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## KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' CHALLENGES TO THE TEACHING OF LITERACY SKILLS AMONG KINDERGARTENERS IN SHAMA DISTRICT OF GHANA

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges teachers face when teaching literacy skills among early graders, specifically kindergarteners and how the identified challenges impede their smooth teaching of literacy skills. The study employed ethnography design. Data was gathered through semi-structured interview guide. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample 12 participants for the interview. Data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis procedures. The findings from the study revealed that challenges teachers encountered were related to; large class size, inadequate instructional resources, insufficient in-service training, and continuous professional development programs, learning disorders, and absence of supportive adults in the lives of kindergarteners. It was recommended that Shama District Education Directorate in collaboration with headteachers of the selected schools should organize in-service training for teachers to expose them to current trends in literacy instructional skills, train them on how to assist learners with disorders, and how to manage large class size. Again, Directorate of Education in collaboration with headteachers should organize Parent Association meetings and seminars to enlighten parents and community members on the need to support and participate in their children's education.

**Keyword:** Challenges in literacy, literacy skills, literacy instruction, early childhood education, kindergarten teachers

### Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi guru ketika mengajar keterampilan literasi di kalangan siswa kelas awal, khususnya taman kanak-kanak dan bagaimana tantangan yang teridentifikasi menghambat kelancaran pengajaran keterampilan literasi mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain etnografi. Data dikumpulkan melalui panduan wawancara semi terstruktur. Teknik purposive sampling digunakan untuk sampel 12 peserta untuk wawancara. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan prosedur analisis isi dan tematik. Temuan dari penelitian tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa tantangan yang dihadapi guru terkait dengan; ukuran kelas yang besar, sumber daya instruksional yang tidak memadai, pelatihan in-service yang tidak memadai, dan program pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan, gangguan belajar, dan tidak adanya orang dewasa yang mendukung dalam kehidupan anak TK. Direkomendasikan bahwa Direktorat Pendidikan Distrik Shama bekerja sama dengan kepala sekolah dari sekolah yang dipilih harus menyelenggarakan pelatihan in-service bagi para guru untuk memaparkan mereka pada tren terkini dalam keterampilan instruksional keaksaraan, melatih mereka tentang cara membantu peserta didik dengan gangguan, dan cara mengelola ukuran kelas yang besar. Sekali lagi, Direktorat Pendidikan bekerja sama dengan kepala sekolah harus menyelenggarakan pertemuan dan seminar Asosiasi Orang Tua untuk mendidik orang tua dan anggota masyarakat tentang perlunya mendukung dan berpartisipasi dalam pendidikan anak-anak mereka.

**Kata Kunci:** Tantangan literasi, Keterampilan literasi, Instruksi literasi, Anak usia dini, Guru anak usia dini

## Introduction

Early Childhood Education (hereinafter ECE) has become a major issue, a centrepiece of debate at all levels of government, and a topic of concern among experts and the public alike, as contributing to and preparing children for their education and future life (UNESCO, 2006). Thus, any intervention at the early years which aims at contributing to any aspect of the individual is crucial. Evidence from many countries shows that quality early childhood education can narrow linguistic disadvantages (UNESCO, 2010). It is for this reason that organizations such as the UNESCO, UNICEF, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) have devoted their resources to the course of literacy skills development and literacy skills instruction at the foundational levels of education across nations.

Literacy is the ability to understand life and its communication. It entails access to communication and participation. Literacy skills could be seen as the ability to understand and use written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment (Mullis et al., 2007).

As said by (Mumpuniarti., 2017), many countries, Ghana inclusive, introduce various educational plans and pedagogical practices to improve literacy development in their schools. However, inadequate content knowledge, lack of support, coaching, mentoring and continuous professional development (CPD) weaken teacher effectiveness. Large classroom sizes as discussed in the study of (Kimmy., 2017) pose a lot of challenges to the teaching of literacy skills as it does not permit the teacher to focus on the learner's individuality and uniqueness. Teachers' performance and the learners' learning are severely affected in extremely overpopulated classrooms (Sharndama., 2013). A striking and frustrating fact about literacy skills development is that it is much less likely to proceed in a trouble-free manner for certain large groups of children.

