



Rural and Urban Kindergarten Teachers' Self-Efficacy: Implications for the Implementation of the Standard-Based Curriculum in Ghana

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The study examined rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy and its implications for the implementation of the standard-based curriculum in Ghana. It also examined whether kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy differs in terms of teaching experience. It also sought to determine the influence of gender, academic and professional qualification, job satisfaction, and teaching and learning resources on teaching efficacy. The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) was used to collect online data from 375 kindergarten teachers drawn from rural and urban school settings. Findings from the study showed that kindergarten teachers in rural school settings reported higher levels of teaching efficacy in the area of instruction and pupil engagement than their urban counterparts. Again, rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy differs across the different categories of teaching experience in areas of instruction and engagement but not for classroom management. The findings further showed that job satisfaction did not influence kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. It is concluded that the Ghana Education Service should organize continuing professional development programmes to boost and sustain kindergarten teachers' self-efficacy in areas of instruction, classroom management, and engagement. Implications of the study's findings to research and practice are also discussed.

Keywords: engagement, instruction, kindergarten, teachers, self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Over several decades, educational reformers in Ghana have attempted to improve the capacity of the teaching workforce and the quality of instructional content to produce an innovative, creative, and competent human resource for its economic development. This is based on the fact that high-quality teachers are critical to students' learning. Nguyen and Ng (2020) noted that teachers have a crucial role in effective educational practice. Teachers have the potential to significantly enhance the lives of their students (Chetty et al., 2014). Mydin, Alaklabi, and Alomar (2022) believed that teacher quality is a critical factor that can enhance students' academic achievement and classroom instruction in the educational setting to achieve a successful national educational system. Hattie (2003) synthesized over 500,000 studies on the factors influencing student achievement. Hattie

Citation: Boateng, P. (2024). Rural and urban kindergarten teachers' self-efficacy: Implications for the implementation of the standard-based curriculum in Ghana. *International Journal of Instruction*, 17(3), 275-290. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2024.17315a>

concluded that almost all things we do in education positively affect achievement but singled out the teacher as the most powerful influence on student achievement. Therefore, he cautioned educational managers to ensure that this most significant influence is optimized to have robust and sensationally positive effects on the learner.

Given the essential roles of teachers in influencing learning outcomes, Ghana has recently embarked on teacher education reforms. This reform strategically aligns with the Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2018-2030) and seeks to completely transform teaching and learning, promote better educational outcomes, and support Sustainable Development Goal 4's objectives. The reform will project enhanced learning outcomes, notably at pre-tertiary levels. A primary object of these critical reforms is to make the educational system responsive to the changing national development agenda and renewed goals and aspirations (MoE, 2018). It also ensures that the educational system adjusts to context, time, technological advancements, industry, creativity, and knowledge economy. The recent reforms focus on three priority areas: (1) improved learning outcomes, (2) enhanced accountability, and (3) equity at all levels of the education sector (MoE, 2018). Notable among these critical reforms are:

1. the conversion of Colleges of Education into University Colleges to offer a 4-year Bachelor of Education with a 3-tier specialization to produce quality teachers for the pre-tertiary sector;
2. realignment of all Technical and Vocational Institutions (TVIs) under the Ministry of Education and created a Technical and Vocational Education Service (TVES) to manage them;
3. the creation of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) combines the functions of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) to regulate the activities of higher education institutions
4. the design and implementation of a new pre-tertiary education curriculum with standards and assessment frameworks;
5. the establishment of the National Teaching Council (NTC) to register, license and promote teacher professionalism;
6. information Communication Technology Policy Reforms that seek to develop early desire and competencies of children's use of ICT, equip pre-tertiary learners with ICT skills, and transform teacher development and tertiary education through technology-based training, and
7. introduction of a Teacher Prize to motivate and retain teachers, especially at the pre-tertiary level.

