carried out here.

**Table 3.3**  
**Population of Pupils**

Schools	Population			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Age Range
PRESEC Staff KG	30	20	50	4-5 years
Hannah Schools Complex	10	9	19	4-5 years
La Presbyterian Early Childhood Development Centre	20	20	40	4-5 years
La Roman Catholic Kindergarten	34	30	64	4-12 years
Jesus is Alive Preparatory	7	6	13	4-6 years
Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten	6	4	10	5-6 years
Total	107	89	196	

### 3.2 Data Collection Procedure

The instruments used for data collection included questionnaire (format adopted from French 2004 and adapted to suit the level), observation, personal interviews and intervention followed by testing.

#### 3.2.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires for teachers were given out to thirty kindergarten teachers from the Greater Accra and Volta Regions of Ghana. These teachers were selected at random. The questionnaire was designed to verify teachers' views and attitude toward reading at this level. It was also meant to reveal some factors that affect the teaching and learning of reading in the Ghanaian kindergartens. Respondents were not made to disclose their identity so as to enable them give frank responses to the questions.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections (Refer to Appendix A). Section A was meant to gather information on teachers' qualification and experience in teaching at the kindergarten level. This is necessary because teachers' knowledge and experience at this level can enhance or impede the reading process.

Section B was to help gather information on the availability of reading books and the aspect of English language that the teacher enjoys teaching. The researcher deemed this section important because there is no way children can develop interest in reading if they do not have a teacher who shares their interest in reading, and provides them with good reading materials to admire and flip through.

Section C asked for approaches teachers use in teaching reading at this level – and why. Respondents were also to state the number of regular refresher trainings they had attended. This is because teachers' knowledge of current issues, as well as their methods of teaching, can either promote or impede the reading process.

Section D asked respondents to comment on their children's attitude toward reading. They were also expected to give information on their use of teaching/learning materials, while Section E was designed to reveal some peculiar factors that affect reading in their schools.

### 3.2.2 Observation

In order to be aware of the methods that are used to teach reading in the Ghanaian kindergartens, the researcher conducted a six-week observation in all the schools that were involved in the study. Each school received two visits. The schools were paired (refer to Table 3.2) and each pair was visited for two weeks – as follows.

**Table 3.4**  
**Pairing of Schools and Times of Visit**

	<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Time and Visits</b>
1.	PRESEC Staff KG Hannah Schools Complex	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> weeks
2.	La Presbyterian Early Childhood Development Centre La Roman Catholic Kindergarten	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> weeks
3.	Jesus is Alive Preparatory Anyirawase I/A Kindergarten	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> weeks

The researcher also participated in some school activities like morning assemblies and break time supervision to listen to pupils' spoken language. The researcher stayed throughout reading lessons to observe the type of reading methods teachers adopt at this level. She also looked out for teaching/learning materials and their usage in lessons.

Other issues that were observed were the number of children in a classroom and how possible it was to engage all of them in the activities; the number of times reading occurs on the timetable and the availability and suitability of pupils' readers. In each school the researcher looked out for how literate the classrooms as well as the entire environment was. It was noted that two of the private schools practice the 'phonics' method of reading, while the public schools use the 'Look and Say' method. However, some of the public kindergartens combined both methods.

After this initial observation period, Jesus Is Alive Preparatory and Anyirawase L/A kindergartens were chosen for the main study. These are the schools in the rural area, and within the same geographical location, making it easier for the researcher to move from one school to the other. Time and financial restraints, prevented the inclusion of the other four schools in the main study.

It was observed that the teacher in the private school used the 'Look and Say Method' to teach the children to read sentences in their environmental studies textbooks on 'My Family.'

The teacher led the pupils to read the sentences that were attached to the pictures. After that, most of the pupils were asked to read aloud. Since the sentences were only two, the pupils were able to memorise them and could say them without looking at the words. They could however not identify and point at any of the words that form the sentences.

In the public school, the teacher used a 'whole word' method to teach high frequency words like 'an, am, on, in and at'. The words were written on the board and the pupils were made to repeat them several times after the teacher. After that, pupils were made to read the words as the teacher put the pointer on them. This was difficult because most of the pupils could not identify the words. The teacher used two of the words in sentences and the children repeated these sentences after him. Two of the pupils were asked to read all by themselves. They managed to read two words each correctly.

### **3.2.3 Personal Interviews**

Verbal Communication was held with some respondents. Headteachers from the selected schools and nine others from Adentan and Ho districts of Ghana were selected at random and interviewed to gather information on the kind of students they admit into their preschool first year classrooms, their (headteachers) own background knowledge of preschool activities, the kind of readers in use and the approaches that the school adopts for teaching English reading.

Fifteen parents of some of the pupils in the rural schools were interviewed as they visited the schools within the research period on the number of children they have in school, their preschool children's ability to read, and what they think contribute to their children's ability or inability to read. They also spoke on home support in terms of availability and use of books and supervision as well as their professions and the effects on the child's learning. The essence of this interview was to enable the researcher evaluate the effects of children's home background on their reading process. The teachers of the six schools engaged in this study were also consulted on why some of their pupils could not read at all at the end of their preschool education. The home background of those who could read very well and those who could not, was also sought from the classteachers.

An officer from the Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education was interviewed on the changes being made to the curriculum of teacher training colleges to equip teachers with teaching skills for teaching at the kindergarten level, with special emphasis on teaching reading in the early years. The National Early Childhood Co-ordinator was also interviewed on policies for early reading in the Ghanaian kindergartens.

#### **3.2.4 Intervention and Testing**

The purpose of this study was to find out how reading instruction is carried out in the Ghanaian kindergartens, the challenges that are faced and how to minimize these challenges by the use of modern methods of teaching reading at this level. After observing the six schools, it was realized that reading instruction in the kindergartens

was either by Look and Say or Phonic Methods. With this in mind, the researcher conducted intervention lessons which were preceded and followed by testing. This was to help her find out whether the use of any of the two methods quickens or impedes the reading process. Because she thought some of the pupils in the private schools were far ahead of their counterparts in the public schools. There were three intervention lessons. In the first round, both schools were taught to recognize letter names. The essence of this lesson was to ensure that pupils' knowledge of the 'letter names' was good enough to build on, using the 'phonics' or the 'look and say' method.

It was a 'fun-full' lesson in which the researcher led the pupils to read the letters from 'letter freeze', 'letter strip' and then from 'flash cards'. In the next step, each pupil was asked to pick a flash card which was turned upside down. He/she was to read the letter on the flash card correctly for a prize. This section was ended by a testing game code-named "I am letter ...." In this game the researcher gave each pupil a cut-out letter which was different from that of his/her mates. This was done bearing pupils capabilities in mind. When the researcher picked any of her 'letter cut-outs', the pupil with that same kind of letter would say, 'I am letter this,' e.g. I am letter 'B'. For a homework, each child was given a strip of three letters to learn to identify by name. The pupils returned to class the following day rejoicing because they could identify their letters.

In the second round, the pupils from the private school were led by the researcher to do picture identification and description. The pupils' ability to speak both the local

language and the English language fluently made it possible for this lesson to be very interesting. Objects to be identified included: spoon, pot, jug, bottle, etc. (refer to appendix B). These were domestic objects and the children were able to identify almost all of them. Those they could not identify in the English language were identified in the Ewe language and the researcher assisted them to learn their English names. One item – ‘jug’ was not identified in any of the two languages because it was not a common household item in the area.

