

**UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION**



**STATUS OF EMERGENT LITERACY IN PRESCHOOLS OF ONE COUNTY,  
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA: A PROPOSAL**

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**BY**

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**A RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER'S  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Emergent literacy is a term used to explain how young children develop skills of pre-reading and pre-writing before they actually start to read and write. It is believed that young children even from one year old and above can experience emergent literacy through the support of parents, teachers, caregivers, and other adults around them. Through this process, young children can successfully progress from emergent literacy to conventional reading. This study seeks to investigate the status of emergent literacy of preschool children in one county in the Republic of Liberia. The aim of this study is to investigate how preschool children gain emergent literacy experiences in preschool classrooms and the home environment. In order to achieve this aim, Parents, teachers, administrators and caregivers need to be knowledgeable of how to develop emergent literacy practices of preschool children through training programs.

The theoretical framework guiding the study is Marie Clay, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky constructivism theories. The proposed study which will be conducted in one county in the Republic of Liberia will use a mixed method approach. Within this context, a purposive sampling and simple random sampling method will be used. The participants of the study will be parents and teachers from the four districts within the county. Data from the study will be gathered through questionnaire, semi-structure interview, focus group discussions and observation. Data gathered will be analyzed through SPSS (v.22) for quantitative and Excel, while qualitative data from interview, focus group discussion and observation will be analyzed through C-at lerti 75 in the form of themes and categories.

Based on the findings from the study, relevant recommendations will be made as to what decisions to take in addressing the challenges of the status of emergent literacy practices of preschool children in the classrooms and home environment.

**Keywords** Emergent literacy; classroom environment; young children; parents; teachers

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
EFA	Education for All
ECE	Early Childhood Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
GOL	Government of Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
HLE	Home Literacy Environment
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education
IEPs	Individualized Education Plan
DLLs	Dual Language Learners
CELL	Centre for Early Literacy Learning
ELA	English Language Assessment
L1	Language-1
L2	Language-2
DR	Dialogic Reading
DR	Dialogic Reading
PR	Print Reference
PWPA	Preschool Word and Print Awareness
SES	Socio-Economic Status
DHH	Death and Hard of Hearing
BEPTA	Better Ear-Pure Tone Average
db	decibels
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CEO	County Education Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
ESP	Early Speech Perception
IRA	International Reading Association
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children

**APPROVAL PAGE**

This proposal has been examined and approved as meeting the partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master's Degree in Primary Education (Early Childhood Education)

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PROF. K. BOSE  
(SUPERVISOR)

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DATE

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(HEAD OF DEPARTMENT)

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DATE



## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my beloved children Victoria, Emmanuel, Violet, Stella, and Godwin. I also dedicate this work to my grandchildren Prosper, Delvin, Maroline, Precious, Edwina, Yasah, Docas, Frances and to Mr and Mrs Darlingston T. Mensah of the USA.

### **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY**

The proposal was prepared at the University of Botswana. The study is an original work by the undersigned except where references were made to materials adopted from others.

JEBBEH N. GRAY

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Background of the study**

Emergent Literacy involves the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that young children practice before they start to read and write (Slavin, 2006). In other words, it is the fundamental building block for learning to read and write. Emergent literacy skills begin to develop in early infancy and Early Childhood through participation with parents, teachers, child caregivers, and the community, in meaningful activities (Gillen & Hall, 2003). It is a wide range of skills that involve complex set of attitudes, expectations, feelings, and behaviours that are connected to written languages. Even though emergent literacy is taught in schools, it begins to develop in the home environment and community (Bennett, Weigel, & Martin, 2002). Bennett et al., (2002) revealed that young children can learn to read and write at their young ages long before they begin school. Children with strong literacy activities in their early years experience better academic outcomes and reading success later on. Therefore, it seems evident that getting young children involved in rich oral language and emergent literacy experiences at home, the community, and in the preschool environment create great opportunity for children to learn to read and write.

Juel (2006) indicated that children, who read early, tend to play a more leading role in the academic career that has lifelong learning. Literacy achievement in young children is one of the most important developmental milestones and is the key to educational success. Juel (2006) further contend that literacy impacts a wide range of social, physical, mental health and economic outcomes. Literacy of young children no doubt takes place both at home and in pre-school settings.

Preschools and home settings thus, should have a conducive environment and provides children with many opportunities to engage in literacy activities. In order for preschools and homes to promote the continuity of emergent literacy practices, it should be an environment that affords children opportunities to engage in purposeful emergent literacy activities which are acknowledged as valid emergent literacy behaviours (Bennett, et al., 2002). For most at-risk

children, enriched preschool environments can be converting issues between success and failure later on in life. Poor readers often drop behind their peers and may never catch up with them, and may likely remain poor reader at the end of first grade (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004).

One of the important settings for acquiring children's emergent literacy experiences is the home environment. The reason is that parents are the child's first educators. They have the greatest influence in shaping young children's attitude, values, behaviours, habits and skills, and can create a literate environment that will develop interest, and support children's effort to become readers and writers (Zeece, 2005). Heath (2001) contends that emergent literacy is rooted deeply in the culture of the family and community, and the home plays an important role in the lives of children that support different kinds and level of literacy. Conventionally, children do not start to read and write until first grade. Yet, they start to show signs of understanding the relationships between speech and print which indicate the emergence of literacy. These early signs include: an interest in looking at pictures, listening to stories, scribbling with crayons, and playing with sounds through rhyme. Such experiences are largely dependent upon the interactions with teachers, caregivers, parents and the home literacy environment.

Bowman, Donovan, and Burns (2000) revealed that reading to a child can widen a child's brain, develop language skills, and help build critical thinking skills. Therefore, when a parent reads to a child, the child begins to accept book like a parent of his life. The book becomes a resource for the child's pleasure and hobby. It was revealed by Tompkins (2011) that emergent literacy is a social achievement; the people that surround young children served as models in the literacy processes. Evans, Shaw, and Bell (2000) indicated that young children who are successful readers often come from home environment that involved parent and children openly communicating, children observed parent reading daily with available reading materials, and every family members valuing reading.

A report from Australia Research Alliance for Children of Youth (2009) indicated that children who experience poor emergent literacy practices are exceedingly associated with family from low socioeconomically or educationally disadvantaged homes. It is the reason for long lasting poverty rate and associated with several disadvantages in life later on, such as, lower income and decreased efficiency, high rates of unemployment and welfare dependency, substance abuse and teenage parenting (ARACY). Children who are not exposed to literacy

experiences will fall further behind in later reading, as they cannot absorb printed information, follow written instructions, or communicate well in writing. These challenges are rooted in poor reading skills that lead to unsatisfactory results and may regularly drop-out from the educational system. Therefore, there is a need to focus on developing strong emergent literacy in young children before they begin formal reading and writing (Newman & Dickinson, 2001). Having established the importance of emergent literacy in the development of a child, this study proposes to investigate its status in preschools in one county in Liberia. The following section presents the background of the subject matter.

In 2009 in Dakar, the Education for All (EFA) adopted in Jomtien called on nations around the world to generate an environment for learning, to give every child an equal and equitable opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills which will prepare them for lifelong learning and potential in life. With this opportunity, young children will have the ability to fully participate in society. Liberia being a part of the signatory to the declaration of the EFA, decided to take the initiative to establish quality education for all its citizens. In effect, Liberia developed a National Action Plan with the six goals of the EFA framework (Ministry of Education, 2004). Liberia decided to implement one of the six goals of the EFA which was to develop and improve Early Childhood Education (ECE) in all parts of Liberia, and to provide free primary education and compulsory for all Liberian citizens. The government decided to make ECE programs accessible to all children of Liberia by taking the initiative to implement ECE centres in the Republic of Liberia. In order for the implementation of ECE centres, the government decided to carry out a nationwide awareness to inform parents and stakeholders and the community about the significance of ECE and development.

In 2010, the government of Liberia began to create ECE centres in most of the rural communities around the country. In addition, the Ministry of Education (MOE) established the Department of Early Childhood Programs in some centres around the country (Ministry of Education, 2010). With the implementation taken by the government to establish ECE centres, it showed that the ECE programs are in readiness to provide every child with education. Notwithstanding, all efforts made by the government, it seems as though there are still challenges along the way which range from inadequate to insufficient ECE centres.

The Early Childhood program in Liberia faces many challenges. These challenges range from poor quality and lack of infrastructural standards to absence of motivated educational staff. In addition, most preschools buildings around the country are limited to serve young children of Liberia. The limited classrooms are over- populated with young children not assessing the key services in their early years. In order to address these challenges, the government, in 2011, set up the Bureau for early childhood education. One of the major goals of the Bureau is to decrease the low reading abilities of the young children of Liberia through reading programs, and to improve the early childhood educational system through quality ECE centres and trained teachers (Ministry of Education, 2010). The plan indicated that early childhood programs are intended to help every child learn to read and write and to develop all literacy skills up to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade.

Also in April 2012, the government of Liberia (GOL) launched the national inter-sectorial policy on early childhood education. Despite the achievement made by the government, the Bureau of ECE has not improved the academic system. It still remains weak with poor quality which has led many young children lacking the necessary services to reach their potential in life. These inadequate and insufficient centres stand as obstacles in achieving the goals of ECE by 2015 (Ministry of Education 2010). One concern expressed by early childhood parents and educators is the implementation of quality ECE programs with trained and qualified teachers in the ECE settings.

In 2012, an organization called System Approach to Better Education Results reports that despite all efforts made by the government to improve and create ECE centres, the programs still remains weak, most coverage areas and quality in ECE centres are of low standard. Reporting on the quality of ECE centres and teachers in Liberia, Ken (2009) indicated that Liberia's readiness for the implementation of ECE programs is yet to develop. There is a lack of infrastructural development and conducive classroom environment. The study revealed that the ECE programs in Liberia have been established in the educational laws; however, many of these centres are provided by private citizens with coverage in a limited number of districts in the country. With the limited number of ECE centres provided by the government, it cannot accommodate the growing population of young children within the country. As ECE is formally part of the educational system, and included in the educational laws, it should be committed to ensuring that

infrastructures and classrooms are made available for all children in Liberia to receive quality education, and that ECE centres must be decentralized.

With this kind of situation, it can certainly be realized that it would hinder young children's development in general, and their literacy development in specific. The Ministry of Education called on its partners including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), collaborated and decided to develop strategies to improve reading among young children in the lower primary schools of Liberia. The partnership established training and provided reading materials for teachers and students, and involved parents to help work with their children to develop a culture of reading in the schools and home environment. It is found that despite all efforts, the school system still needs improvement. There are problems of lower primary children who cannot read a single line of sentence with comprehension. Although preschools are regarded as good places where children can be given basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing, oral language, and other subject areas, there are some problems evident which is, children in the lower primary grades are not reading up to standard. This is so because these programs need to provide age appropriate materials that will improve young children's knowledge and skills that will prepare them for higher education.