Despite the nation's reforms in teacher education, no significant effort has been made to adequately examine the key teacher characteristics that can predict teacher practice, preparedness, and effectiveness as well as assess how they significantly impact instructional quality and influence students' learning opportunities. One of the few individual characteristics that can predict teacher effectiveness and practice, is teachers' perception of their efficacy (Gale, Alemdar, Cappelli & Morris, 2021; Poulou, Reddy & Dudek, 2019). Bandura (1997) defines teacher efficacy as one's belief in his or her capability to perform a task and achieve the desired outcome. Tschannan-Moran and Hoy (2001) also defined teachers' efficacy as teachers' belief in their capabilities to

carry out the professional task of teaching. Teacher efficacy affects how teachers feel, think, motivate, and behave and it enhances their accomplishment and well-being (Abun et al., 2021). Self-efficacy beliefs of teachers are linked to instruction quality, student accomplishment, and student motivation (Klassen and Tze, 2014; Klassen et al., 2011; Zee and Kooman, 2016). Zee and Kooman (2016) found ties between high levels of teaching self-efficacy and students' academic progress, teacher behavior patterns, and best practices in the classroom. Additionally, factors influencing teachers' psychological well-being are linked to teaching self-efficacy. Teachers who have confidence in their abilities are generally happier, more dedicated to their jobs, and less prone to burnout (Brown, 2012; Aloe et al., 2014; Chesnut and Burley, 2015; Zee and Kooman, 2016).

According to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, people evaluate their self-efficacy by interpreting data from four sources: (1) Enactive mastery experiences, where objectives are attained through direct action; (2) Vicarious experiences, where objectives are attained through seeing a model (or oneself) complete a task, (3) social persuasions, which are signals received from others and have a tendency to have varying effects on self-efficacy depending on the information contained in the message and the recipient's perceived status; (4) physiological and affective states such as mood, tension, and anxiety. It is significant to remember that while generating assessments of self-efficacy, information from several sources may be mixed. When people make referential comparisons to a presumed social standard, for instance, they draw on both direct and indirect experiences. The most effective way to boost self-efficacy is often through enactive mastery experiences, which entail achieving objectives directly through action. These experiences are particularly effective when someone completes a task, they find challenging (Bandura, 1997). Teachers are more likely to have confidence in their ability to instruct students when they believe their lessons are successful. Similar to students, teachers may question their ability to teach if they believe they have failed. Vicarious experiences, which entail seeing a model complete a task, are particularly effective at boosting self-efficacy when the task is still new and the model is seen as being similar to the observer. Since many teaching tasks are still novel in the early stages of a teacher's career, vicarious experiences may have the greatest impact on teaching efficacy beliefs. Another source of self-efficacy beliefs is social persuasion in the form of evaluative feedback. The extent to which the person providing the feedback is regarded as credible and sincere will influence the feedback in part. If teachers get "empty praise" or criticism from observers they don't respect or trust, their teaching self-efficacy cannot be altered.

Additionally, according to Bandura (1997), positive feedback is more likely to change self-efficacy beliefs than negative feedback. Physiological and affective variables, such as mood, worry, and stress, may also influence self-efficacy. According to Woolfolk Hoy and Burke-Spero (2005), improvements in self-efficacy tend to positively influence affective assessments of success such as job satisfaction and commitment to the teaching profession. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) indicated that improved self-efficacy leads to effective lesson planning and classroom management. Lazarides and Warner (2020) observed that teachers with a high level of teaching efficacy are more open to new teaching methods, set challenging goals, and exhibit a greater level of planning and organization. They further indicated that such teachers

enjoy solving problems and can adjust their teaching strategies with they encounter problems or difficulties. Similarly, Flackler et al (2021) indicated that teachers' self-efficacy affects student engagement, instruction, and classroom management.