On the other hand, pupils from the public school were led by the researcher to learn the sounds of English short vowels except /u/. They learnt each of them by repeating its sound after the researcher several times and then associating it with objects they are familiar with, that begin with the vowel sound in question. Then the pupils were made to pick and identify vowel flash cards. To test individual pupils’ ability to identify the vowel sounds, the researcher and the pupils played “snake and ladders”, “play, read and move” game.

In the final round of the intervention lessons, the effectiveness of the two dominant approaches to teaching initial reading in Ghana – the ‘Look and Say’ and the ‘Phonics’ Methods – was examined by the researcher. The pupils in the private school were taught to read with the ‘Look and Say’ method while the ‘Phonics’ Method was used for teaching reading in the public school. This was to find out how effective each method could be in the setting within which it was used. Before this time, the researcher had observed that majority of the private schools used the ‘phonics’ method while the public schools used ‘Look and Say’ Method. It was also

to find out whether by using the 'phonics' in the public school, it could be possible for the pupils to read those words (on, in, am, at, an) that they could not read when the teacher used the 'whole word' method to teach at the pre-intervention stage.

Using the Look and Say Method, the pupils were led to identify and name the pictures of a variety of objects. This was very interesting. Every child was able to identify lots of objects. Next, the researcher presented the real objects of 'hat', 'mat' and 'fan' to the children to identify. Then the pictures of 'cat', 'car' and 'man' were also presented for identification. The names of these six objects were written on the board and children were led to read the words several times. Picture flash cards to match the words, were given to children one by one to paste near their corresponding names.

Each child was able to identify at least a word and read it to the class. After that the pictures were removed from the board – leaving only the words. Each pupil was asked to identify and read some of the words as the researcher placed the pointer on them. To test the pupils' real ability to read these words, the researcher cleaned the board and re-arranged the words on the board with changed positions. Each pupil was asked to read all over again. This was quite difficult for the pupils. Only one could read up to four out of the six words.

In the public school, the researcher tested the pupils' ability to recognize vowels: /a, e, i, o/. It was realized that everybody could identify at least two vowels. She moved on to teach the sound of three consonants: /m, n, t/. When the pupils had mastered these consonants, they could pick and sound any of them. The researcher then moved

on to combine a vowel with each of these consonants. In each case the vowels occurred at the initial position, e.g. at. The children were encouraged to attempt sounding the two sounds together. They were not restricted from prolonging the sounds but were afterwards made to know that the vowels are short vowels and should not be prolonged.

With much encouragement from the researcher and the class teacher, the pupils were able to read 'am', after which the rest 'an', 'on', 'in' 'at' were quite easier to read. The children's ability to read the above two-letter words was tested. Those who could read five or four words were drawn aside by the researcher to expand their knowledge a little through learning to read two letter words formed with 'b' and the vowels i.e. 'bi', 'ba', 'be' and 'bo'. The rest of the pupils remained with the teacher to practice reading, 'on', 'an', 'at', 'am' and 'in'.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The statistical technique that is employed in analyzing data collected in this study is table tabulation.

### **3.4 Summary**

In this chapter a brief description of the schools selected for the study was given in addition to the research methods used for data collection. In order to gain proper insight into the factors that affect the teaching/learning of reading at the kindergarten level, the researcher had to observe classes, give out questionnaires, conduct

unstructured interviews as well as give intervention lessons and tests. Data so gathered are analysed in chapter four.

**CHAPTER FOUR****DATA ANALYSIS****4.0 Introduction**

The study is meant to examine factors that affect teaching/learning of reading in the Ghanaian kindergartens. Questionnaires, and interviews were used to gather information from teachers, head teachers, parents and education officers.

**4.1 Analysis of Data****4.1.1 Teachers' Profile**

The thirty respondents (who were selected at random from Greater Accra and Volta Regions) hold a variety of qualifications. 33.3% of them held Diploma in Basic education in addition to the teachers Cert 'A'. 36.7% held only teachers Cert 'A'. Out of this number 10% were post secondary trained teachers while 26.7% were Cert 'A' 4-year trained. The other qualifications were SSCE/WASSCE 23.3%; GCE 'O' Level 3.3% and GCE 'A' level 3.3%.

**Table 4.1: Teachers Qualifications**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	10	33.3
Post Sec	3	10.0
Cert 'A' 4 Year	8	26.7
SSCE/WASSCE	7	23.3
GCE 'O' Level	1	3.3
GCE 'A' Level	1	3.3
Total	30	100

From Table 4.1, 70% of the respondents hold teachers' Cert A or a better qualification in teaching. This implies that a majority of the kindergarten pupils are taught by qualified teachers. This was not the situation ten years back (from the records of National Co-ordinator of ECD's Office) when kindergarten teachers were mostly untrained secondary school leavers. This achievement may be due to introduction of Distance Education Learning in the countries' universities, which gave most teachers the opportunity to enroll for Diploma in Basic Education.

The study also investigated the teachers' experience in teaching at the kindergarten level. Those who were in their first-three years formed 33.3%; 26.7% were between four and six years, 13.3% had seven to ten years experience, while another 26.7% had served more than eleven years. Table 4.2 has the details of this data.

**Table 4.2: Teachers Experience at Kindergarten Level**

Number of Years	Frequency	Percentage
1-3	10	33.3
4-6	8	26.7
7-10	4	13.3
11 and above	8	26.7
Total	30	100

The information in Table 4.2 indicates that about 60% of the teachers had spent six or less years in teaching at the kindergarten while 40% had seven or more years experience.

#### 4.1.2 Teaching of Reading

In this section, the respondents were asked to state the aspect of English they enjoy teaching at the kindergarten level. Fourteen of them, representing 46.7% enjoy teaching reading, 40% stated conversation while 13.3% indicated grammar as their best. The teachers' views on reading were sought. Ninety percent of them saw teaching of reading as interesting, 6.7% said it was boring and 3.3% was indifferent. On the other hand, all the thirty respondents gave an affirmative response that teaching of reading is very important at this level.

The study also looked out for the problems that teachers encounter in teaching reading. 53.3% of the respondents responded in the affirmative that they encounter problems while the remaining 46.7% gave a negative response. Among the problems faced by the teachers were: lack of textbooks and teaching/learning materials, children's different learning styles and lack of interest in reading, lack of home support, late introduction of phonics in the public schools, children's inability to express themselves well in the target language, the heavy workload of explaining word meanings and children's entry behaviour (i.e. children who enter kindergarten one without nursery education find it difficult to read smoothly at this level).

The research also probed into the availability of English readers in the Ghanaian kindergartens and those responsible for the supply. It was realized that 66.7% of the sample pool have enough English readers. Out of this number, 33.3% have parents as

their source of supply. The government supplies to 20% of them. The detail is shown in table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3: Sources of Supply of KG English Readers**

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Government	6	20.0
Parents	10	33.3
NGO	1	3.3
School	3	10.0
Not applicable	10	33.3
Total	30	100

From Table 4.3, it can be realized that 33.3% of the respondents had not got enough English readers in their schools. The teachers in this category solve this problem by falling on parents, pairing pupils to use what is available, writing words on the board/flash cards or just waiting for GES to do something about it. It is obvious that a majority of those in this group are from public schools. This is because most private schools ensure that parents buy such books before the academic year begins.

The teachers were also asked to indicate whether they have been to any in-service training or workshop on reading or not. Sixty percent have had in-service training while forty percent had not. Refer to Table 4.4a for the details.