One of the problems of young children's emergent literacy skills in Liberia can be traced back to children's home environment where their parents cannot speak English Language (English for short) fluently or do not speak it at all. When these children, for the first time, enter formal school environments where English is the medium of instruction, they are exposed to learning English and expected to comprehend and do all other lessons in English. Some of these children are from homes where English is not used in regular conversations at all. Such children need variety of classroom materials with teachers who have the relevant training and experiences of literacy training that will contribute to the development of emergent literacy. This gives credence to Crouch and Korda, (2008) who revealed that ECE teachers and caregivers that prepared young children for conventional reading are untrained, neither do they have ECE specialist to train these teachers. Regrettably, one of the former Ministers of Education in Liberia, Dr. Kandakai indicated that teachers who teach reading at the early childhood levels in Liberia could not read themselves; their levels of reading ability as a classroom teacher is as low as 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade students. At the same time, assessment report on Early Grade Reading in Liberia



indicated that many preschools and lower primary teachers are ill-equipped to teach reading which the foundation for learning is. Statistics from early grade reading assessment in Liberia 2008 revealed that 34% of Liberian students who were tested at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade could not read a single word (Crouch & Korda, 2008).

Ken (2009) noted that there is lack of specific curriculum design for teachers. Therefore, teacher's knowledge and practices in the ECE classrooms depend on what they know as teachers but are not trained in the area of ECE to provide the requisite instruction. Ken (2009) also noted that parents and administrators called for teachers to use developmentally appropriate curriculum. Parents also requested for trained ECE teachers to provide appropriate classroom environment and materials to enhance their children's emergent literacy. It is therefore the duty of a preschool teacher, caregiver, and parents in the homes to ensure that young children's literacy experiences are developed through play activities, by engaging them in variety of print rich environment with age appropriate material and intervention to enhance their learning (Wolfe & Nevills, 2004). For children who are just entering their educational journey, deficiencies such as poor reading, writing, and lack of oral language skills, if not attended to at this early stage, may lead to serious disadvantage for future learning.

Teachers who lack ECE training may find themselves not providing young children with requisite instruction. These untrained teachers may not prepare them to have lifelong learning and may not have the knowledge and skills of developing children's cognitive and social development. As a result, children are going to be at risk for learning difficulty. The lack of specific curriculum designed by ECE programs may lead to lack of specific instructional plan which young children may not experience learning outcomes. The curriculum should be specific and detailed so that teachers can provide learning and instructional strategies that meet the needs of every child. Without the curriculum design, the role of a teacher in the ECE classroom, in which teaching and learning take place, may not provide what and how teachers should facilitate learning in the classroom, hence affecting the children's learning. The home environment with an uneducated parent or adult has a great impact on children's emergent literacy experiences. It is possible that parents with uneducated background may not stimulate their child or get him or her involved in literacy activities. Parents may not have the literacy materials available at home to engage children in developing the love of pre-reading and pre-writing. Some of the low

reading ability of young children may be the result of low socioeconomic background from homes, where parent cannot afford to purchase literacy materials or practice literacy activities.

Report from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) & International Reading Association (IRA) (1998) stated that teachers are the foundation builders of children's literacy development. They need to take the lead in initiating the roles of creating a classroom environment that will prepare children for further reading and writing comprehension as early as possible. It is against this background that this study sets to investigate the status of emergent literacy in preschool children of one county in the Republic of Liberia. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted to identify the status of emergent literacy experiences of preschool children in that county. The next section of the current study presents the statement of the problem. The articulated problem is linked to the research objectives.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Emergent literacy development in preschool is an important building block in developing young children's early reading and writing development for Elementary schools (Slavin, 2006). Although the government of Liberia has taken initiatives to improve ECE centres in the country, there are still problems along the way. Teachers who teach in ECE classroom settings find themselves with less knowledge and less time to plan and implement literacy strategies. Since 2009, research was conducted in ECE in Liberia to investigate the quality of ECE centres along with classroom instructions, it is not known as to what extent emergent literacy is appreciated or supported in ECE in the county in Liberia. It is imperative that preschool programs strive to build literacy classroom environment as well as provide professional development training for their teachers.

At the same time, parents need to be knowledgeable of the practices of emergent literacy in their homes, which will put them in the position of providing children with age appropriate literacy materials to increase children's exposure to pre-reading and writing. Children who are from homes where English language is never spoken on a daily basis, or practicing other home activities which is not in English language, when these children enter schools for the first time, where all literacy instructions are practiced in English, these children who do not understand the

English language begin to be at-risk for reading difficulty. If these ECE teachers are not prepared to develop young children in the area of emergent literacy through recognition of letters and their associated sounds, rhymes, developing print awareness, and pre-writing skills and oral language in a timely manner, the reading abilities of early childhood in Liberia would continue to decline. This would lead children of Liberia to perform poorly in other subject areas, because reading is a cross cutting skill in the curriculum. This in turn will go beyond the lower and upper elementary, junior, and senior high schools, up to university levels, which would perform poorly and would go beyond the labour market. Liberia will have to import human resource instead of using her own citizens for national development.

The situation in Liberia is that young children in the ECE settings need adequate preparation in emergent literacy activities that will prepare them for conventional reading which will prevent reading difficulties at the primary levels. It is thus necessary to investigate the status of emergent literacy of ECE programs in one county, of the Republic of Liberia, especially when there has been no investigation carried out in this area. There is, therefore a need to see the kind of emergent literacy activities that is carried out in the preschool programs with the involvement of parents who are the first teacher to develop young children's emergent literacy skills. This should be seen along with the type of curriculum that is being taught, or the way the classroom environment is set up, including the materials that are provided for the children, or the interactions between the teachers, students, and the parents. It is well known that emergent literacy rich environment with more knowledgeable teachers can influence preschool children's emergent literacy skills (Piastra, Connor, Fishman, & Morrison, 2009). There is no study that is known to the researcher which has addressed the status of emergent literacy in Liberia. This demonstrates a gap in empirical literature which the proposed study intends to fill.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the status of emergent literacy in young children in preschool programs in one county in the Republic of Liberia. It intends to find out the various kinds of emergent literacy practices and supports given to children by parents in the home environment. This study also intends to investigate the classroom literacy environment and literacy centres that young children are involved to develop their emergent literacy skills, and the arrangements of the literacy centre in terms of variety of books, print materials, writing and art

centres, and the physical outlook of the classroom setting, and to also investigate teaching strategies and classroom intervention provided to children in the classrooms.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) To investigate emergent literacy practices in the home environment, and the extent to which parents provide activities to support children's emergent literacy
- 2) To investigate the extent to which classroom environment supports emergent literacy skills in preschool children.
- 3) To identify classroom teaching strategies and intervention used by teachers for enhancing emergent literacy.

### **1.4 Hypothesis of the study**

This study will be guided by two hypotheses:

- Early Childhood emergent literacy activities are experienced by children in the home environment.
- Various uses of emergent literacy materials and teaching strategies are provided by ECE teachers in the classroom.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

In the field of Early Childhood Education, there is an increasing attention which is focused on children's readiness to read and write. This study is important because it focuses on one critical area of education which is the status of emergent literacy of preschool children in one county, Republic of Liberia. While a lot of research has been done on emergent literacy in the world, very little has been done on ECE programs. Thus, this study is significant in that it will provide valuable data on early childhood teacher's knowledge about emergent literacy, and the extent to which classroom practices support emergent literacy skills in young children. A study of this kind will be useful to policy maker such as, the Ministry of Education, preschool curriculum developers, parents, stakeholders, and the community. In this way, it will provide

data on which future curricula for early childhood educators will be based, and the kind of ECE training that will be determined. In addition, the study will contribute to the knowledge base in early childhood scholarship, thereby serving as a reference point for future studies.

### **1.6 Limitation of the study**

The number of schools and teachers selected to participate in the study could limit the generalization of the results. Finance and time limited the researcher from embarking on a more effective study.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the study**

Delimitation in social science research refers to those descriptions that limit the scope of the study (Wiersma, 2000). Delimitations are borders that researchers enforce prior to the beginning of the study to narrow the range of the study. They limit the study to a geographical location and population size (Simon, 2011). In the researcher's opinion, delimitation of a study serves as a guide to the research. It allows the researcher to focus on a specific setting, population, and phenomenon under study. The study will be limited due to the financial position of the researcher to do the research in a more convenient way of selecting a representative sample. Therefore, the study will be carried out on a small scale and hence results may not be generalized to other preschools in other counties.

### **1.8 Definition of terms**

**Emergent Literacy development**-refers to the activities that young children are involved in; activities that are related to oral language, reading and writing.

**Classroom emergent literacy environment**-is the period of time in a particular place during the school day when children are allowed to choose their interest area in which they would like to carry on their activities by looking at various literacy books, pretend reading and writing.

**Literacy materials**-refer to the materials: crayons, pencils, pictures, books that children used to increase and develop reading and writing skills.

**Teacher's mediation**-is the manner in which teacher guides or supports children in performing a particular skill or behaviour in the literacy environment.

**Alphabet letter knowledge**-is when the child is able to identify letters and understand that letters of the alphabet are arranged in categories that can be named individually.

**Print awareness**-is when the child has knowledge of the forms and functions of written language, and understands the importance of print concepts and environmental prints.

**Phonological awareness**-is when the child has the ability to consciously be aware of letter sound and can manipulate sounds and have access to sound structure of language, and an awareness of sound in spoken and written words.

**Storybook Reading**-is when parents or teachers read to the child or children and teach them how to handle book, point to words while reading, and encourage them to ask questions.

**Story Telling**-is where parent or teacher tells children stories by using facial expression or change their voice while telling the story, and asked children to retell the same story and say what he/she learned from the story.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter provided introduction and background information of the study within the context of the study. In this chapter, it discusses the goals of the EFA framework, background information on early childhood programs in Liberia. Additionally, this chapter presents the research objectives guiding the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, limitation and delimitation of the study, and definition of terms are all presented in this chapter. Having gone through the background context, it is appropriate to now look at the conceptual and theoretical framework guiding the study and related literature review for the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Early childhood education worldwide has increasingly become a significant resource for supporting young children's emergent literacy development. The strong foundation for emergent literacy skills are key factors of school readiness. Therefore, administrators, teachers and parents of early childhood literacy environment must be prepared to promote and provide the requisite skills with strong knowledge base regarding the components of emergent literacy development as well as an understanding of how to foster emergent literacy activities in the classrooms. Research revealed that pre-reading and writing are the most important skills preschool children can develop before entering elementary school.