There is no common understanding of how many learners form a large classroom (Adhikari., 2017). As suggested by (Ur., 2005) and (Oppong Frimpong., 2017), the concept of large is subjective, and the definition of a large class varies depending on the context. In some private language schools, a class of 20 learners may be considered large, while in other environments, a classroom of 40 to 45 learners may be considered large, and in yet some areas, a class of more than 100 learners may be considered large. Teachers have a difficult time dealing with disciplinary issues, correcting written work, keeping learners engaged, ensuring successful learning, finding appropriate materials, tracking individual development, and ensuring involvement in a large classroom (Nikam., 2016; Ramjibhai., 2012).

Professionals have proposed several methods for dealing with the challenges that a teacher might face in a large classroom. As some of the alternatives that teachers might try out in a wide heterogeneous class, (Khati., 2010) suggested developing a collaborative learning environment, offering a range of works, and involving all learners in various activities suitable for different levels. While teaching a large language class can be challenging, pedagogical planning, training, proper classroom management and handling, and learner behaviour monitoring can all help (Nikam., 2016). Although large classrooms seem to be an inevitable characteristic of developing countries, teaching and learning can still be enhanced by increasing teachers' and school leaders' capacity to cope with this setting (Benbow et al., 2007).

According to the World Health Organization (2011), sources of risk for literacy failure on the part of learners include mental retardation, hearing problems, language and learning disorders, dyslexia, amongst others. Learning disorders are caused by hereditary and/or neurobiological influences that impair one or more cognitive processes related to learning by altering brain functioning. These processing issues can make it difficult to learn basic skills like reading, writing, and math. Due to some of these issues, improving kindergarteners' literacy skills is limited (Hobson., 2013) and educators who teach kindergarteners reading skills face a significant challenge as a result. Examples of learning disorders that impede the effective development of literacy skills among children include dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dysphasia/aphasia.

Dyslexia is a neurobiological, developmental, language-based learning disorder that affects individuals' ability to learn to read (accuracy and fluency) and the development of spelling skills. Individuals with dyslexia have difficulty connecting spoken language and printed words because they have deficits in the phonological component of language (Roitschet et al., 2019). Dysgraphia is also a disorder of writing ability at any stage, including problems with letter formation or legibility, letter spacing, spelling, fine motor coordination, and rate of writing. Dysgraphia can have a negative impact on the success of a child in school. Many children with dysgraphia are not able to keep up with written assignments, cannot put coherent thoughts together on paper, or write legibly (Crouch et al., 2007). Teachers should be aware of the signs and symptoms of dyslexia and dysgraphia and not dismiss a child as simply having sloppy handwriting or poor reading. If a teacher starts to see a trend of illegible writing for instance, it is appropriate for them to question whether this child has dysgraphia or a similar condition.

The absence of a role model, that is, no one in the family or household to emphasize the importance of reading or schooling, is also detrimental to the growth of literacy skills. It is advantageous for a child to have someone to influence them in the learning of this ability in their immediate surroundings. It becomes a concern when there is no one like that in the life of the child to play that role (Kauffman., 2011).

Another challenge which is worth mentioning is the teacher's perception, interest, experience, and training. Perceptions, interests, and professional development experiences of an ECE teacher affect their literacy instruction delivery (Kimmy., 2017; Lane et al., 2014). Thus, kindergarteners with early childhood educators who have been trained in how to effectively teach early literacy skills have improved literacy skills development (Lane et al., 2014). According to the authors, early childhood educators should have received professional development and educational training that should aid them in providing effective early literacy instruction. Teachers need preparation and professional development to enhance their educational methods, and it is also a factor in how they interpret the teaching of literacy skills among kindergarteners.

Emanating from ECE teachers training is the knowledge gained through the training, for instance, to provide opportunities for literacy learning in the classroom and ensuring learners' engagement in literacy learning (Likpa et al., 2012). Researchers' findings demonstrate the importance of teachers' knowledge through training and the influence that teachers have on learners' success in school as related to their ability to learn to read and write (Cash et al., 2015; Cunningham et al., 2015; Piasta., 2014; Roskos et al., 2014). Teachers play a crucial role in whether or not children learn to read and write. Above all other variables, teacher expertise accounts for more increases in learner achievement in reading (Cunningham et al., 2015).

