Introduction

Language and literacy development are interrelated. Children understand and become familiar with the grammatical structure of the words they use which forms the stronger foundation they build on for reading and writing (US Head Start, 2003).

Different theorists/school of thought such as the Behaviourists, the Nativists and the interactionists have tried to explain the process of language development (Sulzby, Teale, & Kamberelis, 1989).

According to Strickland et al., (2004), the teaching of Emergent Literacy has become a prominent focus of early childhood education in recent years as educational researchers daily discuss the importance of reading and writing in children’s education.

Emergent Literacy, was first used by Marie Clay in 1966 to explain the gradual process children go through as they develop understanding of written language (both reading and writing). A key to the term literacy is the interrelatedness of all parts of language: speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing.

The following concepts form the foundation of literacy learning that children need to develop: oral language, print awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, letter sound correspondence, early writing and beginning reading vocabulary (Morrow, 2001).

This project would observe the extent to which preschool classroom practices such as the classroom environment, programs on literacy, and teaching materials for Literacy.

Research Questions

• What level of awareness do preschool teachers have on emergent literacy in children?
• How are the teachers using the classroom environment to sustain the extension of emergent literacy?
• What teaching and learning materials are available in the preschools and how do they sustain emergent literacy?
• What support do the head teachers provide for teachers in teaching emergent literacy?

Participants

10 preschools will be selected from 53 preschools. This will give 20 preschool teachers. Each teacher will be observed in her classroom making the preschoolers in the classroom involved in the study. The teachers will comprise 10 untrained teachers, 5 degree holder teachers and five diploma holder teachers.

Measures

Classroom Observation

Emerging Literacy Classroom Checklist: To describe classroom practices in terms of literacy richness of the environment, reading practices, variety of literacy activities, and the usage of teacher’s knowledge on literacy. This tool was adapted from the 2004 Early Literacy Checklist of the Ministry of Education, Early Years Branch, Ontario, Canada, and has been modified to suit the Ghanaian classroom.

Questionnaire

A set of self-generated questionnaires will be administered for the teachers. The questionnaires would find information about their teaching skills as well as knowledge about emergent literacy. An adapted form of questionnaires from Khurana & Rao (2011) was used to coin the questions to suit the Ghanaian classroom.

Procedure

• A five week period will be needed for the entire research.
• Observation: Four weeks would be needed for the classroom observation. A day allocated to each teacher, making it twenty days in all for the observation according to the academic calendar. The researcher will observe the selected preschool teacher as they go about on their daily classroom activities for two hours each day in their classroom.
• Questionnaires: Questionnaires will be administered to the teachers on the first day of visit and will be collected on the fifth week of the study. This will enable the teachers to have enough time to answer the questions.

Possible Outcomes

• Information that will be gathered in this research will help to clarify the weaknesses and strengths of the Ghanaian teachers in teaching emergent literacy.
• Suggestions will be made to curricula planners for Colleges of Education to inculcate the teaching of Emergent Literacy to Teacher Trainees.
• Head teachers will be informed about the need of providing Teaching and learning materials for Literacy.
• Preschoolers will enjoy learning literacy when the classroom has learning aid.
• In the future, an intervention could be tailored to suit the needs of the Ghanaian teachers to know how to appreciate literacy behaviours children exhibit.

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