This chapter presents a review of other studies that are currently related to this study. A review of literature is guided to create a representation of what is known about other empirical studies in order to share with readers the results that are closely related to the study being conducted (Creswell, 2003). Literature review will give the researcher an opportunity to study and to identify limitations of which the researcher can fill in the gap from others studies that have been conducted in the same area of study. The study will analyze other studies and convey the findings that are of interest to the researcher. This study will also offer an extensive base for in-depth literature review and constructed instrument that will be drawn from the research objectives. Therefore, the research objectives are: to investigate emergent literacy practices in the home environment and to what extent parents provide activities that support children's emergent literacy, to investigate emergent literacy classroom environment and the extent to which it supports emergent literacy skills in preschool children, and to identify emergent literacy teaching strategies and intervention approaches used for at-risk preschool children. The empirical discussions in this chapter are therefore guided by the specific study subject. This chapter will first discuss the conceptual and theoretical framework that guide the study.

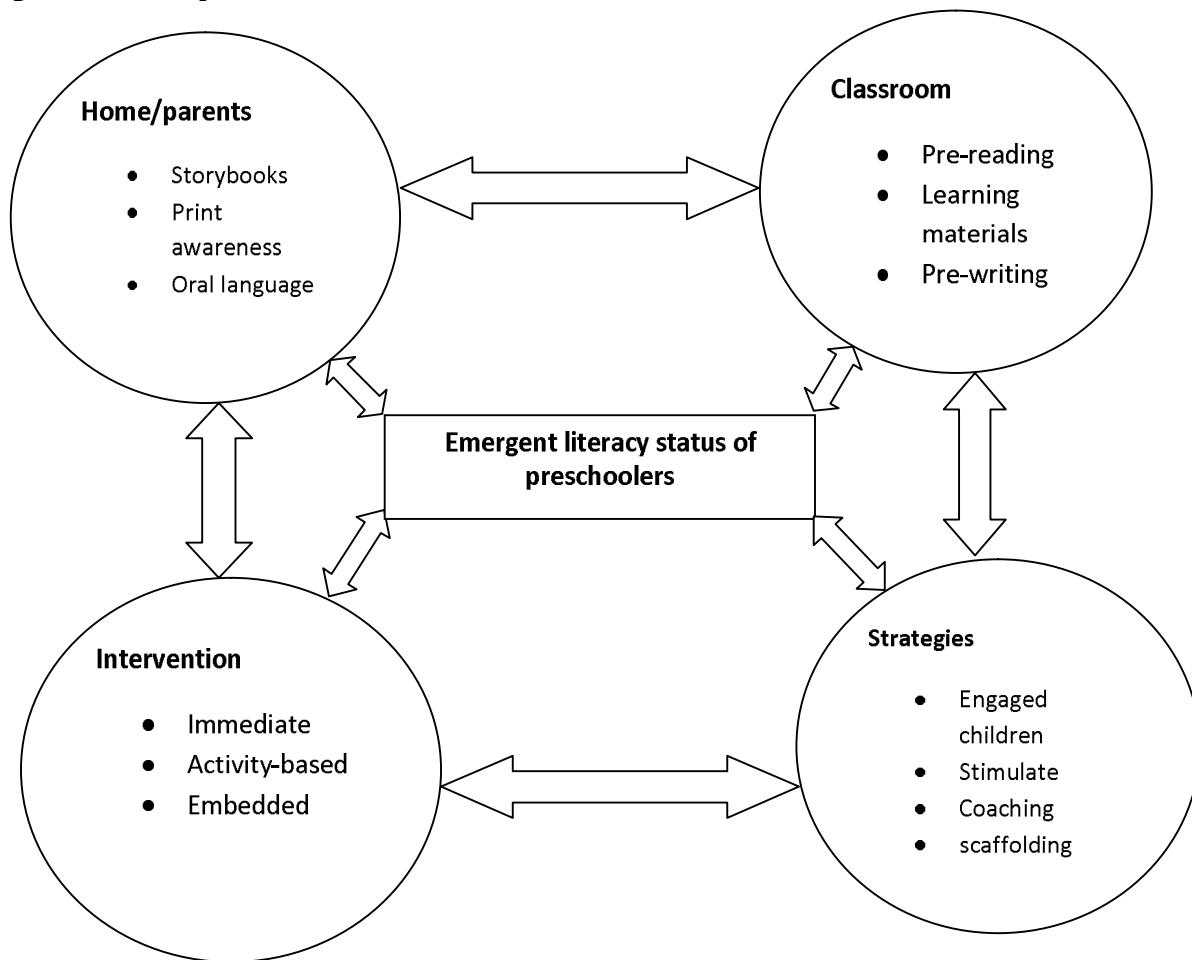
## **2.1 Conceptual Framework:**

Emergent literacy includes the skills, attitudes, and understanding that young children displayed before they start to read and write independently with comprehension. Emergent literacy is not taught through direct instruction, but as young children get deeply involved in the functions of prints, and be able to identify the pleasure and purpose of reading and writing through exposure and encouragement by parents and teachers and the environment, children will be encouraged to try the processes by themselves (Whitehurse, Grover,& Lonigan,2001).The extent to which young children acquired the necessary skills in pre-reading and writing will develop strong literacy skills that will prepare them for academic success in the future. Therefore, when a child learns to read and write at high level skill, he/she will have a lifelong process, because he/she will be able to recognize printed materials, understand the form and functions of environmental prints and know the left and right progression of a book. The child will also be able to write and comprehend clearly, with greater achievements in all subject areas.

The conceptual framework described below was selected because it shows the clear understanding of how young children begin pre-reading, writing and oral language. Emergent literacy is the manner in which young children learn about reading and writing through experiences with oral and written languages and variety of literacy materials available. It describes how young children develop emergent literacy through interaction with parents and teachers in the home and classroom environment. It begins as early as infancy up to kindergarten level. Children, who developed emergent literacy early, are found of being successful readers up to elementary Grades. This concept is effective because it is going to be used in the classrooms and home environment. This concept will guide ECE teachers who facilitate learning in the classroom environment. When teachers adopt this concept, children emergent literacy abilities will improve. And parent who also adopts this concept, their children will experience emergent literacy at home and in preschools.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



Source: Fletcher and Reese (2004).

Families and the environment play a more leading role in helping young children get ready for school. Children who are from homes with the basis of pre-reading and writing experiences, with interest and encouragement to learn, are better equipped for multifaceted task of learning to read than those who do not have the foundational skills (Waski & Hindman, 2006). Learning to read at an infant stage is one of the most critical skills a child will ever be able to master. By the age of six, most children should be able to demonstrate some levels of emergent literacy knowledge by recognizing prints from the environment, and understand the form and functions of prints develop phonological and oral language skills. At the same time, read-aloud

to children and storybook reading are considered to be the key areas of emergent literacy development (Justice & Ezell, 2000).

Early childhood classroom environment is an important environment for children's literacy learning. The classroom environment should exhibit language rich interactions with more knowledgeable parents and teachers that influence the development of young children's emergent literacy (Makin, 2003; Wolfersberger, Reutzel, Sudweeks & Fawson, 2004). Researchers have identified specific kind of the literacy environment that appeared to influence young children's literacy development, to include: the physical outlook of the environment, e.g. the classroom layout, access to literacy materials, variety of literacy resources, and literacy focused interaction between teachers, parents and children (Neuman & Roskos, 1992; Roskos, & Neuman, 2001). The literacy environment should be of quality, and that it should provide many opportunities to promote young children's language and emergent literacy development which is linked to later reading and writing success.

The classroom instructional strategies are most critical for the development of children's emergent literacy. When children are encouraged in conversation, it supports their vocabulary and language development and is often part of the natural rhyme in the classroom. Teachers need to be trained to understand that language and vocabulary is important and should implement strategies that help support children's use of language. Parents and teachers also reading to children is another strategy that is used to promote story-related comprehension and expressive vocabulary. When a child or group of children are asked to retell or rephrase a story, it encourages children to use their imagination and expand their ideas. Scaffolding strategies is to support children's development of emergent literacy skills within the read aloud context.

Teachers giving instructions to a large group of children may need to use a diverse range of scaffolding strategies that can usually be thought as low to high support strategies, which serves as support teachers will provide to the child to meet his or her needs in a given task (O'Connor, Syverson & Vadesy, 2005). Children who entered kindergarten with gaps in their foundational reading skills tend to remain behind their peers that are achieving in emergent literacy activates. Identifying children at-risk for reading difficulties and providing preventive intervention in a timely manner are the beginning of addressing the challenges of low literacy in young children (Justice, 2006).

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by the Constructivist's point of view. Their views embrace the fact that children can determine their own development through an active role within their environment (Hall, 1987). Constructivists believed that children can build-up their own knowledge by themselves through interacting with their parents, teachers and others in the environment (Brewer, 2001). In ECE classroom, they would argue that, free-choice circle time gives young children many opportunities to move around their environment and build up their own knowledge. Two well-known constructivist theorists were Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, as well as Marie Clay's concept of Emergent literacy. The first theory underpinning this study is the concept of emergent literacy by Marie Clay. During the 1980s and 1990s, the term emergent literacy became the leading theoretical point of view in the field of early reading and writing. According to this social constructivist view by Marie Clay (1966), she discovered that young children start learning about reading and writing from infancy by observing and interacting with parent, teachers, adults and other children as they use literacy in their daily activities. Such activities could be, when children are looking at newspaper, writing shopping lists, or in various literacy-focused routines such as, storybook reading and regular conversation with others. Based on these observations and activities through interaction with adults, they can construct their own concepts about the structure and functions of print and then try these in play (e.g., children can pretend to read a favorite book to a doll or recognize their favorite brand of chocolate at the supermarket). In Marie Clay's view, young children attempt at writing often progress from scribbles, to letter-like forms, and then to random streams of letters, and finally to increasingly complex systems of invented spelling (Sulzby, 1990). Ultimately, when children get involved with lots of opportunities to engage in meaningful literacy activities, with interaction among teachers, parents, adults, peers, and some incidental instruction, children become conventional readers and writers.

The second theory underpinning this study is Piaget and Vygotsky. Piaget was a Swiss epistemologist and biologist who studied young children's cognitive development. He believed that young children's knowledge is constructed through their interactions with parents, teachers and care-givers within their environment (Mooney, 2000). Piaget believed that cognitive development of young children passes through four stages: sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational. He believed that children progress and developed at

different times and levels as they rely more on multiple thinking patterns (Brewer, 2001). The four stages of Piaget's cognitive development, is said to be the process in which emergent literacy skills in young children increases more during these stages of development.