**Table 4.4a: Number of In-Service Training Attended**

Number of times attended	Frequency	Percentage
Once	9	30.0
Twice	3	10.0
Thrice	1	3.3
Four Times	0	0.0
More than Four Times	5	16.6
None	12	40.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.4b Teachers Experience versus Number of In-service Training Attended**

Number of Years Taught	Number of In-Service Training					
	0	1	2	3	4	5+
1-3	6	2	1			1
4-6	3	2		1		2
7-10	1	2	1			
11+	2	3	1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>5</b>

It is expected that those who spend longer years in the kindergarten should have more staff development training. Comparing data from Table 4.2 to Table 4.4b, it was noted that out of the twelve respondents that had taught in the kindergarten for seven

or more years, only two had attended in-service training or workshop for five or more times. Three of them had no training at all. Five had in-service training only once and the remaining two had had it twice each. This is an indication that in-service training courses that are organized for teachers are inadequate and this can have adverse effect on their performance in teaching, especially in the teaching of reading.

#### 4.1.3 Approaches

Another important factor the study looked at was the methodology that teachers adopt in teaching reading. It was clear from the data collected that the dominating approaches were the 'Look and Say' and the 'Phonics' methods. The details are captured in Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5: Approaches Used for Teaching Reading**

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Phonics	5	16.7
Look and Say	10	33.3
Both	15	50.0
Total	30	100

Table 4.5 indicates that 50% of the respondents use a combination of 'Look and Say' and 'Phonics' (Eclectic Approach) to teach reading at this initial level. Those who practice 'phonics' only formed 16.7% and 'Look and Say' only was 33.3%. The respondents also stated that they were familiar with other reading methods such as dictation, oral drills, pick and say, picture reading, reading aloud, reading

comprehension, conversation, story telling and teaching/learning flash cards. The appropriateness of these 'methods' is discussed in chapter five.

The teachers were made to give reasons for preferring one method to the others. Seven respondents (23.3%) stated that 'phonics' introduces children to reading while 'Look and Say' helps them in the identification of words. Another 23.3% said 'phonics' helps children to improve upon their reading and fluency in speech because it leads to sound identification which makes reading easier. 16.75% of the teachers also stated that both methods help children to understand the reading lesson better.

Other reasons were:

- Both 'phonics' and 'look and say' make pronunciation easy.
- 'Look and say' aids picture reading
- It depends on the child's ability and the aspect of the language being taught.
- Children learn faster through observation of the pictures.

Though it seems the 'look and say' makes children to learn faster, through observation of pictures, it was realized in the intervention lesson that it rather aids memorization and guessing which do not work well when the position of words change.

#### **4.1.4 Factors That Affect Teaching/Learning of Reading**

The research also requested that the teachers rate their pupils' reading interest and the result is shown in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Pupils' Interest in Reading**

Interest Rate	Frequency	Percentage
High	8	26.7
Good	12	40.0
Average	10	33.3
Low	0	0
Total	30	100

The Table indicates that over 50% of the pupils in the Ghanaian kindergartens studied have great interest in reading. The researcher also realized from the observations and the intervention lessons that reading does not scare a majority of the KG pupils. Their inability to read should better be traced to what kills this interest.

The teachers were asked to indicate whether they had enough teaching/ learning materials in their schools or not. 76.7% of the sample pool responded in the affirmative. 40% of this number got their supply from their school authorities, the government supplies 13.3% of them and teachers and parents supply the remaining 23.3%. The other 23.3% that answered in the negative solve this problem by using phonics books for teaching, falling on parents to buy books and writing words on the board.

The research requested that the respondents comment on their pupils' response to lessons when they use teaching/learning materials. 46.7% of them stated that the pupils participate fully in the lesson because they are excited and motivated to learn.

16.7% said learning becomes easier. 20% also saw children's learning as interesting when teaching them with teaching/learning materials.

The concluding part of the questionnaire asked teachers to indicate the factors that affect teaching and learning of reading most in their classes. Home influence was stated by 53.3%. 30% indicated teaching/learning materials, 6.7% stated textbooks, and teaching methods was stated by 3.3%. Those who did not respond to this question were 6.7%. Out of those who stated home influence as a factor, only 4 (25%) receive positive home support. The rest (75%) receive negative home support towards the reading process. This is an alarming issue because lack of home influence had more than 50% of the sample pool. It appears teaching/learning materials have positive effect on reading when compared with the other factors because out of the nine (30.0%) respondents that stated it, only two (22.0%) claimed that its effect was negative.

#### **4.2 Interpretation and Test Data**

One of the research questions that guided this study was “What kind of approaches are teachers using to teach reading at the kindergarten level”. As already stated, ‘phonics’ and ‘look and say’ methods are the predominant approaches in Ghana (Refer to table 4.5 for details). As part of the intervention lessons, the researcher tested the effectiveness of the ‘look and say’ method in one of the private schools – Jesus Is Alive Preparatory (Anyirawase). Only ten pupils participated in the Lesson because three were absent from school on that day. The researcher taught six words: fan, man, mat, cat, car and hat. She first introduced real objects and pictures; and

then wrote their names on the board. The children were led to read through the words several times. The individual pictures were affixed adjacent to their names. The children were asked to read one after the other and the result was as follows:

**Table 4.7: Result of Reading – Words with Pictures**

<b>Number of Words with Pictures</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Six	3	30.0
Five	3	30.0
Four	2	20.0
Three	2	20.0
Two	0	0.0
One	0	0.0
Zero	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

With the pictures, every child was able to read at least three words. Three of the pupils (30%) were able to read all the six words. Another 30% were able to read five words and four words were read by two pupils.

The researcher removed the pictures leaving only the words at the same positions. The children were made to read individually and they fared as follows:

**Table 4.8: The Result of Reading Without Pictures**

Number of Words	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Six	2	20.0
Five	4	40.0
Four	2	20.0
Three	1	10.0
Two	1	10.0
One	0	0.0
Zero	0	0.0
Total	10	100.0

When Table 4.8 is compared with that of Table 4.7, it could be realized that, there was not much change. In Table 4.8 the number of children that could read six words reduced from three to two while that of five words increased by 10%. In Table 4.7, the least number of words read was three but it moved a step down to two words on Table 4.8. Since there is not much difference between the two test results, the correlation between the use of pictures and the pupils' ability to read could be interpreted as negative.

The words were cleaned and rearranged on the board. The children were asked to read individually again. This was to test their ability to recognize and read the words in the absence of pictures and at different 'environments.' The test result is shown below.

**Table 4.9: Test Result of Reading – With  
Same Words at Different Positions**

<b>Number of Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Six	0	0.0
Five	0	0.0
Four	1	10.0
Three	2	20.0
Two	2	20.0
One	2	20.0
Zero	3	30.0
Total	10	100.0

Table 4.9 has revealed a deviation in the children's ability to read the six words - car, fan, man, mat, hat and cat. None of the pupils was able to read six or five words. Only one child could read four words. Three to one words were read by two children each while as many as three children (30%) could not read any word at all.

Table 4.9 has therefore shown a positive correlation between the pictures and the children's ability to read the words. That is, as the pictures diminished, and the position of the words changed the children's ability to read too decreased. While 30% of the pupils could read all the six words with pictures, none of the pupils (0%) could read the six words when the pictures were removed and the position of the words changed.

**Table 4.9: Test Result of Reading – With  
Same Words at Different Positions**

Number of Words	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Six	0	0.0
Five	0	0.0
Four	1	10.0
Three	2	20.0
Two	2	20.0
One	2	20.0
Zero	3	30.0
Total	10	100.0

Table 4.9 has revealed a deviation in the children's ability to read the six words - car, fan, man, mat, hat and cat. None of the pupils was able to read six or five words. Only one child could read four words. Three to one words were read by two children each while as many as three children (30%) could not read any word at all.