The managers of Ghana's educational system should obtain insight into outcomes at both the classroom and individual teacher levels given the strong influence of teachers' self-efficacy on teacher effectiveness and how it influences student learning outcomes. This, therefore, suggests that assessing and enhancing kindergarten teachers' efficacy is extremely critical to improving their zeal to teach and eventually improving their teaching performance as well as leading to effective implementation of the standard-based curriculum (Fullan, 2007). The study explores urban and rural kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy and its implications on the implementation of the standard-based curriculum in Ghana. The study's main objective is to:

- (1) examine the personal teaching efficacy of urban and rural kindergarten teachers. The study aims to explore the self-efficacy levels of kindergarten teachers in both rural and urban settings in the Ashanti region of Ghana.
- (2) assess differences in teaching efficacy based on instructional practices, classroom management, and pupil engagement. The study seeks to investigate how urban and rural kindergarten teachers differ in their teaching efficacy concerning these specific areas.
- (3) determine the impact of teaching experience on teachers' efficacy. The study aims to explore whether kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy varies with their years of teaching experience.
- (4) examine the influence of gender, academic qualification, professional background, job satisfaction, and teaching and learning resources on teaching efficacy. The study intends to assess the effects of these variables on kindergarten teachers' self-efficacy.
- (5) discuss the implications of the findings on the implementation of the standard-based curriculum in Ghana. The study seeks to explore how the study's findings can inform the effective implementation of the standard-based curriculum in Ghana.

Numerous research on teacher efficacy have targeted elementary and secondary school teachers and also pre-service teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001), novice teachers (Ozder, 2011), and student teachers (Poulou, 2007). Few studies have looked at kindergarten teachers' efficacy in the classroom and how that affects kindergarten instruction in urban and rural settings. The scarce number of studies conducted in the Ghanaian setting is particularly significant. A few research that is currently accessible in Ghana focused just on the self-efficacy of in-service teachers and the efficacy of kindergarten teachers' instructional and classroom management practices (Cobbold & Boateng, 2015; 2016) and pupil engagement (Boateng & Sekyere, 2018). This gap left by earlier investigations is filled in some measure by the present study. The study's findings may add new dimensions to the assessment of teacher effectiveness and help policymakers develop a new teacher evaluation model for inspection in

kindergarten schools in Ghana. In addition, the findings may be helpful in training kindergarten teachers in Ghana.

METHOD

The sampled participants included 375 public Kindergarten (KG) teachers who willingly participated in the study. The participants were drawn from three school districts in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The school districts were carefully selected because of their unique characteristics that best suited the study's purpose. The first school district was a metropolis with all of its schools located in urban settings. The second is a municipality with 67.8% of its schools located in urban settings and 32.2 % found in rural settings. The third, on the other hand, 88% of its schools are located in rural settings with only 12% urban (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The study participants completed an electronic survey during the first three weeks of November 2022. Before that, informed consent was obtained from the participants and they were assured of maximum confidentiality of the information they would provide. The survey instrument was posted on the social media platforms of the kindergarten teachers by the early childhood coordinators of the selected school districts upon approval from their directors of education. The initial statement of the instrument advised teachers the instrument was meant for only kindergarten teachers and that each teacher should answer the survey only once but they were encouraged to share the instrument with other KG teachers in the same school districts.

Instrumentation

The study collected teachers' demographic information such as age, gender, teaching experience, school location, and professional training. They were asked to indicate whether they were satisfied with their jobs as kindergarten teachers and to indicate again whether they had enough resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities for their pupils.

The study used the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy in 2001 to measure rural and urban kindergarten teachers' efficacy. The TSES includes a broad range of teacher tasks required for effective teaching (Pressley, 2021; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and measures teachers' efficacy and specific constructs of instructional, engagement, and management efficacy. The study used the long form of the TSES which consists of 24 items. The TSES uses a nine-point Likert scale with an overall reliability of 0.94. However, this study, like others (Boateng et al., 2019; Bakar et al. 2012; Atay, 2007; Poulou, 2007), used a five-point Likert scale of TSES. The original TSES scale asks the respondents "How much" but the present studies like Boateng, et al. (2019) and Bakar et al. (2012) ask respondents "How confident are you" since teacher efficacy is a measure of a teacher's confidence to promote students' learning (Hoy, 2000). For example, the respondents were asked "how confident are you to: get through to the most difficult students", "use a variety of assessment strategies" and "control disruptive behaviour in the classroom" All three subscales consist of eight items and they were assessed along on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 5 (very confident) to 3 (confident) and 1 (not at all confident). The psychometric properties of TSEs have been adequately established in many studies