In Piaget's theory of cognitive development, as children get involved in a range of literacy activities, their knowledge and skills begin to increase as they begin to understand the importance of storybook reading and that words are made out of letters, and letter are associated with sounds. Piaget also described the process by which he believed children can build up their knowledge. He developed and described the learning process into three concepts: accommodation, assimilation, and equilibrium. In the view of Brewer (2001), accommodation is the process of creating a new group or schemata to put information. Assimilation is the process of arranging new information into pre-existing schemata; while Equilibrium is the results they received when information is organized either by accommodation or assimilation (Brewer, 2001). The experiences that young children gained through information, is said to be organized through these procedures. In relation to this theory, as children experience new concepts about print, either by accommodation or assimilation, it will take place as they display new information into new or existing schemata. Vygotsky studied Piaget's work. Unlike Piaget, he also believed that young children can build up their knowledge through their experiences with the environment and others. However, Vygotsky believed that children's knowledge is build within their social context. Their social context includes the morals and attitudes of the family, teachers and caregivers that are involved in the child's life (Mooney, 2000). Vygotsky believed that these morals and attitudes can influence the way in which children think and learn (Mooney, 2000). His belief is that, children experience emergent literacy within a social context where learning takes place, which is the home and classroom environment. He believed that the home environment has great effect on young children's literacy experiences as well as the classroom.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is one important concept in Vygotsky's theory. The ZPD are series of activities between what young children are able to do by themselves and what they can do successfully with some mediation from the parents or teachers (Brewer, 2001). Vygotsky believed that parents, teachers, and caregivers should serve as mediators for children within their ZPD by providing guidance while children are carrying on meaningful activities. He relates to this guidance as scaffolding. The act of scaffolding in emergent literacy activity is an

important factor that develops children's pre-reading, oral language and pre-writing skills. Emergent literacy point of view states that through natural experience, children learned about pre-reading and pre-writing by frequently looking at books and manipulating literacy materials in the homes and classroom environment. It is accepted that children also need adult scaffolding or support, in order for them to gain more knowledge on learning to read and write (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995).

Piaget and Vygotsky both considered play as a significant context for children to build up their literacy's knowledge and internalize concepts (Mooney, 2000). Piaget believed that when children play, it enables them to learn about the world around them. He also believed that adults must show care and be able to support children's inquiries. Parents and teachers should also provide them with meaningful hand-on activities. While Vygotsky shared his view about the role parent and teacher play in supporting children's play, he also emphasized that play should encourage daily conversations and interactions among parents, teachers and others with children (Mooney, 2000). Clay, Piaget and Vygotsky's view stated that various literacy activities can support children's emergent literacy development. The emergent literacy point of view also recognized the significance of children's play in the school and home environment. It is believed that children with various pre-reading and pre-writing materials can support their emergent literacy development (IRA & NAEYC, 1998). Piaget, Vygotsky and Clay's ideas are woven within the emergent literacy's view. The emergent literacy view confirm that young children learn about early reading and writing naturally through experiences with oral and written languages (Gunn, et al., 1995). This view is liable with the constructivist view that through interactions with the environment, children's knowledge can build up. Both the constructivist's view and the emergent literacy's view recognized meaningful experiences in the social context, with adult's mediation and play, influenced children's cognitive development.

In the case of Liberia, early childhood programs have to take young children's home environment and classroom settings into consideration when facilitating emergent literacy activities. Given the low literacy rate among parents of young children in Liberia, it is likely that many homes and even preschool environment do not have emergent literacy materials, as well as trained teachers with literacy knowledge. This means that not much emergent literacy activities are taken place in the homes and preschools environment. This social Constructivist Theory

seems relevant to this study, as it will guide parents, teachers, communities and the preschool programs in developing young children's emergent literacy experiences through providing lots of literacy materials and interactions with the children in the ECE centres and homes. This is particularly in terms of equipping preschool teachers in the area of emergent literacy with pedagogical content knowledge.

### **2.3 Studies conducted on emergent literacy of young children**

This section discusses the reviewed literature under several themes that derived from empirical findings. The findings from these studies are revealed under the following headings: emergent literacy and parental and home involvement, emergent literacy in classroom environment, emergent literacy teaching strategies, and intervention in preschool settings. The main objectives for the reviewed literature are to make use of the views and findings of other researchers as a dependable tool upon which a careful conclusion is drawn.

#### **2.3.1 Emergent Literacy Practices at Homes and Parental Involvement**

Children are not born as successful readers and writers. Their desire to read and write somewhere along the way was encouraged by parents, teachers, caregivers or an adult who showed love for books. Research has indicated that learning to read at an early age is fundamental to a child's future academic achievement. The child's first and most significant teacher is the parent in the home. Children are encouraged to learn about reading through encountering prints in their home environment as well as observing literacy activities in their homes. Parents can play an active role in order to help their child learn to read and write by modeling literate behavior. This literature review will describe anxious need for early literacy and research will prove that a child's reading success begins in the home.

Ntim (2013) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the connections between emergent literacy skills in the home at the kindergarten levels and later reading and phonological awareness at the primary one and two classes in Ghana. The author monitored the reading achievements of three hundred children between the ages of 3-4 years through the use of purposive sampling. Additionally, Ntim (2013) reported the monitored experiences in alphabetic

knowledge, word recognition, nursery rhymes, and the structure of words used in their homes. One hundred children were selected from the urban or educated background, one hundred from suburban or semi-educated homes, and one hundred from the rural or non-educated parents to form part of the study. A set of questionnaires was used to gather data from parents of the kindergarten children. Findings from the study showed that the low reading abilities of young children are associated with parents from less educated backgrounds. Results from the study also showed that parents from educational or socioeconomic backgrounds that provide care services in the homes have great effect on their children's early learning care services such as alphabet knowledge, word recognition, and nursery rhymes.

Liebeskind, Piotrowski, Lapierre, and Linebarger (2014) conducted a telephone survey of 531 parents with children between the ages of 8 to 36 months. Parents were asked concerning their household demographics, and the use of child media in the home environment, along with the interactions between parent-child relationships. The hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether homes environment have various media for children or parent-child interactions contribute to children's language and literacy outcomes. Findings from the study indicated that parent-child interactions play an important role in the development of young children oral language and literacy development, along with the amount of books and radios that are available in the home environment are connected to more frequent parent-child interactions.

Khurana and Rao (2008) conducted a study in India to examine emergent literacy experiences of preschool children at home and in school, and the quality of books available to them. The objective of the study survey was to evaluate emergent literacy experiences of Kannada speaking children studying in preschool of Mysore city. The author developed a questionnaire for parents to study emergent literacy experiences of their preschool children at home. The findings from the study indicated that most of the parents in the sample exposed their children to rich emergent literacy experiences such as availability of books at home, storybook reading, storytelling, print awareness, letter knowledge, and oral language skills. Also, and those parents in the sample preferred Kannada language for oral language activities like daily conversation, and storytelling, and used English for literacy related activities e.g. reading and writing which prepared their children for formal literacy acquisition in the English language.

Similarly, Carroll (2013) examined the impact of the home literacy environment and children's literacy interest on the children's emergent literacy skills. A question that guided the study was: Do child literacy interest or home literacy experiences differentially predict emergent literacy outcomes such as: oral language, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness? One hundred and forty-six low-income children and their families participated in the survey. Findings of the parental home literacy environment showed a significant association with child performance on literacy measures like child book-reading behaviours. The study used such statistical approaches as correlation and hierarchical regression to measure experiences, receptive vocabulary, and oral expression. Results from the correlation analysis showed that book experiences were significantly correlated with receptive vocabulary and oral expression; print awareness as expected. The foregoing studies are relevant for analysis in the currently proposed in that they all focused on children in preschool in the context of emergent literacy. Emergent literacy is also the subject matter of this study.

Easterbrook (2013) examined the relationship between home emergent literacy experiences and emergent writing in preschool children. The home literacy surveys were distributed to 231 families that participated in the study. The assessment battery instrument was used to measure oral language, cognition, emergent reading and writing of preschool children. Participants for the study included 367 preschool children who were recruited from 54 preschools and day-care programs located in Pennsylvania and Florida. Results from the three-year old children letter writing showed that parent involvement and encouragement is necessary for the child's emergent literacy development in the home.

Robert, Jergens, and Burchinal (2004) examined 4 measures of specific home literacy practices with their children: frequency of shared book reading, strategies of showing care while reading books to the child and the child enjoyment of reading. There were 72 African- American children and their mothers participated in the study. These mothers and primary guardians from low-income families with their children were monitored by the authors in the home literacy environment and development of their children. The children's mothers were interviewed concerning how often they read to their children, and how much their children enjoyed being read to. The 3 and 4 year-old children receptive and expressive language and vocabulary experiences were assessed by the authors annually. The findings of the study revealed that the



global measures of overall responsiveness and supports to the home environment were the strongest predictor of young children's language and early literacy skills.

It is very important when parents have higher levels of education because when they are educated, they will provide their children with literacy materials and encouragement which will lead their young children to excel in higher academic achievements, acquisition of greater cognitive skills, development of higher problem solving skills and also have a positive impact on their reading and writing abilities.

Biedinger (2011) evaluated the home environment and parent's education on the cognitive abilities in young children, along with the improvement for preschool children living in Germany. The study sampled 3-5 years old German children who were randomly selected from data of registration offices in 30 German cities and communities. Parents were interviewed at their homes. Results showed descriptively that the cognitive outcomes of the children were determined by the education of the caregiver and their home environment. The author summed that education and home environment have a huge impact on the cognitive outcomes. The findings revealed that highly educated parents may stimulate their children better than low educated parents. In addition, the home environment has a strong effect on their children's cognitive abilities. Thus, the author suggested that low educated parents should be requested to be active with their children, because joint activities stimulate the cognitive development of children. Therefore, parents of high educated background always have greater and higher success in providing their children with literacy activities that contribute to early success in school and life. The results from the above literature revealed that parental involvement in emergent literacy in young children at home with frequent shared book reading, print materials, regular conversations, impact a wide range of emergent literacy experiences in young children.

Carroll (2013) measured oral language, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness as positive impact on children's home literacy. Parental home literacy environment showed significant association with child performance on emergent literacy which includes: child book reading behaviours, and child early literacy behaviours. Findings also supported the role of frequent shared-book reading at home that facilitates children's development of their oral language. In the same line of study, Khurana and Rao (2008) found out that storytelling and the use of English language for literacy related activities which include: reading and writing that

prepared children for formal literacy acquisition in the English language. One efficient ways of enhancing literacy Khurana and Rao (2008) used a mixed method study approach. The rationale is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient by themselves to capture the trends and details of the situations such as, complex issues of parental early involvement in young children's literacy, which prepared them for later reading and writing in elementary grades and the future. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allowed for more complete analysis (Creswell & Clarke, 2007). This is a similar methodological approach which the current study has proposed.

Under the theme of emergent literacy practices at homes and parental involvement, the following key themes emerge: parental interactions play an important role in the development of young children oral language and literacy development. Parental home literacy environment showed a significant association with child performance on such literacy measures as child book-reading behaviours, and as evident in samples of children's letters, parental involvement and encouragement is necessary for the child's emergent literacy development. The next theme concentrates on the relationship between emergent literacy and the classroom environment.