Table 4.9 has therefore shown a positive correlation between the pictures and the children's ability to read the words. That is, as the pictures diminished, and the position of the words changed the children's ability to read too decreased. While 30% of the pupils could read all the six words with pictures, none of the pupils (0%) could read the six words when the pictures were removed and the position of the words changed.

This implies that the children's ability to read as portrayed by Table 4.8 was aided by their ability to memorize the words via their original positions. When the positions changed, the pupils were seen guessing. According to 'Stairway to Reading' programme, guessing is a bad reading habit which should not be encouraged.

According to Fianu (2005), the 'Look and Say' method encourages whole word recognition and memorization without dealing with letters. In this test, there was a complete memorization of the words but little (if any) recognition had taken place. Since as many as 33.3% of the sample pool (refer to table 4.5) uses only this method to teach reading, there is a possibility of a teaching method impeding the reading process.

The researcher also tested the effectiveness of 'phonics' reading method in the public school – Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten. After using many games and teaching/learning materials to teach the English short vowels (except 'u') and three consonants – 'm', 'n' and 't', the researcher combined the vowels and the consonants to form two-letter words. She encouraged the children to pronounce them together.

Sounding the first word – 'am' – was difficult initially but after many clues and encouragement from the researcher and the teacher, a child was able to say 'am' correctly. She was followed by the rest of the class to pronounce 'an', 'at', 'on' and 'in' correctly. In each case, the children's ability to recognize and produce the sounds of the individual letters involved in forming the words, was tested first before combining them. Finally the words were written on flashcards and turned up side

down on a table. The children took turns to go to the table, pick the cards one after the other and read to the researcher. The result is shown below:

**Table 4.10: The Result of Phonic Reading**

**– Two Letter Words**

Number of Words	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Five	2	20.0
Four	3	30.0
Three	2	20.0
Two	1	10.0
One	1	10.0
Zero	0	0.0
Total	10	100.0

The Table indicates that 50% of the pupils could read between four and five words and every child read at least one word. Since these were the words that the class teacher used “whole word” method to teach during the pre-intervention lesson, the researcher went further to see if the children’s ability to decode is limited to those words only. The sound of letter ‘b’ was taught to the five children that read four to five words in the test. The new sound was used at the initial position to form syllables: ‘bi’, ‘ba’, ‘be’ and ‘bo’. This reading was done with very little difficulty, which was attributed to the change in vowel position from initial place to final.

Comparing the number of pupils that read the words – ‘am’, ‘an’, ‘at’, ‘in’, ‘on’ – during the pre-intervention lesson with their performance in the post-intervention test, it is clear that the post-intervention test had recorded an improvement over the pre-intervention one. It therefore implies that phonics can be effectively used to teach reading in the public or private kindergartens. It should however be noted that the children’s achievement was greatly supported by individual attention which was possible due to the small class size (refer to Table 3.3 for details).

The research has made it clear that none of the methods – ‘Phonics’ and ‘Look and Say’ is completely effective all alone. Each of them has its own strengths and weaknesses. A better approach is to combine the two so that the strengths of one can cover up the weaknesses of the other.

### **4.3 Answering Research Questions**

The research questions that backed the study are discussed in this section based on the data collected and other research findings.

#### **4.3.1 What does Reading at This Level Entail?**

Reading at the kindergarten level is a gradual process which involves putting together bits and pieces. A careful examination of the Ministry of Education’s kindergarten curriculum, reveals that this gradual process begins with pre-reading activities like left to right eye movement, visual discrimination, etc. to inculcating reading interest in the children through book sharing, picture reading, turning of book pages, before introduction to alphabet awareness. It also means making the school environment

literate enough to capture the child's interest and desire to know more (Maggart and Zintz, 1992). This implies that the classroom and its surroundings should contain labels, and beautiful drawings, books with colourful pictures, etc. that can attract children. Teachers' ability to use the right teaching methods could enhance this process.

The study had noticed from observation of lessons that the public schools use more 'Look and Say' method than the 'Phonics'; and the private schools keep to 'phonics' and hardly use the 'Look and Say' method. In the Ghanaian kindergartens, a child is expected to do lots of pre-reading activities in KG one and part of KG two. The rest of KG two is supposed to be spent introducing the child to phonological awareness – reading two-three letter words. (KG Curriculum 2006). While 'Look and Say' method is appropriate for teaching pre-reading activities, reading two to three letter words is best learnt through phonics.

#### **4.3.2 What kind of Approaches are Teachers Using to Teach Reading?**

The research revealed (see Table 4.5) that 50% of the sample pool used a combination of 'phonics' and 'Look and Say' methods. 16.7% of the remaining respondents used only Phonics while 33.3% use 'Look and Say' only. An interview with the fifteen headteachers (refer to page 46) also confirmed this research finding that 'Phonics and Look and Say' methods dominate teaching of reading in the Ghanaian kindergartens. Meanwhile the only reason why the headteachers and their teachers adopt these methods was that they make reading easier and faster for children. This is an indication that they do not have much knowledge of the recent

research findings on these methods. This lack of knowledge can have adverse effect on the reading process. Regular in-service training is capable of eradicating this impediment but data collected on teachers' teaching experience and the number of in-service training attended revealed that those who had spent seven or more years teaching in the kindergarten have had only a few in-service trainings (Table 4.4b).

#### **4.3.3 What Calibre of Teachers Teach in the Ghanaian Kindergartens?**

Table 4.1 gives a detailed information on the qualification of the thirty teachers that were used as the sample pool. From this table, the highest qualification held by the respondents was Diploma in Basic Education and the least was GCE 'O' level. It was also noted that over 50% of the respondents had received training to teach children. This indicated that a some percentage of the Ghanaian kindergarten children are taught by teachers who had been trained to teach. It was however noted (through personal communication with the teachers) that only one of the respondents had been trained to teach at the preschool level. The others were trained (as teachers) at the time that preschool education was not considered in the Teacher Training Curriculum. As a result they are limited in knowledge of issues that affect teaching at this level, and must be given regular in-service training in order to enhance their performance.

#### **4.3.4 What is the Role of Parents in Promoting the Child's Reading Process?**

According to Farris, et al. (2004), parental involvement in a child's reading progress begins from infancy, when the child is helped to gain phonological awareness through

the songs, stories, poems, rhymes, etc., that are administered to him/her whether knowingly or unknowingly.

The research also revealed several other sectors in which the Ghanaian child needed his/her parents to support him acquire reading skills. When the research asked the respondents to state whether they have enough reading books in their schools or not, 66.7% answered in the affirmative. They were also asked to indicate their sources of supply. As many as 36.7% of them (the largest quota) stated parents as their source of supply for English readers. 33.3% of the respondents stated that they didn't have enough readers and were asked to say how they solve the problem. Again 6.7% of this group solve their problem by relying on parents to buy the books for their wards. In other words, out of the thirty respondents, thirteen (43.3% rely on parents for the supply of reading books. This implies that where parents are unable to provide this need of the children, a lot of them go to 'school' without readers. The researcher observed in the Labadi and the rural schools that, there was lack of English readers due to parents' inability to supply them. In one of the schools, none of the ten pupils in the class had a reader. It was gathered from the interview with parents that most of them were illiterates and could not read to their children. Others could not afford it. The few who were literates, were not aware that they need to read to their children at home.

The study also collected data on factors that affect the teaching of reading in kindergartens. 53.3% of the respondents stated home support as a factor that affects

their reading lessons. Seven-five percent (75%) of this figure receives inadequate support from home. When asked the role they expected parents to play in their children's reading, headteachers stated among other things that parents must have time to supervise and encourage their children's learning. Headteachers from the model schools stated in an interview that, they ensured that each child that goes to class one is able to read at least two letter words, by inviting parents of 'less performing' children to discuss how to motivate the teachers to give the children extra attention after school.