(Klassen et al. 2010; Poulou, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The reliability of the present scale has been established in the Ghanaian context by Boateng et al. (2019) with an overall reliability coefficient of .82. The Cronbach Alpha revealed adequate internal consistency of the subscales as follows: efficacy in student engagement (0.79); efficacy in instructional practices (0.82); and efficacy in classroom management (0.86).

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze the quantitative data to answer the research questions. An Independent sampled t-test was used to investigate the possible differences in urban and rural kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. ANOVA was used to determine the differences that existed between kindergarten teachers' efficacy and teaching experience. Regression Analysis was used to determine the influence of gender, academic qualification, professional background, job satisfaction, and teaching and learning resources on kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. The .05 alpha level was used for all statistical procedures.

FINDINGS

The study results showed that 52.3% were within 31 to 40 years, 28.0% were within 21 to 30 years, 16.8% were within 41 to 50 years, 2.4% were within 51 to 60 years and .5% were 20 years and below. It was found that 56.0% were diploma holders, 34.4% were first degree holders, 5.6% were certificate/high school certificate holders and 4.0% were master's degree holders. It was revealed that 56.0% lived in an urban area and 44.0% lived in rural areas. The results further showed that 79.2% were satisfied with their job and 20.8% were not satisfied. It was observed that 84.8% were females and 15.2% were males. Regarding teaching experience, it was seen that 64.8% have taught for 1 to 5 years, 20.0% have taught for 6 to 10 years, 10.4% have taught for 11 to 15 years and 4.8% taught for 16 to 20 years. The study results further showed that 60.0% had professional qualifications for teaching at kindergarten and 40.0% did not have professional qualifications. Findings revealed that 69.6% had enough teaching and learning resources to deliver their lessons while 30.4 did not.

RQ1 & 2: Personal teaching efficacy levels and how they differ among urban and rural kindergarten teachers in terms of instructional practices, classroom management, and pupil engagement.

Table 1
Independent samples t-test of location and teaching efficacy

	Variable	N	M	SD	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. value
Instructional practices	Rural	159	33.8	5.5	1.13	2.027	364	.043
	Urban	207	32.7	5.2	1.13			
Classroom management	Rural	162	33.5	5.1	.15	.284	356	.777
	Urban	196	33.3	4.9	.15			
Pupil management	Rural	156	92.9	10.1	2.19	2.113	347	.035
	Urban	193	90.7	9.1	2.19			

The results showed that rural kindergarten teachers reported higher teaching efficacy in the area of instruction ($M= 33.8$, $SD= 5.5$), classroom management ($M=33.3$, $SD=5.1$), and pupil engagement ($M= 92.9$, $SD=10.1$) than their counterparts in the urban setting. This implies that kindergarten teachers in rural schools reported higher efficacy levels than those in urban schools.

The results also showed that rural kindergarten teachers ($M= 33.8$, $SD= 5.5$) were different from urban kindergarten teachers ($M= 32.7$, $SD=5.2$), $t(364) = 2.027$, $p= .043$ (2-tailed) in terms of instructional practices. It was found that rural kindergarten teachers ($M= 33.5$, $SD= 5.1$) were not different from urban kindergarten teachers ($M= 33.3$, $SD=4.9$), $t(356) = .284$, $p= .777$ (2-tailed) in terms of classroom management. The results showed that rural kindergarten teachers ($M= 92.9$, $SD= 10.1$) were different from urban kindergarten teachers ($M= 90.7$, $SD=9.1$), $t(347) = 2.113$, $p= .035$ (2-tailed) in terms of pupil engagement. The findings imply that kindergarten teachers in rural school settings reported higher levels of teaching efficacy in the area of instruction and pupil engagement than their urban counterparts. However, rural and urban kindergarten teachers reported similar abilities in the area of classroom management.