Similarly, (Lerner et al., 2016) concluded that in early childhood classrooms where time was spent directly teaching phonemic awareness and letter identification and where teachers exhibited competency in the knowledge of early literacy pedagogy, learners performed significantly higher on early literacy assessments. On the contrary, in classrooms with less knowledgeable teachers and similar amounts of time spent directly teaching phonemic awareness and letter identification, learners performed significantly lower on early literacy assessments. Without proper knowledge of how children learn and how to effectively deliver developmentally appropriate early literacy instruction, teachers may not be fully prepared to teach these essential early literacy skills to children in early childhood classrooms (Varghese et al., 2016). A component of a teacher's knowledge of literacy in early childhood is the importance of knowing which books to read to children and how to integrate instructional activities into the lesson delivery.

One necessary component in a highly effective classroom where literacy skills can easily be developed is the implementation of effective classroom management. Classroom management can be considered as a two-fold concept, consisting of classroom rules and procedures (Mata., 2013). Classroom rules are used to define general expectations or standards regarding learner behaviour, and classroom procedures. They are used to define behaviour for specific tasks (Marzano., 2012). For instance, a classroom rule could be that when the teacher is providing instruction, no one should get out of their seat to sharpen a pencil. A procedure might be a morning

routine of coming into the classroom, hanging up school bags, and beginning morning work. Effective classroom management increases learners time on task and with more time on task, teachers have more time to provide small group or individualized instruction. Teachers who are well trained and highly skilled in classroom management can manage not only learner behaviour but also ensure consistent academic performance and achievement. In an instance where the teacher is not well trained, managing the classroom will be a herculean task; they will not be able to manage learners' behaviours and to ensure their consistent academic performance and achievement, including their literacy skill development. It is crucial to develop literacy among children when they are at the foundational stage. This is because it lays proper foundation for children to heighten on other essential skills as they grow and mature (Keefe et al., 2011).

However, according to literature, there exist some challenges which reduce the quality of teaching and learning of literacy skills and the development of these skills at the early stages of children. Most of these discussed challenges which makes it difficult for teachers to function efficiently and assist children develop literacy at the early childhood level draw evidence from Western and European countries (Kimmy., 2017; Sharndama., 2013; Nikam., 2016; Ramjibhai., 2012; Hobson., 2013; Roitsch et al., 2019). Per the readings of the researchers, there seems to be paucity of literature regarding the challenges teachers encounter when teaching literacy among kindergarteners as there has not been any evidence of a study like that in Ghana and within the Shama District. Methodology wise, the above indicated studies used research designs other than ethnography. This therefore leaves a methodological gap. Thus, by employing this research design, the study will not only be contributing to the limited literature. The study will also be contributing to how ethnography can be employed in similar studies in other contexts. This study was purported to explore the challenges associated with the teaching of literacy in Shama District of Ghana.

## Method

Morogoro Municipality was the area of the study which was conveniently selected, as the fact that it is a town with multi-ethnic groups and highly urbanized with 12 schools with special needs students units, therefore, made it possible to have the population and sample that represent other areas of the country. A mixed method was employed using descriptive design in explaining the views of people on certain The researchers employed ethnography from the interpretivist stance which "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (researcher and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin et al., 2008) in this study. Interpretivism underpins qualitative research where the researchers argue that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens., 2005) and context-specific (Silverman., 2001). Thus, there can be several realities (Guba., 1990, cited in Johnson et al., 2004). The use of interpretive

paradigm (ethnography) was suitable for the study as the researchers intended to have in-depth knowledge about the participants and to possibly understand the context or setting in which the participants expressed their views (Creswell et al., 2007). Ethnography studies actions, social interactions and perceptions within groups, organisations, and communities (Reeves et al., 2008). Thus, by using this design, the researchers could directly hear the voices of the participants and could therefore trace the knowledge generated and the application of the challenges teachers were facing in literacy skill instruction to specific local situations and the individuals (Johnson et al., 2004).

The target population was all the public kindergarten centers in the Shama district of Ghana, with a total population of 419 from 99 kindergarten schools. The accessible population was 265 ECE teachers from 43 ECE centers. Using quota and convenience sampling techniques, two schools were selected from each of the 6 circuits, making a total of 12 schools and the KG 2 teacher of each school was purposively sampled. Thus, the sample size was 12. Data were gathered using semi-structured interview guide.

Trustworthiness is defined as "establishing the validity and dependability of qualitative research" (Streubert-Speziale et al., 2003). When qualitative research effectively captures the study participants' experiences, it is reliable. Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were the four criteria identified in determining the trustworthiness of the data (Speziale et al., 2003). Participants' recognition of the presented research findings as their personal experiences was the sign of credibility (Streubert., 2011).