Teachers of the six schools also told the researcher that children whose parents are literates and are abreast with current ways of learning to read progress faster in reading than those with illiterate parents. Also parental initiative to pass children through nurseries before entering kindergarten is a great push to access smooth reading skills. During the main study, the researcher had the opportunity to evaluate the home backgrounds of the ten pupils that were in the public school (see Table 3.3). Only two of them have parents that support their learning at home. These are far ahead of their mates. One of the children has practically nobody who can read in his house. Though he had much delight in taking reading assignments, he returned the following day unable to read them correctly. This confirms Maggart and Zintz's (1992) assertion that parents' ability to read is a very dynamic promoter of the child's reading because it makes his/her environment 'print-rich' and determines the value the child places on reading.

#### **4.3.5 What is the Government's Role Towards the Kindergarten Child's Access to Reading?**

The government in this sense is represented by the educational policy makers like Ghana Education Service (GES), Ministry of Education, Teacher Education and National Commission on Children. Data collected for the research indicated that, the government has vital roles to play to enable the kindergarten child acquire reading skills.

In the first place, the government is the policy maker and determines where the kindergarten child stands on the educational ladder, what goes into his/her learning, who teachers him/her and even how he/she should be taught to read. In other words, the government's policies can make or mar the kindergarten child's learning, including acquisition of reading skills.

The 2007 Educational Reform made kindergarten education a compulsory part of basic education in Ghana. As a result, every child must have two years sponsored kindergarten education before entering primary one. Since then, every primary school headteacher has been encouraged to attach a kindergarten department. The government is therefore expected to provide good accommodation for these young learners. This has been a problem in most of the public schools leading to large class sizes. During the visit to the six schools, it was realized that the two public schools in Accra had not less than fifty pupils in a class. In one of the classes, two KG One classes were put together for lack of rooms. While conducting this research, the researcher was appointed an Early Childhood Education Coordinator for one of the

new Municipal Assemblies in Accra. Her visits to the schools revealed that out of the eleven kindergartens in the Municipality, only two have classrooms spacious enough to accommodate the children.

Supply of furniture to the pupils is equally poor. In the rural area, it was observed that the ten pupils in KG two of the public school were sharing three tables, two long benches and a chair. This made it so difficult for the children to sit comfortably during lessons, or for the teacher to re-arrange class for certain activities, including story telling.

Apart from accommodation, it is the government's responsibility to supply the schools with textbooks, including English Readers. The researcher asked that the respondents to indicate whether they had enough readers in their schools. 66.7% of them stated that they had adequate supply. Out of this number only 20% had their supply from the government. 33.3% of the respondents answered this question in the negative. It is possible that this percentage of the respondents too depend on the government for their supply of readers. That makes a total of 53.3% of the sample pool depending on the government for supply of English readers. In an interview with headteachers, one of them expressed concern about how government's inability to supply textbooks had led to the penetration of the market by several 'authors' selling printed materials they call 'textbooks' with many errors which go undetected. The pupils learn such errors and produce them in examination. This can lead to their failure.

Another vital role of the government is to supply relevant teaching-learning materials to the kindergartens. The research revealed that 76.7% of the thirty respondents have enough teaching-learning materials and 13.3% of this figure receive their supply from the government. The school supplies 40% and teachers improvise 16.7% of the teaching-learning materials. Teaching-learning materials here include wall charts, flashcards, video games, language games, computers, electronic toys etc.

The research also led to another responsibility of the government towards the kindergarten child's acquisition of reading skills. This is to equip the teachers that teach there with the necessary skills. The government must ensure that the teachers who teach in the Ghanaian kindergartens receive regular in-service training on current reading issues among other things. The data collected during the research had indicated that the number of in-service training that the respondents had had, did not correlate positively with their teaching experience in the kindergarten. The number of in-service training that is given to teachers is inadequate.

The government is also expected to review the teacher training curriculum to ensure that teacher trainees are well equipped with knowledge on teaching the kindergarten child to read. An interview with an officer at Teacher Education had made it clear that the government had set aside seven teacher training institutions to specialize in early years education.

All these apart, the government is responsible for developing the appropriate curriculum for the kindergarten children, and determining which methods should be

used to teach these young children to read. For instance, 50% of the sample pool (refer to table 4.5) indicated that they combine both 'Phonics' and 'Look and Say' method for teaching reading. This is so because the curriculum indicates that picture reading as well as phonological awareness should be taught.

#### **4.3.6 How can Reading be Made Fun at this Level?**

From the researcher's visits to the six schools, it was realized that most teachers teach reading at this level as though they were teaching primary six children. All children learn better through play. For this to happen, adequate use of relevant teaching-learning materials is necessary. Data gathered in the research had indicated that children's learning becomes easier and interesting when teaching-learning materials are used. They are motivated to learn and they fully participate in it. A 'fun-full' reading lesson is made possible by the teacher's creativity and his knowledge of the method s/he is using. From the research intervention lessons, the researcher realized that giving meaningful and manageable reading assignments as well as engaging children in petty competitions are means of making reading at kindergarten great fun.

#### **4.3.7 To Whom Should Early Reading Instruction be Given?**

One of the teachers from the schools that were observed told the researcher that children who could not access reading before leaving her class were those who were not mature enough to be in the class. Much as it is true, that is, children must be mentally mature for reading before starting it, one must also bear in mind that children differ greatly in their mental ability at any given age. Smith (1986) cited in Maggart and Zintz (1992) stated that children acquire literacy habits at a very tender

age and it is the responsibility of teachers to be sensitive and observant enough to identify this readiness so as to build on it.

The curriculum developers seemed to have this in mind when they were developing the curriculum for kindergarten education. Units four to seven of the KG One English were dedicated to pre-reading activities which would prepare the child for actual reading. Picture reading, left to right eye movement etc. that respondents mentioned earlier in this chapter as the other methods they were familiar with, were all meant to make the child ready for actual reading. Even in KG Two, real alphabet work begins from unit 12 and is preceded by advanced pre-reading activities. Teachers are expected to be vigilant in looking out for which child is ready for reading so as to move him or her to the next stage. This will prevent boredom, which results from delaying the fast learner as well as rushing the slow learner.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

The main objective of this study is to find out factors that affect the teaching and learning of reading in the Ghanaian kindergartens. In all, six schools were observed. Four from the city – Accra and two from a rural area. Through observation of teachers' work in the six schools and analysis of data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and testing, it became clear that a lot of issues are involved in the teaching and learning of reading at the kindergarten level.

#### 5.1 Observation

##### 5.1.1 Class Size

It was realized in Accra public schools that the teachers have to handle a class of not less than fifty pupils. This number makes teaching of reading very difficult. In one of the schools, as many as sixty-four children, with varied age groupings, were packed into one classroom. It is also very difficult to prepare enough teaching aids for such classes and class control becomes an impossible thing. As a result of inadequate teaching-learning materials for this large number, the teachers resort to using pictures in pupils' workbook as aids for teaching reading. Majority of the pupils did not benefit from such lessons. While the teacher was busy teaching with her attention on only those in front, those behind busily engaged themselves in a variety of activities including fighting, gossiping, tearing pages, turning to other pages, etc.

The fact of the situation was that some of the children did not own books and had to share with others. This inadequate supply of reading books resulted into conflict because each user wanted to satisfy his/her inquisitiveness. In yet another of such large class situations, the teacher was using old basic one readers. These books contained lots of pictures on a page. While the teacher was drawing attention to picture five, those a bit far away from her were discussing other pictures on the page.