### **2.3.2 Emergent Literacy and Classroom Environment**

The early childhood classroom setting is an important environment for young children's language and literacy learning. Literacy environment has an important influence on young children's reading, writing and oral language development prior to the beginning of formal literacy instruction in elementary school (Whitehurst, Grover, Lonigan, & Christopher, 2001). Even though children do not start to read and write until they are in first grade, they begin to demonstrate signs of thoughtful relationships between prints and speech, which shows the sign of emergent literacy in young children. The classroom environment with language-rich interaction, and more knowledgeable parents and teachers influence the development of preschooler's emergent literacy outcomes (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008). Teachers who practice Developmentally Appropriate Literacy activities in the classroom environment as considered by the quality of the physical and social environments, and the active learning activities facilitate greater gains in their preschool students' literacy development.

Zimbia (2011) study focused on the preschool classroom practices of teachers' knowledge that supports the persistence of emergent literacy in preschool children. A mixed method approach was used in the study. The study targeted 26 preschool teachers, 8 administrators, and 680 preschool children from two districts in Zambia. The four research objectives that guided this study were: to ascertain preschool teacher's knowledge of emergent literacy in children, to establish the extent to which the classroom environment supports the continuation of emergent literacy, to establish what literacy instruction program is in place and the extent to which it supports emergent literacy, and to find out what teaching and learning materials that were available in those preschools, and the extent to which they support emergent literacy. Results revealed that the classroom environment had low literacy support, low levels of teachers' knowledge which were due to lack of literacy resources, and that the classroom environment did not seem to have any clear philosophy regarding literacy instruction.

Similarly, Cunningham (2008) investigated the quality environment of emergent literacy in relation to students' reading and writing attitudes in the classroom environment. There were 201 students between the ages of 5 and 6 years old participated in the study. The girls were one hundred and four (51.7%) while 97 were boys (48.3%). Cunningham (2008) study found that those students that were tested as poor in their language and literacy activities had negative attitudes; where as those that participated in the classroom with rich literacy environment had the most positive behaviour. The study concluded that children's attitudes towards reading and writing have the ability to be more positive if they attended high quality preschool classrooms than if they attend classroom of less important quality. By way of suggestion, Cunningham (2008) posited that attention be paid to the physical environment and the curriculum in the early childhood years which will reduce the likelihood of school failure due to reading difficulties.

Guo, Justice, Kaderavek and McGinty (2012) examined the different and interactive effect of the physical and psychological literacy environment on children's growth in the preschool classroom settings. Their focus was on teacher-child interaction within the physical classroom environment structure which includes the quantity of books, the books and writing areas, and the quantity of writing materials that were available in the literacy classroom, with respect to the psychological literacy environment. A total of 209 children from the classroom were randomly selected to participate in the study. Teachers were also randomly assigned to a

treatment or a comparison condition. Results from the study showed that neither books nor writing materials were available in the classrooms that were significantly related to instructional support. The overall findings of the study suggested that the physical and psychological literacy environment of preschool classroom, considered as diverse entities.

Zhang, Hur, Diamond and Powell (2014) conducted a study to examine the classroom writing environment, children's name writing, and their knowledge they use to explore the relation between the writing materials which provided children with writing opportunities to develop early writing skills. The study included 31 Head Start classrooms from the urban and rural areas of a US Midwestern states. All the lead teachers and the children in the classroom participated in the semester long longitudinal randomized professional development study. Sixteen classroom and 159 children participated. All of the participating children were at least 4 years old. Results showed that 23% of the classroom had writing props in play area e.g. dramatic play and science areas. For teachers writing facilitation and teacher-child writing interaction, the results showed that it was a low frequency during the author's observation. One limitation of this study was that the authors did not include any report on the teacher-child interaction in the writing classroom, which could have made the study clearer about how teachers facilitated the children's writing activities in the preschool classroom.

Guo, Swayer, Justice and Kaderavek (2013) conducted a study to evaluate the impact of a book-reading intervention on the emergent literacy skills of preschool children in an inclusive Early Childhood Special Education classroom (ECSE). The authors' purpose was to distinguish the structure and instructional quality of the literacy environment in an inclusive ECSE classroom, and examined the contribution of teachers and the classroom level factors of the quality of the literacy classroom environment. The study included 54 teachers from the inclusive ECSE preschool classroom working within the Midwest states. The number of children were 439 (60% boys) from 54 classrooms were selected. The children age range was from 3 years 9 months to 5 years. 54% of the children had Individualized Education Plan (IEPs) and 46% received speech-language intervention services. Eight percent of the children were identified as developmental disabilities including, Autism (n=21), Cerebral Palsy (n=5), Down Syndrome (n=3), ADAH (n=2) and other diagnosed were, Stickler, Tourette Syndrome, Apraxia, and small percentage (49%) were children who were Dual Language Learners (DLLs). Results from the

study showed that the quality of the classroom literacy environment and instructional literacy environment were of low quality.

Zimbia (2010); Cunningham (2008) and Guo et al., (2012) results showed that emergent literacy classroom environment should contain various books and writing materials with teachers' knowledge and interaction in the classroom, which could affect children's literacy growth. The researcher noted that Zimbia (2010), Cunningham (2008), and Guo et al., (2012) confined their investigations to mixed studies, and followed an explicit path of research expectations, all tools of inquiry were selected to find in-depth solution of the phenomena or problems. However, the researcher can argue that their data could have generalized literacy growth in young children from their home environment which could have examined the comparative growth of children from home with variety of literacy materials and parent involvement, from home without literacy materials and parental involvement, in response to children's literacy experiences in the classrooms. Therefore, the researcher intends to investigate in her future research the link between the classroom environment and home literacy status of young children.

In a nutshell, a number of findings have emerged from the theme of emergent literacy and classroom environment. For example, studies under this theme show that classroom environment with language-rich interactions and knowledgeable teachers influence the development of preschooler's emergent literacy outcomes. However, empirical evidences show that the classroom environment did not seem to have any clear philosophy regarding literacy instructions. Another key finding is that neither books nor writing materials were available, and lack of these largely affected both physical and psychological literacy negatively. Nevertheless, one key finding which, of course, is a limitation is that those studies did not include results on teachers-child interaction in writing classrooms. The current study considers such data appropriate because it would make the study clearer about how teachers facilitated writing in the preschool classrooms. In the following section, empirical evidences on emergent literacy teaching strategies and intervention in pre-schools are discussed.

### **2.3.3 Emergent Literacy Strategies and Intervention in Preschool Children**

Emergent literacy development is a complex process. This is especially true prior to the beginning of formal reading and writing instruction. The knowledge and skills that young children acquired as precursor to reading and writing are often referred to as emergent literacy. Young children who participate in literacy activities are viewed particularly as an important context for facilitating their development of key emergent literacy skills. Given the fact that many young children participate today in preschool programs, pre-reading and writing should be a regular event in the classroom settings. It is important for preschool teachers to use various strategies and (or) scaffolds to support children's development of emergent literacy within the pre-reading and writing classroom settings. Research findings indicate that young children benefit from thorough early literacy instruction, by using different intervention programs based on emergent literacy activities and constructivist theory.

Yu and Pine (2006) conducted a study in China to enhance teachers' early literacy strategies in Chinese preschools. The study was conducted through action research with group inquiry. Two hundred ninety-seven children age range from 3 to 5 years old from three schools participated, along with ten teachers introducing and assessing early literacy skills in their classrooms. The key elements of the strategies were to engage young children actively in interesting, meaningful and functional written languages, to provide print-rich physical environment that appeared to stimulate children to explore the functions and meaning of prints, and relationships between written languages and their activities. The findings from this study indicated that the four types of strategies that the teachers implemented were demonstrated to be effective for the development of early literacy for the children. The findings suggested that the instructional strategies that were most significant for the development of emergent literacy for western children, could also lead to effective development of Chinese children in the early literacy classrooms.

Hsieh, Hemmeter, McCollum, and Ostrosky (2009) conducted a study to assess the effect of classroom coaching on early childhood teachers' use of emergent literacy teaching strategies. The participants were five early childhood teachers. The teaching strategies were organized into three clusters included, oral-language and comprehension of text, phonological awareness, alphabetic principles, print concepts and written knowledge. An experimental design

was used for the study. The results from the coaching strategies indicated that there was an increase in each teacher's use of the three clusters of strategies. Results also indicated that coaching was effective in prioritizing each teacher use of emergent literacy teaching strategies.

Pentimonti and Justice's (2010) goal was to characterize teachers' frequent use of six scaffolding strategies in preschools. Generalizing, reasoning, predicting, co-participating, reducing choices and eliciting in a whole group read aloud section. The authors viewed their study as important means for differentiating instruction in large and small group activities. Participants were five female teachers with 18 children from preschool classrooms. The average age of the children that participated were 4 years 10 months old. Each section involved the teacher reading a storybook to students in a whole group setting. The results showed that majority of strategies used by teachers were low in support scaffolding strategies. Teachers engaged very little in use of high support scaffolding strategies for every reading aloud section.

Moody, Skibbe, Parker, and Jones (2014) examined the extent to which teachers provided print referencing strategies through the use of electronic storybook (e-book) reading that had greater literacy skills on students, than students who only had access to traditional storybook reading during reading sessions. The authors examined letter knowledge, early decoding, and print concepts in twenty children at the age of four years old, who were living in poverty. Two groups were selected for the study, the control condition group had ten children that completed the 15 minutes day of the traditional storybook reading instruction using a direct instruction curriculum, while children in the intervention group completed an e-book reading paired with an adult directed print referencing strategies. Children were asked to name each of the twenty-six lower and upper case letters of the alphabet that was given in random order on a single printed sheet. The print concept skills were measured by the Preschool Word and Print Awareness (PWPA). The finding from the study indicated that the pairing of traditional instructional methods such as print referencing strategies with technology tools may offer benefits to children who are developing print awareness concepts. One limitation of this study is that, the participants were very small for the study, taking into consideration the use of technology as a new concept in preschools, and therefore, this study should have generalized to a larger population.

Study by Dunst, Simkus, and Hamby (2012) conducted a meta-analysis report in the Centre for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) review. The purpose of the report was to investigate the effectiveness of children's story retelling on the children's story-related comprehension and expressive vocabulary. The studies were conducted to search for infant, infancy toddler, preschool and kindergarten children using retelling, story retell, pretend reading, and retold story, in both controlled-vocabulary and natural-language. These authors identified the characteristics and conditions under which children's story retelling had the most effect on their study outcomes, most especially comprehension and expressive vocabulary. Children that participated in the study were 687 aged above 57 months. They were divided into equal male and female groups. Four of the sample was consisted to be children at risk for poor outcomes, and one sample of the children was considered to be children with intellectual disabilities. Children in the sample were engaged in retelling stories between one to four times or more, the storybook reading lasted between 15 and 45 minutes, while the intervention lasted from one to thirty-six weeks. The outcomes that were used to evaluate the effects of the children's story retelling were comprehension, expressive vocabulary, receptive language and different aspects of early literacy development (phonological awareness and print awareness). Results revealed in the CELL review showed that children's story retelling was an effective literacy and language development strategies. The reason for different findings from the emergent literacy classroom strategies were based on the measures of the various authors.