The data analysis focused on simplifying the data to make it more comprehensible (Frankel., 2002). With this process, the researchers reduced the data to manageable size, developed summaries, and looked for patterns. Thematic as well as content analysis were used to analyse data for the study. The recurring themes were identified and analysed and the patterns that emerged within data were captured and reported. Before then, recorded interviews were listened to severally before they were carefully transcribed. Once that was done, the researchers sent the transcribed data to the participants to check whether the transcriptions best represent what they communicated. After this confirmation by the participants, the transcripts were read at multiple times, and were initially coded (Braun., 2006).

## **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the analysis and discussion of the study's result. In analysing the data, the identity of the participants was hidden and were represented with alphanumeric codes (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, ....12). The recordings from the interview sessions were first of played severally to get the right transcribed data.

### 1.1. *The challenges kindergarten teachers face in the teaching of literacy in the Shama District of Ghana*

This section sought to ascertain the challenges teachers face when teaching literacy skills among kindergarteners within the Shama District. The researchers using semi-structured interview guide, engaged participants in interview sessions, when they were to identify the challenges that makes it difficult for them to successfully teach literacy skills among kindergarteners, they espoused that:  
Inadequate instructional resources

*We do not have any teacher's guide and textbooks to teach these children? You bring a new curriculum but refuse to provide the teacher with textbooks and guide to use. It is my serious headache. (Teacher 3).*

*My challenges include no textbooks to complement the standards, some of us too do not have much knowledge of most of the strategies. (Teacher 6)*

*As for internet, you even need not to mention it because the school does not have any Internet connectivity. Whatever we teach here, we can't use anything ICT. It is always the pictures we have in the books that we show to them. Sometimes too, I have to draw it on the board for the children to copy (Teacher 12).*

*The few books I have are old. Some are torn and the painful thing is that they are even not enough (Teacher 9).*

#### Inadequate in-service training on new modalities of literacy skills

*I will say that, we are not mostly provided with in-service programmes. (Teacher 1)*

*all we do is the professional learning community. Even this, sometimes we don't go. Sometimes they organize the training during vocation so some people are not able to go (Teacher 5).*

*Hmmm, when they organise the training, it is the whole day and by the time you come back you are so tired. Sometimes too they rush through the training (Teacher 11).*

Large class size

*The children in my class are many as you can see. They are even on break so most of them have gone out to play (Teacher 3).*

*My main challenge in my teaching is the number of children in class. They are too many and we are only two to take care of them. Some of them also disturb (Teacher 7).*

*I suffer from large class size, because the children in my class here are so many. As for my class, if I don't use my experience to adopt the teaching strategy that is able to overcome the so many children in my class, then my children will not learn anything. But I am experienced so I choose the method that is appropriate to teach the children (Teacher 9).*

#### Absence of a supportive adult at home to help facilitate literacy activities

*Parents of the children we teach live everything on we the teachers and expect us to work magic (Teacher 1)*

*the problem I have in this school with the parent is that, they won't come to the school. Some of them don't come to the school at all, even when they are bringing their children, they leave them at the gate. Sometimes, I want to say something about a child to the parent, I won't get them. It is a real problem (Teacher 3).*

Learning disorder (dyslexia and dysgraphia) that affects the reading ability of learners

*children with various learning disorders especially the ones related more to reading and writing (Teacher 1)*

*There are some of the children when they write, you can't even see what they are writing. For some of them, the letters are not clear, some too write and some of the writing will go up and others will go down (Teacher 10).*

Nature of the furniture

*I will touch on is the tables and chairs we have in this school for the children. It is not good for them, and they are not even enough (Teacher 6).*

*I have the round tables, but you cannot divide the table. Some of the chairs are also broken. There are some who the parents are to help to buy but the parents will say they don't have money (Teacher 4).*

*The tables and chairs are okay for my class and my children. Everybody has a table to sit on. The only problem is that some of the chairs are a bit high for the children so you will see that when they sit on it, their legs will not touch the ground (Teacher 8)*

It was deduced from the responses that the kindergarten teachers in Shama District face some challenges during the teaching of literacy. Although the teachers are ready to assist kindergarteners to develop literacy skills to communicate effectively, several challenges disrupt this process and impede the successful roll-out of effective literacy skills lessons. These challenges include; inadequate instructional materials, insufficient in-service training, large class size, absence of adult support, dyslexia, and dysgraphia. Espousing on each of the challenge will suggest that the curriculum can be developed with all the intentions, the teachers could be ready to translate the content of the curriculum, but the circumstances as mentioned could impede the achievement of the success of the lesson and of the curriculum.