This is partly due to the large class size and to the fact that the pictures in that book were too plenty to be used as a teaching aid in any class size. In another public school, the teacher tried to solve this problem by drawing the pictures on the board. Though a better approach, it implies that children can only learn about objects that the teacher can draw. Sometimes, if care is not taken, children can mistake the drawn object for another object and print that interpretation in their minds.

### **5.1.2 Teacher's Knowledge Level**

A teacher's knowledge of current reading issues is of great importance to the teaching and learning of reading in the kindergarten. In La Presbyterian Early Childhood Development Centre, it was observed that the teacher, who was a newly trained teacher, had an indepth knowledge of the English sounds. She easily linked her 'look and say' picture reading lessons with phonemic segmentation and sound identification exercises. This kept her reading class busy and interesting. It was also noticed that the headteacher's knowledge and experience in early childhood education served as a good bank that supported this young teacher's work.

Also helpful to the reading success in this class is the teacher's ability to communicate in the children's L1. She communicated instructions and parts of her lesson in both languages. As a result, the children understood clearly what they were to do at each given time.

In another school, a teacher's lack of knowledge in the pronunciation of English sounds, led children to pronounce umbrella and 'bird' wrongly. /u/ in 'umbrella' was pronounced /ɔ:/ instead of /ʌ/ and 'ir' in 'bird' was pronounced /e/ instead of /ɜ:/.

In another private school (Hannah School Complex), the teacher was not a professional teacher but had attended seven intensive nursery teachers' in-service trainings. With the knowledge gained from these trainings, she was able to adopt a different measure from what the school prescribed, to help her children learn to read two letter words and sounds. At the time of the observation, fifteen out of her nineteen children could read two letter words/syllables formed with vowel 'a' and any consonant without help. The other four needed help with some of the words. It is important to note that the class size and elite background of the pupils, added 'flavour' to her achievement.

The rural schools have good class sizes too. The private school had thirteen pupils and the public school had only ten. The attitude of these teachers towards work was not desirable. The pupils in question were in their exit point of the level but as at the time the researcher visited these schools, none of the pupils could identify the English alphabet up to half way. At 'Jesus Is Alive' Preparatory, the teacher was using pupils

Environmental Studies Book One to teach reading. The pupils were made to memorize and say the sentences: 'This is my father Kwame' and 'This is my mother Ramatu'. They were not able to identify and read any of the words that form the sentences. This teacher held WASSCE certificate and was in her first year of teaching. She had not had any in-service training. Comparing this teacher with the other private school teachers at 'Hannah and La' one would agree that a teacher's knowledge level in reading issues matters a lot and it can impede or promote the pupils' reading progress.

### 5.1.3 Teachers' Attitude to Work

It was also observed that teachers' attitude towards work at this level is crucial in reading skill acquisition. In the La schools, the private school teacher took pains to prepare adequately before teaching reading. In her picture reading lessons, the pictures were either drawn on the board or on a manila card. Few pictures were treated at a time. At the end of the lesson the class concentrated on one picture, to learn the sounds that constitute its name. There were lots of letters for the children to sort through in search of a given letter or sound. But the public school teacher reported late to work and seemed unprepared for the lesson. Upon interrogation, it was realized that reading had not been going on in the class for some time then, because of some renovation work which cleaned the wall pictures. Children's workbook was used to teach reading and since some of the children did not have the books, they did not actively partake in the lesson.

Another 'teacher attitude' that was observed was intolerance towards the children during the reading lesson. The researcher saw some teachers from both public and private schools confusing the young 'readers' by exercising no patience for them to read at their own pace. In one of the lessons, both the fast and the slow readers were made to keep reading through the same set of words. A fast reader told the teacher, 'I know all that already'. He was shut up immediately. In some schools the teachers go to the extent of using canes and insults on the children. This puts off the child's desire to read because he/she begins to associate the beating or insults with reading.

In the rural area, the researcher observed that some of the teachers that work in the public kindergarten were too old to carry out the strenuous work of teaching reading. In the KG one of one of the schools, a male pensioner was the teacher while another male who was very close to retirement was the KG two teacher. Though experienced teachers are good hands for kindergarten department, great experience without the necessary enthusiasm is useless. These teachers could hardly handle three effective lessons in a day.

It was also observed that lack of supervision and motivation can make teachers develop poor attitude towards work. While lack of motivation had caused some of the private school teachers to relax their output, it was realized that most of the public kindergartens do not operate well because of lack of supervision. In the course of the observation, distribution of questionnaires and the main study, public teachers were seen putting in less for lack of supervision. Effective teaching of reading goes with dedication and commitment on the part of teachers, pupils and headteachers.

Adequate supervision will ensure that the right thing is done at all times. In one of the public schools, it was observed that two teachers were teaching KG one because it was a combined class. Nevertheless, only one of these teachers was at post at any given time. This made class control a very difficult task.

#### **5.1.4 Confusing Letters**

In some lessons children were seen mistaking some letters for others. For instance, letter 'j' was mistaken for letter 'l'; 'd' was also mistaken for letter 'b'. This calls for careful writing of letters on flash cards, board, etc. Some children made these mistakes due to poor sight and must be observed and positioned near the board.

#### **5.1.5 Use of Teaching-Learning Materials**

Out of the six schools observed, only two used teaching-learning materials through out their lessons. When a class of fifty was observed, it was noted that the teaching-learning materials kept their interest through out the lesson. This was because the materials were appropriate and relevant to the lesson. On the contrary, when pictures in pupils' workbooks were used for teaching-learning materials, the lesson generated into chaos. Where no teaching aids are used, children begin to get bored in less than ten minutes into the lesson. It was observed that there was not adequate supply of materials for teaching reading in both public and private kindergartens.

#### **5.1.6 English Readers**

It was observed that each of the six schools used a different set of readers. Hannah School used a primer, PRESEC Staff was using the Old Primary English Course

Book One, La Presbyterian Early Childhood Centre used “USAID’ Workbook and ‘Language Activities Book’, La Roman Catholic Kindergarten used ‘Picture Work for Beginners’ and Jesus is Alive Preparatory was using Environmental Studies Book One. Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten had no readers at all. It was also observed that two different curricula are in use in the schools. Some kindergartens are using the 2006 Curriculum designed for kindergartens by the Research Development Division of the Ministry of Education. The other Schools are using the Curriculum designed by ‘USAID’.

#### **5.1.7 Reading on the Timetable**

According to the US National Rights to Read Foundation, reading should be done for about fifteen minutes in every contact day of the week. The researcher observed the timetable of the six schools to see how often reading is taught in our kindergartens. It was found that the private schools have reading not less than three times in a week but most of the public schools have it once, in addition to library reading, which does not take place because of lack of story books. Other literary periods were meant for teaching of rhymes, story telling, writing and conversation. Teaching reading to these little ones for only 30 minutes in a week is woefully inadequate, and needs immediate intervention.

#### **5.1.8 Nature of Classroom and School Environments**

As Maggart and Zintz (1992) rightly put it, the kindergarten environment must be full of labels. The researcher looked out for how our kindergarten environments were labeled. Out of the six schools, only two were averagely labeled. In PRESEC Staff

Kindergarten there were lots of print and drawings on the walls of the compound and the classrooms were full of walls charts. There was however no labeling of objects in the room and there were no library books. In La Presbyterian Early Childhood Development Centre, there were no wall drawings and prints but the inside walls of the classroom were well labeled with alphabet and numeral freezes, objects and charts. Before taking any reading lesson, the children were drilled in letter name recognition in the English alphabet. In the rural schools, none of the walls (both in the public and the private schools) was good or safe enough for labels or sticking anything on. They were made of clay with no plastering. Even the school building of the public kindergarten was on the verge of collapsing.