In the study of Yu and Pine (2006), Hsieh et al., (2009) and Pentimonti and Justice (2010) their studies were related to the various strategies applied by teachers in the preschool environment. Yu and Pine (2006) measured four types of strategies that teachers exhibited in the literacy classrooms. While Hsieh et al., (2009) study measured three clusters of coaching strategies, oral language and comprehension of text, phonological awareness and alphabetic principles, print concepts and written language. These authors found that coaching was effective for prioritizing each teacher use of emergent literacy teaching strategies. While Pentimonti and Justice's (2010) study suggested that six strategies in the literacy settings were found to be important for differentiating instruction for small and large groups. The researcher noted that studies conducted by Yu and Pine (2006), Hsieh et al., (2009), Pentimonti and Justice (2009), did not follow an explicit research expectation as a tool of inquiry to find in-depth solution of the phenomena. However, the current proposed study is of the opinion that these authors confined



their investigation to qualitative approach, which according to Chilisa and Preece (2005) are likely to provide the reader with knowledge that is subjective, because it is socially constructed and mind dependent.

In order to make up with the deficiency of providing subjective knowledge, this study proposed a mixed method approach. Using a mixed method design, the rationale for combining both quantitative and qualitative approach is that the quantitative data results provide a general picture of the research problem, that is, what internal and external factors contribute to and or hinder teachers strategies in the classroom, while qualitative data and its analysis will refine and explain these statistical results by exploring the participants' view in more depth (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Bailet, Rapper, Murphy, Piasta, and Greeley (2011) conducted a study, and examined the effectiveness of emergent literacy intervention for preschool children at risk for reading failure. The children were 266 in 72 child care and preschool sites in year 2 of the study along with 374 at 102 sites in year 3 participated. The overall objective of the study was to identify 4 and 5 year old kindergarten children who had been proven to have delays in acquiring emergent literacy skills, and should be provided with experimental educational intervention in order to better prepare them for formal reading instruction in elementary school. In order to make up with the deficiency of providing subjective knowledge, this study proposed a mixed method approach. Results from Bailet et al (2011) supported the three hypotheses in year 1, 2, and 3 which noted that at-risk children showed significant gains in emergent literacy skills following their participation in 9 weeks intervention. The result from year 1 of the study showed significant gains in emergent literacy in response to experimental intervention. In the immediate intervention group, there was a statistically significant gain that was obtained in the midyear as compared to the delayed intervention group.

Botts, Losardo, Tillery and Werts (2012) focused their study on the effectiveness of two different interventions approaches, activity-based intervention and embedded direct instruction on the acquisition, generalization, and maintenance of phonological awareness, which is the key area of emergent literacy by preschool children with language delays. In the activity-base intervention, the interventionist focused their attention on the child's interest, actions, and motivations during routine or planned activities like, book reading to elicit alliteration, while the

embedded direct instruction activities, the interventionist teaching sequence was directed by drawing the child's attention and presenting a scripted verbal prompts for example, what word do these sounds make when you put them together (*c...at*)? Five males were diagnosed with mild to moderate language impairment ranging in age from 4 years 2 months to 5 years 7 months participated in the study. Study revealed that none of the five children met the standard of 100% response accuracy for the three sessions. The result of the study indicated that the use of the highly structured embedded direct instruction approaches resulted in more effective and efficient acquisition of phonological awareness, than the use of the activity-based intervention. In order to avoid this limitation, the current study proposes to involve a large number of participants that will be purposively selected from a population.

Botts et al., (2012) study is similar to Olivier (2010) in that both studies applied emergent literacy in language learning context. Olivier (2010) conducted a study in South Africa to find out emergent literacy skills of English language learners (ELLs) in kindergarten within four months prior to entering grade one. A quasi-experimental design, comparing four groups was used in the study. The participants were 72 children that were assessed before intervention on the performance of eight different emergent literacy sub-tests. Experimental group and two control groups were selected for the study. The subtest of the English Language Assessment (E LA) was emergent literacy writing and spelling and environmental print. The results were analyzed by mixed methods. Four primary schools in the Eden and central Karoo District in South Africa were selected for the study. Participants were randomly selected from class list and assigned to one of the four classes. Results presented from the study on the performance of the four intervention groups revealed that, there was no significance difference found in the main score on the subtest namely, sound in words, rhymes, letter recognition, and concepts of prints. This indicated that Language-one learners (L1) did not perform significantly better than their Language two (L2) peers in the emergent literacy sub-test: word definition, narrative ability.

Hong (2012) conducted a study to investigate children's language and early literacy outcomes from pre to post intervention and from pre to follow-up. The study involved parent and their developing children age ranging from five and six years from the preparatory year one of school in the suburban areas in Queensland. The research design was described as a pragmatic randomized control trial with pre and post intervention measurement. The follow-up assessment

was conducted three months later when the children commence year one in school. In each year, the children were randomized into three groups: dialogic reading with the children print referencing group, dialogic reading, and a control group. The children's language and literacy competencies were measured at pre assessment, post assessment, and follow-up. The findings from this study revealed that shared book reading intervention have some beneficial effects on the children's language and literacy skills that are related to expressive vocabulary, rhyme and concepts about prints.

Lederberg, Miller, Easterbrook and Connor (2014) study focused on the development of early literacy intervention for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH). Twenty-five DHH children participated in a long year foundation intervention. Teachers implemented foundations for literacy with 25 children in two schools. One school used only spoken language and the other used sign without language. The comparison group was thirty-three DHH children who matched on key characteristic with intervention children, but attended school that did not implement foundation for literacy. The authors examined the DHH children in phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and vocabulary. Children were between the chronological ages of 3 years and 8 months and 5 years eleven months. There was no child diagnosed of severe disability or teachers suspected any with severe disabilities such as, autism or severe intellectual disabilities, along with unaided hearing loss with a Better Ear-Pure Tone Average (BEPTA) of 50dB or greater. The authors selected fifty decibels or greater as a criterion because children with a moderate hearing loss have weaker speech perception and language abilities than those with less severe loss. The authors recruited DHH children from seven schools that had early childhood programs for children with hearing loss. Results showed that some struggling readers had difficulty with phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge whereas; others had difficulty with vocabulary. As for DHH children, they had difficulties with foundation literacy skills.

In Lonigan, Purpura, Wilson, Walker and Menchetti (2012) study, there is an evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions design to promote the development of emergent literacy skills with a sample of preschool children who were at high risk for later problem in reading. Three hundred and sixty-five children age range from 3 and 4 years completed some of the assessments. Children were randomly assessed within their school to one of the five intervention groups. The intervention group consisted of dialogic reading plus phonological awareness

training, dialogic reading plus letter knowledge training, dialogic reading plus the combination of phonological awareness and letter knowledge, standardized shared reading plus the combination of phonological awareness and letter knowledge, and the control group that received only an ongoing classroom curricula.

Results showed that children skills increased substantially by the end of the school year. So far, the current study has interrogated literature in the sub-categories of: doing things that is interestingly evident in most studies is emergent literacy is applicable in early language acquisition level. However, further interrogation of the linguistic cognition and behaviours falls outside the scope of this study. Having interrogated studies in the area of emergent literacy strategies and intervention in preschool children, the following key findings are articulated: strategies that teachers implemented were demonstrated to be effective for the development of early literacy for the children. This suggested that instructional strategies were most significant for the development of emergent literacy at preschool stage. In addition, coaching strategies were effective in prioritizing teachers' use of emergent literacy strategies. Furthermore, empirical evidences indicate that the pairing of traditional instructional methods with technology tools is beneficial. The results that emerge from pairing strategies appear to be more effective and efficient acquisition of phonological awareness.

## **2.4 Summary of Literature Review**

This literature review has interrogated empirical evidences on three key areas of this study. These areas include: emergent literacy practices at home and parental involvement; emergent literacy and classroom environment; and emergent literacy strategies and intervention in preschool children. Each of the three areas forms the focus of each objectives of this study.

Studies show that the child's first and most significant teacher is the parent at home. This underscores the importance of parental involvement in the development of emergent literacy practices. Furthermore, teachers should adopt appropriate strategies and scaffolds that support children's development of emergent literacy in preschools settings. One interesting feature of most studies that been reviewed is that various characteristics and conditions of preschool children were addressed. Some of the characteristics includes age, duration of lessons per day, duration of lessons per week, etc. Empirical evidences showed that the use of effective

interventions increased children's skills substantially. The findings of these studies for one thing, the findings of the articulated studies go a long way in putting this study into a scholarly perspective. They contribute in synthesizing the findings of the current study to form part of the broader knowledge in early childhood literacy. In addition, methodological variations are important in addressing issues that cluster around this subject matter. The findings will help the current study in relating to empirical evidences for interpretation and discussions. . Hence, the first step is to investigate the status of emergent literacy in preschools children of one county in the Republic of Liberia. In the next chapter, a discussion in the methodological approaches for the study will be presented.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Methodology is where the whole description and interpretation of the research is based on. It is where the reader will attain an understanding of how the research will be conducted (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). It involves a series of approaches that are used in educational research to collect information which are based on inferences, explanation, and interpretation. Best and Khan (2006) revealed that methodologies of research in education are usually based on research methods in the behavioural and social sciences, and it mostly relies heavily on psychology, sociology, and anthropology. This chapter will establish an appropriate and suitable design for the study's methodology. It will describe how the researcher will collect data and how the data will be analyzed. It addresses the research design (mixed method which involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches), population and justification, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection procedure, pilot study, data analysis, content analysis, and ethical consideration.

#### **3.1 Research Methods**

In this regard, the researcher is interested in quantifying the phenomenon and the findings of the study will be described as they are. The philosophical underpinnings are precisely based on the fact that reality can be observed, and that genuine knowledge is based on experience that can be advanced by means of observation and experiment (Creswell, 2003). Based on the need to investigate Emergent Literacy Status of Preschool Children in one county, Liberia, this study will adopt and be guided by the pragmatic paradigm approach, which, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2002) and Creswell (2003) is appropriate in research because, it focuses on what works as the truth concerning the research questions that are under investigation. Creswell (2003) also sees mixed method approaches as associated with the pragmatic paradigm and strategies that engage in the data collection in a concurrent or chronological manner using methods that are drawn from both quantitative and qualitative traditions in a way that best addresses the research objectives. Therefore, pragmatic paradigm approach is preferred in this

study because it has the advantage of flexibility in multiple sources of data collection and analysis.