### ***1.2. The challenges identified affect the teaching of literacy skills among kindergarteners within Shama District of Ghana.***

The researchers designed a semi-structured interview guide to find out from participants, why they pointed out that overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching materials, insufficient in-service training, learning disorders, and the absence of parental/guardian support were challenges they face when teaching literacy skills among kindergarteners. Responding to how inadequate instructional materials pose a challenge to them, the researchers interviewed some teachers, and their responses point to the following:



*I do not get the necessary textbooks and teacher's guide which are essential to me as a teacher and it becomes a problem not knowing what to do. Also, when teaching the sounds, phonics, morphemes, and almost all other aspects of literacy, there is a need to have appropriate materials, because we do not have them, most lessons are taught in abstract (Teacher 4).*

*as I speak, there are no government-approved books for teachers and students to use. We are left to work with our discretion and instinct (Teacher 6).*

*The materials at my centre are not always enough and it is obvious that children learning in such an environment will not do better because when teaching the sounds, phonics, morphemes, there is a need to have appropriate materials (Teacher 9).*

*One of the things I have personally experienced is that some of the children like to touch. We learn through touch, so you can't just come in and teach them in the abstract. They need to see, feel/touch, and use all their senses to properly facilitate learning. Because of this, my teaching has become a one-way style. I sometimes lecture to them as if I am teaching those at upper primary. This is because I don't have instructional materials to teach the learners with (Teacher 12).*

**On insufficient in-service training, respondents gave reasons as to how the issue poses a challenge in the following;**

*I know nothing about how to help learners with disorders in my class to learn how to read and write. I am just trying, and it is not working. If there is in-service training on such things, I might be able to help my learners well. (Teacher 4)*

*As a teacher, you have completed school and you are now on the field. Once in a while, in-service training has to be done to equip you more with current trends, but in this case, there are only few in-service training, so it is just the old ideas and old strategies I use. (Teacher 8)*

*This is a challenge since we are in a world in which new things come up every day. Not having the opportunity to keep up with these new modalities through in-service training makes me feel like I am always behind, which poses a significant challenge to literacy teaching (Teacher 10).*

**Regarding large class size posing a challenge to teachers, some respondents during the interview explained by stating the following;**

*Teaching a large class size is always difficult. I have learners who are hyperactive, and they distract the class. I always have to pause to help organize the class. It would have been better if they were not that many learners, but with this number, it is difficult to provide the individual needs of children (Teacher 1).*

*The normal kindergarten class size is supposed to be around 25, if I am not mistaken, but I have more than 45 learners in my class. This makes it difficult to attend to the kids individually and the classroom environment is not wide. (Teacher 2)*

*I am not motivated to select strategies that attend to each child's learning needs since they are many in the classroom (Teacher 6).*

Explaining how the **absence of adult support** in the life of learners was a challenge, respondents indicated thus;

*Children learn through repetition. Without revising with their parents, they come back to school, and they have already forgotten what has been already taught, and sometimes their homework assignments are undone (Teacher 11).*

*Learning depends on three things: the child, the teacher, and the guardian or parent. Learning should be a continuous process. When a child learns at school and does not get any assistance at home to revise, the teacher will have to go over the same thing during the next lesson, which drags the teacher (Teacher 5).*

*Most learners that I have encountered are who they are because of the support they have from their parents. The efforts parents put into their children's education help me move faster when teaching them. Children who receive minimal or no support from their parents always pose challenges to teachers (Teacher 7).*

Respondents indicated that **learning disorders** such as dyslexia and dysgraphia pose a challenge when teaching literacy skills because:

*Children with dyslexia and dysgraphia see b as d and write 9 as P, taking the teacher back. One significant challenge is that I lack practical knowledge on assisting these learners (Teacher 3).*

*Children having disorders in reading and writing properly draw the class back because I will have to find time for these children and offer any form of assistance to them. (Teacher 12)*

*Some children have difficulties in writing and reading properly. It is as if it is a special issue or a disorder because I have tried my best and it is not working. (Teacher 6).*