The researcher also found out that the children are not taken through enough reading – readiness activities. In the rural schools, the KG two pupils could not pick out the odd ones in a given series of pictures. They were neither familiar with the shapes of the English alphabet though they could recite them with much ease.

It was also observed that most teachers use ‘Phonics’ and the ‘Look and Say’ methods without indepth knowledge of their usage. The US National Rights to Read Foundation gave a systematic way of using the ‘Phonics’ method in 16 steps as follows:

- (1) Short vowels sounds e.g. /æ/ /ɪ/ /e/ etc.
- (2) Consonant sounds e.g. /b/ /k/ /d/ etc.
- (3) Two-letter blends e.g. b+a = ba, f+i = fi etc.
- (4) Three-letter blends e.g. ba + t = bat; be + n = ben

- (5) Twin consonants endings eg. sell, kiss, puff etc.
- (6) Two consonant blends eg. blab, frog, brag etc.
- (7) Digraphs eg. chin, whip, ship etc.
- (8) Three consonant blends eg. scrub, split, spring etc.
- (9) High frequency words: no, he, we, me, is, I etc.
- (10) Long vowels: cake, baby, feet, etc.
- (11) R-controlled vowel sounds e.g. /ɜ:/ in bird, /ɑ:/ park
- (12) Diphthongs e.g. /ɔi/ boy, /əʊ/ go, /ei/ hate etc.
- (13) Special spelling patterns e.g. /s/ = cent, face etc.
  - \* /j/ → age, fridge, gym etc.
  - /f/ → phone, cough, etc.
  - /k/ → chorus, Christmas etc.
  - \* /sh/ → chef, champagne etc.
- (14) Decodable stories
- (15) Easy to read books
- (16) Reinforcement till third grade

This is a gradual long term plan which begins from the kindergarten and runs through to about class three. At each point teachers are to give daily practice of about 15 minutes, five days in a week. It would be more fruitful if each child is allowed to move at his or her own pace.

At number 13 above, the National Rights to Read Foundation uses /j/ instead of /dʒ/ and 'sh' in place of /ʃ/. This, unfortunately is incorrect. It is important to note that, while 'sh' is not an English phoneme, 'g' in age, 'dg' in fridge and 'gy' in gym will sound 'dʒ' and not /j/.

Another thing that the research revealed was that children who speak both their L1 and the English language progress faster in reading. Though 'Jesus Is Alive Preparatory' is in the same locality with Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten, their students speak both languages and could easily remember the names of objects that have been learnt during a previous lesson. Their counterparts in the public school could not. They hardly speak any English though they are very fluent in their L1. Such students can benefit a lot from reading if they are taught to read first in the L1 and then move on to learn to read in the English language. Teachers could use modern methods for learning language like the Total Physical Response (TPR) to teach these children to acquire lots of English vocabulary within a short time (Anyidoho, 1999). The theory backing the method explains that, children acquire their L1 by listening to lots of commands from their environment right from infancy. As they grow, they turn to understand the commands and respond appropriately (even before they begin to speak). This process is transferred into L2 learning by allowing the students to listen to their teachers use the target language in several situations aided by the use of pictures, gestures and occasional words from students' native language. The students will then respond physically to the commands (Anyidoho, 1999).

It was also noted that things in the child's environment contribute to his/her reading progress. In 'Jesus Is Alive Preparatory', children were able to use both Ewe and English languages to do picture identification during a reading lesson. They could however not identify 'jug' in either of the languages because it was not a common household object in the locality.

The intervention lessons also revealed that every child has a great interest in reading. This interest is nurtured by a teacher's use of good methods, appropriate teaching/learning materials, good preparation before the lessons, adequate motivation and enough opportunity to practise as well as sufficient parental support. Introduction of petty competitions and games to crown reading lessons activate children's interest the more.

## 5.2 Questionnaires

The data collected from the questionnaires that were given to teachers have revealed that the government is failing in its responsibilities towards the KG child. These responsibilities include supply of English readers, teaching/learning materials, adequate in-service training for teachers who teach at this level, etc. From the data 66.7% of the respondents claimed that they have English readers but only 36.7% of this number received their supply from the government. As much as 40% of the teachers have not received any in-service training. Meanwhile 50% of these people have been working in the kindergarten for more than three years. This can have adverse effects on teaching in general, and reading in particular, because early

reading researchers keep coming out with new findings that can enhance the teaching of reading. It is also funny to note that out of 76.7% of the sample pool that stated that they have teaching-learning materials in their schools, only 13.3% is supplied by the government. The schools rather supply 40%.

Data from the questionnaires show that most of the kindergarten teachers do not have much knowledge of the methods that are used for teaching early reading. The respondents were to state the other reading methods they are familiar with, apart from the one they were using. 43.3% of them did not answer this question, 10.0% of them (those who were using 'Look and Say' method) stated 'Phonics' and 16.7% of them (those using 'Phonics') stated 'Look and Say'. The rest stated: Flash cards, pick and say, left to right eye movement, oral drill, objects around the classroom, dictation, conversation, story telling and reading comprehension.

While some of these are aspects of the language, others are just activities for practice. Left to right eye movement for instance is a pre-reading activity designed to prepare the child for actual reading. Reading comprehension is not a teaching method for reading. It is a type of reading in which the reader is to understand the text and answer questions on it. At kindergarten level, only visual comprehension and picture reading comprehension are appropriate. Methods that are commonly used for teaching early reading include: Alphabetic, Phonics, Syllabic, Phrase, Word, Sentence and Story Methods. Other approaches are Phonological and Phonemic awareness, language experience approach and the context support method.

It was also obvious from the questionnaire that teachers have problems with teaching of reading at the kindergarten level. 53.5% of the sample pool affirm this statement.

Some of the problems they faced were:

- children's lack of interest in reading
- lack of readers and teaching-learning materials in the schools
- the difficulty of teaching children who have not been to KG One; and
- effects of children's different learning styles.

Some of these problems have easy remedies. For instance, children's interest can be reactivated in the lesson by using the right methods and the appropriate teaching learning materials. Children who have not been to KG One must be started from scratch before joining the rest of the class. The questionnaire indicated that methods, textbooks and teaching-learning materials can affect reading positively or negatively.

Another important revelation made by the questionnaire is that the in-service training that is offered to the Ghanaian kindergarten teacher is inadequate. Since such staff development programmes are meant to refresh the teachers understanding of the current issues on learning, it will be laudable to have it correspond with the number of years spent teaching in the kindergarten.

### **5.3 Interviews**

Interviews conducted to headteachers, class teachers and some parents have made some contributions towards the research findings. The headteachers confirmed the

researcher's view that there are factors that promote reading while others impede it.

Among the factors that affect teaching and learning of reading positively are:

- good supervision of teachers' work.
- children's regular phonics drills
- good teaching methods
- exposure to library books and shared reading.
- interesting reading lessons
- provision of the right readers; and
- motivating the young learners.

It is necessary to emphasize the point on exposure to library books and shared reading. The public kindergartens have 'library reading' on their time tables but teachers do not utilize it due to lack of library books and also because most of them do not know what they are supposed to do. A lot could be done during this period. Children could be allowed to pick the library books and flip through the pages – reading and interpreting the pictures. An adult, a teacher in this case – could read an interesting book to a child or a group of children. This is referred to as book sharing. During book sharing, the teacher is supposed to sit in a way that all the children in the group can benefit from what is being read. He or she is to vary his/her voice to suit the characters in the story, so as to keep children's attention and interest throughout the reading. The teacher must pause to allow the children to pass comments on what has been read so far.