### **3.2 Research Design and Justification**

In the case of this study, both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used to enrich the findings or results by triangulation. Triangulation is the process of using different data collection methods in order to raise a study's validity and reliability (Best & Khan, 2006). The data collection methods are qualitative and quantitative. On the other hand, Quantitative approach often involves a significant representative sample of the population as a procedure for gathering data. Quantitative approach will be used as a central approach in the study. It involves the collection and analysis of numerical data through surveys, questionnaires, and checklists. In an attempt to find an answer to the problem at hand, a research design that is suitable most appropriately is the survey design.

On the other hand, qualitative approach provides description to show the richness and complication of events that occur in a natural real life setting from the participants' view. It asks open-ended questions, usually with small number of informants. It involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data obtained from observation, focus group discussions, interviews, and document. It is used to gather first-hand information through direct interaction with the respondent (Best & Khan, 2006). Therefore, the researcher will also use qualitative approach because it shows an inductive form of reasoning and generalization is the point of departure.

### **3.3 Population and Justification**

Neuman (2007) refers to a population as a large general group of people or a number of possible units or elements that are included in the study; in other words, it refers to the totality of people, organizations and objects, from which a sample is drawn. Specifically, a population is any group of people or individual that has one or more characteristics that are common and are of interest to the researcher (Best & Khan, 2006). In this study, the population will be the preschool teachers and parents of young children in one county, Republic of Liberia.

### **3.4 Sample, Justification and Sampling Procedure**

A sample is a representative of a population of interest. It comprises the characteristics that are closely equivalent to that of the population (Charles & Mertler, 2002). A sample will be drawn from the three categories or strata of the population of preschools in the county namely; district, type of school, and class level. There are 285 preschools in the county and these schools are distributed across 4 Districts. Therefore, to draw a sample that will be manageable and representative; a stratified random sampling method will be used to select ECE centres from the entire population of 285 preschools in the county. The study will utilise the different types of schools, namely: Private, Public, Church-based, and Community schools depending on the availability of the school and classes in the particular district.

From each stratum, participants will be selected by purposive sampling and simple random sampling methods. According to Obasi (2008), purposive sampling involves handpicking desired participants to make sure that such participants are included with the assurance that all relevant teachers and parents are represented in the sample. On the other hand, simple random sampling requires that a researcher develops an accurate sampling frame against which elements will be selected for inclusion in the sample according to a mathematically random (Neuman, 2007).

Based on a sampling ratio of 35%, a sample will be selected from the 285 preschools, because when dealing with population below 1000, the sampling ratio of 35% is the best ratio, especially in cases where generalization is critical, it is also considered sufficient for controlling sampling error (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport, 2008). Based on the 35% sampling ratio, the number of preschools that will be included in the sample is approximately 100 and this will be selected across the four districts and will have equal representation of types of schools and level of class respectively.

An attempt will be made to select at least 1 type of school from each district depending on the availability of schools in that particular district. Teachers from all the ECE centres in the four districts will be selected from the different types of preschools to make an equal representation from each sector or category or strata.



A sample of teachers will be selected across all levels of classes, namely: day-care, nursery, kindergarten-one, and kindergarten-two in the preschools. An attempt will be made to ensure that one teacher from each class levels will be included. Teachers will purposively be selected from each school. In effect, 400 teachers (100x4) will be selected to participate in the study. This is based on the intuition that their views will be significant for this study as they are the ones who facilitate learning in the ECE classroom environment; and are likely to be knowledgeable in the subject matter. This is consistent with the advantage of purposive sampling technique. As for parents, the study will select 10 parents from the four class levels and from the four districts making the total number of 160 parents (10x4x4) to participate in the study.

### **3.5 Research Instrument**

This section gives facts about the tools or instruments the proposed study will use to collect data. The instruments that will be used are questionnaires and structured interview, observation schedule and focus group discussion. There are several types of questionnaires, such as structured questionnaire, unstructured, open-ended, and close-ended.

A questionnaire is a set of cautiously constructed questions that is designed to provide information in a particular area or concern in a given subject. Questionnaire will be used because respondents will have time to think about the answers and will also cover a large number of respondents. Johnson and Christensen (2004) explain that researchers use questionnaires in order for them to gather information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, and behavioural of the research participants. Questionnaire is preferred over other instruments of research because of its relative advantage over others. The open and closed ended questionnaire in a form of likert-scale type questionnaire will be utilised.

Wiersma and Jurs (2009) revealed that before any data is collected; necessary measuring instruments must be identified and perhaps developed. Cohen (2007) defines questionnaire as a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyze.

In this study, the questionnaire will be self-administered by the researcher, and answered by the sampled population which are the teachers from the ECE classroom setting. The

questionnaires will consist of closed-ended as well as open-ended questions. The questionnaires will be carefully structured to obtain the relevant data. The questionnaire will be divided into four sections:

**Section A:** Demographic Data

**Section B:** Questions regarding emergent literacy in classroom environment.

**Section C:** Questions regarding emergent literacy strategies and intervention.

### **3.6 Interview Schedule**

Interview schedule is another data collecting research instrument that will be used in this study. Turner (2010) considered an interview as an exchange of views between two or more people on a topic of common interest. An interview is a conversation between people in which one person has the role of a researcher. The interviewer will have on hand a set of questions written which will be posed in a structured and methodical way. Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) emphasize that these questions might be used to only remind the researcher of the mean areas that will need probing. The following are advantages of using an interview as a technique for collecting data in this study:

- Interviews will be flexible as a researcher will probe for more specific answers by questions that will be repeated which the researcher thinks the respondents will not understand.
- The researcher will be able to consider the trustworthiness of the respondents' answer, as she will be able to observe how the respondent will respond.
- The researcher will have control over the order of questions and will make sure that the respondents will not answer questions out of order.
- The respondents will answer questions in a natural way and will be narrated and will explain the procedure or how things will be done.

The respondents will be the ones who will answer as they will be selected purposively and there will be no chance that somebody will answer for them, and the researcher will control the questions and make sure that all will be answered (Turner, 2010). These advantages will add to the choice of the interview as a method that will be used for collecting data in this study.

Boyce and Neale (2006) view interview as a method of involving or conducting an interview with an individual or a small group of respondent to investigate their views on a particular situation, or idea. Therefore, in this study, interviews are aimed at triangulating information from the participants such as parents and teachers. Patton (2001) asserted that triangulating information is crucial because to rely on one method may distort the researcher's picture of a particular reality under investigation. The researcher will interview 5% of the teachers from the total number of 400 teachers.

### **3.7 Observation Guide**

Observation is the procedure for making the researchers to know about the activities of the people that are under study in a natural setting by observing and participating with them in the activities. Observation gives the situation for the development of sampling guidelines and interview guides (DeWalt & DWalt, 2002). In this study, the researcher will use 10% of the 400 teachers for observation. She will explain to the teachers that she will be collecting data for her Masters study. The researcher will make them aware that she will be investigating emergent literacy status of young children in the ECE centres. The study will involve observing various storybooks, print rich environment, letters of the alphabet displayed on the wall and pictures that represent emergent literacy. The researcher will also observe the writing and art corners in the classroom environment.

### **3.8 Focus Group Discussion**

Focus group discussion is considered to be a small number of individual that are fairly similar, who will give information during a group interactive discussion (Goldenkoff, 2004). Participants are chosen for focus group discussions based on their ability to give information and be able to approach issues under study. In this study, the researcher will conduct focus group discussion with a number of ECE teachers. The researcher will act as a facilitator or mediator to initiate a discussion on how young children are facilitated in the classrooms during emergent literacy practices.

### **3.9 Data Triangulation**

One of the forms of triangulations that this study will use is data triangulation. Data triangulation refers to the use of different sources of data as distinct from using different methods in the production of data (Shwandt, 2007). It combines data drawn from different sources and at different times, in different area or from different people. It reduces bias that can regularly occur when the researcher is only using one data source, or procedure and method. In this study, information will be verified by using different research instruments such as interviews, focus group discussion and observations. The different respondents such as teachers and parents will be interviewed. This will enhance the validity of the information that will be obtained from the respondents.

### **3.10 Reliability**

Reliability is a sign of consistency between two measures of the same thing. According to Golafshani (2003), reliability refers to the extent to which a research instrument will give the same result on different occasions. This means that for a research instrument tool to be reliable, it should be given the same result when it is being measured again. It is the level of data collection that is consistent or stable with the same or similar instrument on occasions when it should tentatively produce the same results (Cohen, 2007). Since reliability is never perfect, it is measured as a correlation coefficient. In this study, some measures of reliability will be achieved by using and distributing questionnaires to ECE teachers as pilot study.

### **3.11 Validity**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) validity is the level at which scientific explanations of phenomena match the reality of the world. To ensure validity, a research instrument that will be used in the study must measure what it was intended to measure. Validity is reliant on the situational factors, purpose and population in which measurement take place. Therefore, valid instruments evaluate what they are meant to evaluate. In this study, content validity will be adopted. Content validity refers to the extent to which the conceptual framework is reflected in the individual items in the questionnaire, or test items (Golafshani, 2003). In this study, the content validity of the study will be validated by the staff of the University of Liberia.

In this study, some measures of reliability will be achieved by using and distributing questionnaires to ECE teachers as pilot study.

### **3.12 Pilot Study**

According to Monette and Sullivan (2002) pilot study means conducting a much small study to prepare for the main study. It is done to refine or adjust the research methods or to test out the research techniques. Piloting is essential because it ensures that questions are precise, unambiguous and simple to complete (Cohen, 2007). It shows how questionnaires are reliable and valid. In this study, the questionnaire as a research instrument will be tried out on a small group that will give information for the study. A feasibility study will be conducted in four Districts with teachers who will not respond to the final questionnaire. These respondents will be chosen because they represent similar characteristics to the strata sampled in the main study. The purpose will be to check if there will be need to make changes as a result of language, double questions, ambiguity, and time taken to fill in the questions. The suggestions will be considered with the reforming of the instrument from the objectives.

### **3.13 Trustworthiness of the Study**

Trustworthiness in qualitative data means that someone can rely on something to be good, truthful or sincere. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), trustworthiness of the research is how, dependable and creditable the study will be.

Trustworthiness addresses ways towards off bias as a result of qualitative analysis. It is of the view that for valid statistical inferences to be made on the source of the data, any research tool must be used internally reliable and valid. To achieve external validity such instruments must be planned in such a way that the analysis of sample data must be generalized to the whole population. Therefore, this study will be trustworthy because the researcher will be conducting the study by using information that will be composed from relevant sources and from the reliable respondents such as ECE teachers, who facilitate learning in the ECE classroom environment, and parents whose children are admitted in those ECE centres.