Some participants also highlighted **inadequate and inappropriate furniture** is a challenge because:

*Children in my class do not feel comfortable at all because they struggle to reach the table they have been given. They are those desks that the grown children use so when they sit on them, they cannot even pay attention. It affects how they read and write. It also prevents me from going in for strategies that will require them to sit in circles or the 'u' shape (Teacher 11).*

*the furniture is not enough and appropriate for the children. Sometimes you want children to sit and carry on with paired reading, but it is not impossible because of the furniture (Teacher 3).*

The findings revealed that kindergarten teachers did not just cite large class size, inadequate instructional materials, insufficient in-service training, and continuous professional development programmes, inadequate and insufficient furniture, absence of adults' support in the lives of kindergarteners, and learning disorders such as dyslexia and dysgraphia as challenges that they face during literacy instruction. However, as shown in the presented data, they had numerous reasons for their responses as they established how these identified challenges affect the success of their teaching of literacy skills among kindergarteners

The identified challenges by participants and how each of them affects the lesson delivery form the basis of the discussion section. By no special order, the discussion section is presented on theme basis.

### **Inadequate instructional resources**

Again, on challenges facing teachers teaching literacy skills among kindergarteners, the results reveal that insufficient instructional resources is a challenge. This is because most lessons taught at the kindergarten level require certain teaching and learning materials to enable children enjoy and fully benefit from the teaching and learning process. When these materials are unavailable, learners learn concepts in abstracts. Sadly, according to the results, this is exactly what is happening. The results support the assertion of Abioye (2010), that inadequate learning materials and overcrowding classes can lead to an unfavourable learning climate, even if learners are highly motivated to learn a language. The results suggest that sometimes because the instructional materials are not enough when teachers try to distribute the little among these many learners, it creates chaos. Corresponding to this, (Sharndama., 2013) commented that the teacher must devote precious class time to controlling noise and learner distractions in large classrooms rather than teaching-learning activities.

### **Insufficient In-service Training**

Based on the results, it is possible to conclude that teachers view insufficient in-service training as a challenge to teaching literacy skills among kindergarteners because we live in an unstable world where everything is not static, including the techniques and methods in teaching literacy skills and also ways in professionally handling children with special needs. Out of the many avenues, one can equip one's self with current educational modalities, in-service training stands tall. But here is the case, they are not sufficiently organized. The results suggest that many are the literacy skills instructional strategies introduced, but teachers are trained on few or none, making teachers go back to the ones they have worked with over a period and are comfortable using. This includes the read aloud and whole word methods. This result from the study lends support to evidence in the literature championed by (Adhikari., 2010), who identifies insufficient in-service training as an impediment to quality literacy skills instruction among kindergarteners.

### **Large Class Size**

The results further indicate that teachers view large class size as a challenge they face when teaching kindergarteners literacy skills because having a class with many learners in class reduces the quality of the teaching and learning process. Children at the kindergarten level need enough attention and sometimes some children specially need this attention. When deprived, they get themselves busy with other unproductive things that disrupt lessons and drag the class back. The result reveals that such a class is always congested, making it uncondusive and uncomfortable for teachers and learners. These findings align with (Sharndama., 2013), who posits that a large class is one with more learners than the recommended class size, more learners than learning

resources and physical structures, which prevents the teacher from functioning as efficiently as possible and impedes learner learning. In extremely overpopulated classrooms, the teacher's performance and the learners' learning are severely affected (Sharndama., 2013). Similarly, the results are in line with several works which state that teachers having a large class size have a difficult time dealing with disciplinary issues, correcting written work, keeping learners engaged, ensuring successful learning, finding appropriate materials, tracking individual development, ensuring learners' involvement, monitoring learners' activities and development, providing input and evaluations, finding it difficult to get to know learners individual needs (Nikam., 2016; Ramjibhai., 2012; Ur., 2005).

As a result of the findings, it can again be deduced that employing literacy skills instructional strategies to meet the learning needs of individual learners becomes impossible when classrooms are overcrowded. This causes the teacher to use the more convenient and much more comfortable strategy, hence going in for teacher-centered teaching strategies. This result lends ample support to the work of (Abioye., 2010), who states that in larger classes, the individual learner is buried in the sense that the teacher attempts to engage with learners from various socio-cultural backgrounds and learning abilities using the same instructional strategy because it is difficult for the teacher to meet each learner's individual learning needs and desires all at once.