The headteachers also unfolded some factors that affect teaching of reading negatively as follow:

- lack of home support
- erroneous English readers
- chorus reading
- large class size
- lack of supervision
- teaching without teaching/learning materials
- use of unsuitable reading materials
- ineffectiveness of teachers and absenteeism of pupils.

The headteachers also gave the following as problems faced by their teachers: lack of understanding of the teaching methods, influences of teachers and pupils L1 on pronunciation and large class sizes.

Some headteachers pointed out the secrets to reading success in their schools. Some of those are listed below:

- Good supervision to ensure good practices at all times.
- Insisting on effective use of teaching/learning materials.
- Regular drills in 'phonics'.
- Division of the reading task among the various stages (classes) that the child will pass through before leaving the kindergarten.

This last point demands that each headteacher sets a target for his/her school's reading success and breaks this goal into achievable units to ensure that every teacher contributes his/her quota effectively. The interview also revealed that the government has no prescribed readers for the kindergartens because each school used a different reader.

The interview with parents and class teachers was meant to help evaluate children's home background and its effects on their reading skills acquisition. Fifteen parents were interviewed and the outcome has shown that a parent's socio-economic background can either have a positive or negative effect on the child's reading. It was also noticed that seventeen out of the nineteen children in Hannah School have parents that support their reading while only two out of the ten children in Anyirawase L/A Kindergarten had supportive parents. In effect, the former were able to read words at the time that the latter were struggling with identification of letters.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

There is no doubt that reading is the key to any educational success the child may have in life. As such, great commitment and dedication must be attached to its acquisition at a very tender age like kindergarten days to enable it become part of a normal life.

To this end, it is recommended that teachers change their attitude towards work. They need to prepare well before teaching reading or any other aspect or subject. This preparation has to do with writing of lesson notes, acquisition of the necessary

teaching/learning materials and upgrading their knowledge to inform and improve their practices.

It is also recommended that headteachers and education officers should always ensure that there is sufficient supervision to enable good practices. It is very necessary for every preschool teacher and headteacher to receive nursery teachers' training. This training, especially the one offered by GES, will equip the teachers with the knowledge they need to teach these young children reading as well as give them the opportunity to prepare almost all the teaching/learning materials they need for effective teaching of reading. The headteachers too will become aware of what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. They can then be in the right position to insist on good practices in their kindergartens.

The government must, as a matter of urgency supply readers and other textbooks to kindergartens. A syllabus alone is not enough for any KG teacher to produce results. It will also be rewarding to review the teachers' salary upward as a way of motivating them to work harder. The KG teacher needs to be accorded the respect that his/her colleagues at the higher levels receive from the society. He or she is not a KG teacher as a result of his/her block headedness but rather because he/she is the best teacher, and purposely trained for the job at that level.

A review of the kindergarten time table for public schools is also recommended. This is necessary because the present 30 minutes a week for teaching reading is inadequate. It would be much appreciated if provision of good classroom blocks for

kindergartens will be on District Assemblies' priority list. This will prevent these vulnerable ones from being trapped under the dilapidated structures that house most of them now (especially in the rural areas).

Good and appropriate teaching/learning materials are a gateway to interesting reading lessons. To encourage teachers to use good teaching/learning materials, and not pictures from pupils' workbooks; GES needs to come out with standard and useful teaching/learning materials like 'Kims game', descriptive pictures, picture cards, etc. This will not only enhance reading lessons but also lessen teachers' workload as far as preparation for reading lessons is concerned.

Since in-service training is meant to refresh teachers' knowledge in current learning issues, it is recommended that all kindergarten teachers be given periodic in-service trainings on reading issues to enable them practice with knowledge and understanding. Parents' constant visit and link with teachers will serve as motivation to teachers and enable them to initiate new approaches to help all children gain reading success.

It is also necessary for the Department of Social Welfare to begin to establish and run day nurseries which will in turn feed the public kindergartens. This will help bridge the gap between the entry of children into the public kindergartens and those into the private ones.

### 5.5 Conclusion

This study has shown that, there are factors that affect the teaching and learning of reading in Ghanaian kindergartens either positively or negatively. The major factors include:

- Teachers' positive attitude towards work and good parental/home support.
- Good knowledge and strategic choice of teaching methods.
- Regular in-service training and workshops from knowledgeable personnel to refresh teachers' knowledge in reading matters.
- Good English readers – well structured to cater for children's learning stages – and good planning of the kindergarten curriculum; and
- Ample practice plus commitment to reading success by all and sundry.

If any of the above factors is lacking in a kindergarten, reading is likely to be affected negatively.

The researcher hopes the recommendations in this chapter would be considered by all stakeholders so as to promote fast acquisition of reading skills among our young learners.

### 5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

This research work was limited to kindergartens but most of the findings can easily apply to the Lower Primary. Future researchers could therefore look at factors that affect teaching of reading at the Upper Primary and Junior High levels in Ghana.

## APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Please supply the information needed by either ticking the appropriate box or writing the information where applicable.

1a. Sex      Male [ ]                      Female [ ]

A.

2a. Qualification

Degree [ ]      Diploma [ ]      Certificate [ ]      Post Sec [ ]

Cert A 4 year [ ]      SSCE/WASCE [ ]      Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Number of years taught in Kindergarten

1-3 [ ]      4-6 [ ]      7-10 [ ]      11 and above [ ]

B.

1. Which aspects of English do you enjoy teaching?

Grammar [ ]      Conversation [ ]      Reading [ ]      None [ ]

2. How do you view the teaching of reading

Boring [ ]      Interesting [ ]      Tiring [ ]      Indifferent [ ]

3. Is it necessary to teach reading in the Kindergarten

Yes [ ]      No [ ]

4. Do you encounter some problems in teaching English reading? Yes [ ] No [ ]

5. If yes give example .....

.....

6. Are there enough English readers in you school? Yes [ ] No [ ]

7. If no how do you solve this problem?.....

.....

8. If yes, who supplies the books? Government [ ] Parent [ ] NGO [ ]

School [ ]

## C.

1. Have you attended any in-serve training or workshop on reading?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. If yes, how many times? .....
3. Which method(s) do you use for teaching reading?  
Phonics [ ] Look and Say [ ] Both [ ] Others (Specify).....
4. Why do you like using the method(s) .....
5. State any other reading methods you are familiar with: .....

## D.

1. How would you rate your pupils' interest in reading?  
High [ ] Good [ ] Average [ ] Low [ ]
2. Do you have teaching-learning materials for teaching reading in your school?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
3. If yes, who supplies them? .....
4. If no, what do you normally do? .....
5. What is your pupils' response to learning to read when you use teaching / learning materials. ....

## E.

1. Which of these factors do you think affects the teaching/learning of reading in your class most? Home support [ ] Text books [ ]  
Teaching learning Materials [ ] Reading Methods [ ]
2. Does it affect it positively or negatively? .....


Associating beginning letters with objects.  
Read the letter and the picture in each box.

J j




jug

K k




kettle

L l



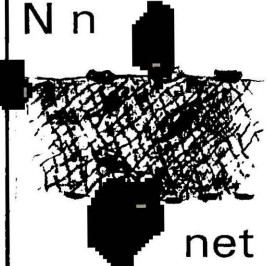
lantern

M m



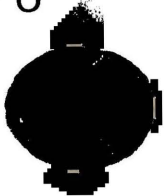
mat

N n




net

O o



orange

P p




pencil

Q q



queen

R r



rabbit

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