RQ3: What difference exists in kindergarten teachers' efficacy in terms of teaching experience?

Table 2
ANOVA of teaching experience in terms of teachers' efficacy

Group	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	356.151	3	118.717	4.259	.006
Within Groups	10089.480	362	27.871		
Total	10445.631	365			
Between Groups	1713.594	3	571.198	6.363	.000
Within Groups	30970.985	345	89.771		
Total	32684.579	348			

From the one-way ANOVA, $F(3, 362) = 4.259$, $p = .006$. The result shows that there is a significant difference within the categories of teaching experiences in terms of teachers' efficacy in instructional practices. The study further showed that $F(3, 345) = 6.363$, $p = .000$. The result shows that there is a significant difference within the categories of teaching experiences in terms of teachers' efficacy in pupils' engagement. This implies that kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy differs from the categories of teaching experience in terms of instruction and engagement but not classroom management.

RQ4: What is the influence of gender, academic qualification, professional background, job satisfaction, and job resources on kindergarten teachers' efficacy?

Table 3
Regression of factors influencing teacher efficacy

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	126.415	7.064		17.897	.000
Gender	6.638	2.312	.146	2.871	.004
Academic qualification	4.116	.922	.226	4.462	.000
Professional qualification	-5.091	1.718	-.153	-2.964	.003
Job satisfaction	-1.156	2.090	-.028	-.553	.581
Teaching and learning resources	6.261	1.821	.174	3.439	.001

Dependent variable: Teacher efficacy

It was found from Table 3, that except for job satisfaction which could not predict or influence teacher efficacy ($r=-.028$, $p=.551$), other independent variables like gender ($r=.146$, $p=.004$), academic qualification ($r=.226$, $p=.000$), professional qualification ($r=-1.53$, $p=.003$) and teaching and learning resources ($r=.174$, $p=.001$) could all predict teacher efficacy.

This is because the probability value for the variables is less than 0.05. The findings suggest that gender, academic qualification, professional qualification, and teaching and learning resources influence kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. However, job satisfaction does not appear to influence kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy in Ghana.

DISCUSSION

The study examined rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. Additionally, the study sought to find out whether kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy differs concerning their teaching experience. It also examined whether gender, job satisfaction, academic qualification, professional qualification, and teaching and learning resources influence kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. Analysis of teaching efficacy data from 375 kindergarten teachers revealed that, except for classroom management practices, kindergarten teachers in rural school settings reported higher teaching efficacy in the area of instructional practices and pupil engagement than teachers in urban school settings. There is no study in Ghana to confirm or disconfirm these findings. However, the findings of this study contradict those of the previous study by Pressley (2021). In a study to explore the new teaching approaches and requirements because of COVID-19's impact on elementary teachers' self-efficacy across the United States of America, Pressley found no statistically significant differences among rural, suburban, and urban teachers' efficacy in areas of instructional practices and pupil engagement. One could attribute the high levels of teaching efficacy in areas of instruction and engagement reported by kindergarten teachers in rural settings in Ghana to low enrolment which enables them to perhaps perform their teaching functions more zealously than their counterparts in urban settings who are overburdened with large school enrolments. Again, rural schools in Ghana seem to

benefit more from school or instructional-related interventional programmes championed by Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) and Donor Partners (UNICEF & UNESCO) than schools in urban settings and these interventional programmes might have made rural kindergarten teachers more efficacious in areas of instruction and engagement than their counterparts in urban schools.