### **3.14 Data Collection Procedure**

According to Creswell (2003); and Johnson & Christensen (2003), there are numerous data collection options, and the conclusion to make an approach is said to depend on the answers to the following questions: what do you want to know? What are the existing sources? The answers for the given questions will certainly be influenced by the paradigm and methods that is adopted for the study. In order to plainly conduct a study mostly in school, permission has to be required from the powers that at the ministerial levels, as well as the school. The researcher will seek permission from the District Educational Office and the schools selected for the study. Firstly, the researcher will liaise with the Ministry of Education seeking permission for the researcher to carry out the research in all the ECE centres in the county. Upon receiving an approval, the researcher will send it to all selected schools for the research. The researcher will send the introductory letter from MOE to the District Education Office (DEO) in person. Upon receiving the permission from the DEO, the researcher will send it to the ECE schools in person. The researcher is a Teacher Trainer and is known to the districts, this will make it easy to have access to the school. The submission of the permission letters to selected ECE centres will stand as the beginning of data collection. The researcher will travel to all sampled ECE centres to administer the questionnaires.

### **3.15 Data Analysis Procedure**

Data analysis involves the manner in which data are explained and organized in order to make sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the condition, themes, categories and regularities (Any, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). The data must be structured and broken down into orderly sections to establish important findings. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006) the analysis of the data is described about how the data will be handled through initial analysis, statistical tests, computer programs, and other technical information. In this study, data analysis procedure will be gathered through questionnaires. The quantitative data will be analyzed through SPSS (V.22) and Excel while qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions, observation and open ended questions from the questionnaire will be analyzed using C-at lerti 75, in the form of themes and categories which allow for easier data analysis. Content analysis is another part of the data analysis that will be used in the study. It is another part of the research method that examines phrases or words within a wide range of text including books,

book chapters, essays, interviews and speeches, as well as informal conversations and headlines (Jackson, Harris, Ashton, McCarthy & Tremblay (2000); Lance, Johnson, Douthitt, Bennett, & Harville, 2000). The essential idea in content analysis is that the many words from text are classified into significantly fewer content categories.

### **3.16 Ethical Consideration**

Ethics are generally considered to deal with beliefs and perceptions about what is good or bad and right or wrong. In research, ethics are principles or norms that guide the right choices about behaviour and relationship with others (Creswell, 2005). To behave in an ethical way, it will increase the chances of the researcher maintaining positive relationships with the participants during the time of the study. Therefore, data collecting instruments should exhibit suitable ethics. Therefore, the researcher will issue a consent form to verify if the participants understand the purpose of the study and that they should be aware of their rights to participate and should confirm their willingness to take part (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). In so doing, the following needs should be considered:

- Respondents are free to participate and at liberty to withdraw. In this study, the respondents will be allowed to withdraw if they feel anxious to participate.
- The respondents should be aware about the reason for conducting the study, and how the information will be used. In this study, the researcher will issue consent form clarifying to the respondents the purpose of the study and how they would assist by participating.
- Before the study is being conducted, the respondents will be knowledgeable about the nature of the instrument. Therefore, the researcher will provide consent form before the participant responds.
- Participants in this study should not have negative thoughts about participating. In this study; the researcher will make sure not to expose the respondents' names.

The researcher should not expect the respondent to act contrary to his/her principles. In this case, the study will be explained to the respondents and they will be made aware of their rights. In this study, when the researcher visits schools, the first thing she is going to do is to explain the purpose of the visit. The researcher will indicate that she is collecting information for a research that will lead her to get her Master's Degree. In addition to the consent form, the

researcher will also give out a copy of permission letter that will be obtained from the County Education Office (CEO).

### **3.17 Summary**

This chapter has presented clearly the research design, research approach, population and sampling, research methods, research instruments, compilation of research instruments, pilot study and trustworthiness of the study and data analysis, ethical consideration that are all related to the proposed study.



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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to seek information regarding emergent literacy status of preschool children in the four districts ECE centres in one county. You are kindly requested to tick in the box the statement that best suits you.

#### Section A: Demographic Data

- Age

Tick the box that corresponds with your age range

Below 20 years	
21 – 25	
26 – 30	
31 – 35	
36 – 40	
41 and above	

- Gender

Tick the box that corresponds with your gender

Female	
Male	

- How long have you been teaching?

Tick the box that corresponds with your answer

Below 5 years	
6 - 10 years	
11- 15 years	
16 years and above	

- Your highest qualification

Tick the box that corresponds with your answer

High school Diploma	
C-certificate (primary teaching certificate)	
Associate Degree ( A) in education	
Bachelor's Degree in education	
Master's Degree in education	
Others: specify	

- Which class do you teach?

Tick the box that corresponds with your answer

Day-Care session	
Nursery	
Kindergarten 1	
Kindergarten 2	

- Area where your school is located

Tick the box that corresponds with your answer

Rural	
Urban	

- Number of students in your classroom setting

Tick the box that corresponds with your answer

Below 20 students	
21 -30	
31-40	
41-50	

**Section B: Questions Regarding Emergent Literacy Classroom Environment.**

1. The following questions are to investigate the extent to which classroom environment supports emergent literacy experiences of preschool children.



Classroom environment that supports emergent literacy

I	Is your classroom environment rich with literacy materials?	Yes	No
Ii	Do you interact with your student in the classroom?	Yes	No
Iii	Do you have writing area in your classroom?	Yes	No
Iv	Is your classroom structured with quality books and writing materials?	Yes	No
V	Do you give children the opportunity to develop their writing skills?	Yes	No
Vi	Is your classroom print-rich?	Yes	No
Vii	Does your classroom support emergent literacy?	Yes	No
Viii	Do you make your literacy classroom interesting to your children?	Yes	No
Ix	Are written materials and books available in your classroom?	Yes	No
X	Do you have corner just for book reading in your classroom?	Yes	No
Xi	Do you have more than 25 different picture books in your classroom?	Yes	No
Xii	Is alphabet chart visible in the classroom?	Yes	No
Xiii	Do you have drawing and colouring books available in your classroom?	Yes	No
Xiv	Do you have interesting storybooks in your classroom?	Yes	No
Xv	Do you have puzzles in your learning centre for your student?	Yes	No
Xvi	Do you e-book (electronic storybook) in your classroom?	Yes	No
xvii	Do you show your students video pertaining to emergent literacy?	Yes	No

**Section C: questions regarding teaching and learning strategies.**

2. The following questions are to identify emergent literacy teaching strategies in the classroom environment.

Circle the number to indicate your agreement key:

1: SD- Strongly Disagree; 2: D-Disagree; 3: A-Agree; 4: SA-Strongly Agree.

I	I engage children with various strategies to improve their literacy and language skills	SD-1	D-2	A-3	SA-4
Ii	I apply different kinds of literacy strategies in the classroom to encourage children literacy development	1	2	3	4

Iii	I apply different kinds of instruction in large and small group activities	1	2	3	4
Iv	I always read story books to my students	1	2	3	4
V	One strategy I use in my classroom is eliciting a whole group read aloud section	1	2	3	4
Vi	I provide intervention strategy for my student	1	2	3	4
Vii	I ask my students to retell story to the whole class	1	2	3	4
Viii	The intervention approaches that I use in my class are activity-based instruction	1	2	3	4
Ix	I encourage my students in conversation to increase their language and literacy outcomes	1	2	3	4
X	I provide small group strategy for children at risk for reading difficulty	1	2	3	4
Xi	I do coach students in the literacy classroom	1	2	3	4
Xii	I arrange children in small and large group for literacy activities	1	2	3	4
Xiii	I provide immediate intervention for children with poor reading ability	1	2	3	4
Xiv	I motivate children during reading in the literacy activity	1	2	3	4
Xv	I stimulate children in the literacy environment.	1	2	3	4
Xvi	I teach children phonological awareness and letter knowledge	1	2	3	4
Xvii	I use ICT in my classroom for teaching and learning purposes	1	2	3	4
xviii	I scaffold my students in the read aloud classroom	1	2	3	4
Xix	I use e-book reading in my classroom	1	2	3	4
Xx	I develop students emergent literacy through play base interactions	1	2	3	4

Xxi	I have literacy corner in my classroom for students pre-reading activities	1	2	3	4
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3. This section is to identify emergent literacy intervention approaches used in the classroom:

1) What type of literacy materials do you have in your classroom?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

2) Do children have writing materials to develop their writing skills?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

3) And what type of ICT that is available in your classroom?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

4) What strategy do you implement in the literacy classroom to develop children’s emergent literacy?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

5) What intervention strategies do you provide for children with reading difficulties?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

6) What strategies do you use to help your students learn to write?

.....

.....

.....

## APPENDIX B

### **Focus Group Discussion: *for Parents***

The purpose of this discussion is to investigate emergent literacy practices in the home environment. Please provide your personal information in this space below.

<b>Information</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Other adult at home</b>
Name		
Age		
Educational qualification		
Occupation		
Time spent with the child (hours/day)		
What professional activities do you engage in?		

The discussion will be initiated by the researcher among parents as per the items in the following table.

Number	Items
1	Number and types storybooks at home
2	Language practice at home
3	Practice pre-writing activities with the children
4	Amount of time parent spent interacting with your child
5	Crayon and pencil available at home
6	Colouring books with alphabet and pictures are available for child in the home
7	The use of ICT at home
8	Sing songs and rhymes that help in literacy development
9	Story telling sessions at home and number of time you read to the child
10	Take child for sightseeing in community
11	Have regular conversation with children at home
12	Ways of making the child love practicing pre-reading and pre-writing daily

## APPENDIX C

### **Interview Schedule: *for ECE Teachers***

The purpose of this interview is to seek information regarding the status of preschool children's emergent literacy skills in the ECE centre.

1	Do you have knowledge about how children develop emergent literacy?
2	Do you have special training in emergent literacy skills?
3	Can you provide young children with emergent literacy activities?
4	What do you do in the classroom to develop children's emergent literacy experiences?
5	Do you use ICT in your classroom for developing emergent literacy?
6	Can you tell me how often you engage children in story book reading?
7	Do you tell stories to your students?
8	Do you allow your students to tell the rest of the class story?
9	What materials do you use for writing in the classroom?
10	What challenges do you experience while facilitating literacy activities in the classroom?
11	How many times a week do you read storybooks to your students?
12	Can you describe the literacy corner in the classroom for me?
13	When do you provide intervention strategies for students at-risk for pre- reading and pre-writing?
14	How many storybooks do you have in your classroom?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Observation Guide for Schools**

The purpose of this observation is to see how teachers provide activities in the classroom during literacy session and what activities are provided in the home to encourage children emergent literacy.

- 1) Available reading books
- 2) Classroom environment is print-rich or no
- 3) Corner for literacy
- 4) Time teacher spends on facilitating children while in literacy centre
- 5) Teachers use facial expression while reading story to children
- 6) Arrangements of literacy materials in the classroom setting

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Observation for Parents at Home**

- 1) Literacy books in home environment
- 2) Writing material available in the home
- 3) Conversation with the child while being together
- 4) ICT available in the home