### **Absence of adult support**

Participants comment that the absence of adult support in the kindergartener's life was a challenge to literacy skills instruction was because when parents, guardians, and other older siblings are unsupportive to the literacy skills development of learners (including not helping to revise what has been learnt with the children and not guiding them to do their homework), it makes the teacher's job a hectic one. Some parents are not even interested in knowing the performance of their wards. All these, according to this study, drag the class back as teachers may have to teach and repeat concepts or lessons multiple times. Supporting this view, (Kauffman., 2011) states that the absence of a role model, that is, no one in the family or household emphasizing the importance of reading or schooling, may be detrimental to the growth of literacy skills. It is advantageous for a child to have someone influencing them to learn this ability in their immediate surroundings.

### **Learning Disorders**

Learning disorders such as dyslexia and dysgraphia were among the difficulties kindergarten teachers in the Shama District face when teaching literacy skills. Participants were of the view that dysgraphia manifest in the child's ability to write appropriately whilst dyslexia relate to a child's inability to read properly. This is consistent with the views expressed by (Roitsch et al., 2019) and (Chung et al., 2020). To them, dyslexia as a neurobiological, developmental, language-based learning disorder

that affects individuals' ability to learn to read (accuracy and fluency). Also, dysgraphia as a disorder of writing ability at any stage. This includes problems with letter formation or legibility, letter spacing, spelling, fine motor coordination, rate of writing, grammar, and composition.

Deducing from the study, children with these disorders are slow in developing literacy skills and, they can slow down the progress of lessons for the class. The view of (International Dyslexia Association., 2017) corroborates this assumption that, many learners struggle in school because of dysgraphia. (Similarly et al., 2013) states that these processing issues can make learning basic skills like reading and writing difficult. As a result, the aim of improving kindergarteners' literacy skills can be limited. Educators who teach kindergarteners reading skills face a significant challenge due to this.

## **Conclusion**

Just as there is no perfection in whatever we engage in, literacy instruction among kindergarteners is not an exemption. Kindergarten teachers revealed that they encounter numerous challenges when executing their duties especially, when teaching children reading and writing. They made mention of numerous challenges as shown in the study's results. Notable among them are large class size, inadequate instructional materials, insufficient in-service training and continuous professional development programmes, inadequate and insufficient furniture, absence of supportive adults in the lives of kindergarteners, and learning disorders such as dyslexia and dysgraphia.

It was established that learning disorders such as dyslexia and dysgraphia are challenges that disrupt the teaching and learning process because kindergarten teachers do not possess the right amount of knowledge to enable them assist these children to fully benefit from lessons. As a result, the pace of lessons is slowed as sufficient time are required to attend to and assist these learners.

The implication of a class with overcrowded learners is that teachers resort to selecting strategies that are convenient to them and the class as a whole instead of selecting strategies that are effective to individual learners. This is a reason for which kindergarten teachers commented that large class size is a challenge to literacy instruction.

Moreover, inadequate instructional materials is a barrier to quality literacy instruction because some lessons demand that teachers employ some specific resources to aid them effectively deliver to the understanding of young learners. When these resources are unavailable, it tends to impede the quality of lesson delivery. In case the resources are available but insufficient, sharing them among lots of children sometimes create chaos and disruption which delays teaching.

Additionally, it is worthy to note that in the education of early learners, stakeholders who spend more hours with learners in a day are parents/guardian and the child's teacher. The work of teachers would become less stressful should parents, guardians or any other relevant adult in the child's life continues to assist the learner in practicing what has been learnt at school when they get home or when they provide children with more opportunities for academic growth. When parents do not perform these expected roles, the huge responsibility then lies on only the teacher. This becomes a challenge because children need more opportunities even at home to revise what has been learnt and they learn more things on their own.

### Recommendations of the Study

1. The study recommends that the Shama District Education Directorate through the Regional Education Directorate should organize regular in-service training for teachers to expose them to current trends and modalities in literacy skills instruction and on how to handle learners with various special needs.
2. It is recommended by the study for the Ghana Education Service and other relevant stakeholders to provide teachers with training on how to manage large-sized classrooms to ensure quality literacy teaching and learning activity.
3. Also, headteachers and teachers in Shama District need to educate parents through workshops, seminars and meetings about their responsibilities of guiding and assisting their learners in revising and mastering concepts that have been taught at school when their children are at home.

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