Again, the findings of the study revealed that kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy differs across the different categories of teaching experience in terms of instruction and engagement but not for classroom management. It seems that studies on the influence of teacher efficacy on classroom management appear to produce different outcomes. Some studies such as Berger et al. (2018) found that more experienced teachers have a greater sense of efficacy for classroom management while other studies like (Roberts et al. 2006; Seneviratne et al. 2020) suggest that teaching experience does not significantly discriminate teachers' efficacy and classroom management. Similarly, Hudson et al. (2018) suggest that novice teachers may not feel adequately prepared to handle a classroom irrespective that classroom management skills form an integral part of their teacher preparation programme. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies comparing practising teachers with different categories of teaching experience (Tschannan-Moran & Woolfolk, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). It is also consistent with previous studies that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs present a curvilinear relationship with years of teaching experience such that self-efficacy increases in early-career and mid-career, levels out in mid-career, and declines in later career stages (Poulou, et al. 2019; Dicke et al. 2014). The majority of the teachers in our study were in their early and mid-career stages with 4.8% in later career stages. The findings of our study slightly contradict Gale et al. (2021) who found in their study that teachers with more experience reported higher teaching efficacy for instructional practices and classroom management but not for student engagement. They believe that self-efficacy for student engagement did not change at different levels of experience because teachers enter their careers with a relatively stable sense of their ability to motivate students. In the current study, the stability of efficacy for classroom management across the different categories of teaching experience was anticipated because classroom management appears to be the main teacher concern (Korpershock et al. 2016) and research suggests that teachers receive minimal training in this area in Ghana (Cobbold & Boateng, 20016). The researcher believes the lack of consensus on the influences of teaching experience on efficacy for classroom management practices of teachers may be explained by the complexity and contextual challenges (Bresnahan & Brown, 2022). This implies that students are different at every stage of the educational structure and the classroom experiences are influenced by several factors such as the day of the week, time of the class, parental support, teacher's expertise, and other adequacy or inadequacy of instructional resources to manage the pupils in the school settings. The findings of the study require that the managers of Ghana's education system pay critical attention to and provide continuing professional development programs for in-service teachers in developing expertise in areas of instruction, classroom management, and engagement. They should also strengthen the micro-teaching experiences at the initial teacher training since it is a significant factor in

increasing teacher self-efficacy (Lee, Davis & Li, 2023) and pedagogical practices and professional skills (Rustemi & Kurteshi, 2023).

Additionally, the findings showed that besides job satisfaction, gender, academic and professional qualifications, and teaching and learning resources greatly influence kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. This implies that job satisfaction does not seem to influence kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy in Ghana. The findings of the present study contradict Western literature that seems to suggest that job satisfaction influences teachers' self-efficacy (Bagliu, 2020; Collie et al., 2012; Demir, 2018; Karabatak & Alanoglu, 2019; You, Kim & Lim, 2015; Viel-Ruma et al., 2010; Klassen et al., 2009). It is also inconsistent with studies conducted in Asia such as Malaysia (Jin & Hassan, 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2021), Indonesia (Wahyono & Widodo, 2022), and India (Babu, 2022) support the idea that job satisfaction influences teacher self-efficacy. The contradictions in the findings may be partly because of the teachers involved and the socio-cultural context of the studies involved. The compared studies from Western and Asia were conducted among elementary, secondary, and university teachers who are perceived to have a high sense of professional identity contrary to low professional identity, prestige, and professional background (Boateng and Sekyere, 2018) associated with kindergarten teaching in Ghana. Similarly, even though about 79.2% of the participants in the present study reported that they are satisfied with their jobs as kindergarten teachers, it is thus, strange to note that their job satisfaction did not influence or predict their teaching efficacy. This suggests that the teachers might have overrated their job satisfaction or they have created a false consciousness about how they feel about their job and the different aspects of their jobs. It is commonplace that kindergarten teachers in Ghana may not be highly satisfied with their jobs because of poor working conditions and workload, salary, social representation of the profession, promotional opportunities, relationships with colleagues, and supervision. To achieve the objectives of the standard-based curriculum, it is expected that the managers of the Ghana Education Service should explore the many factors that contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction find ways of meeting the needs of teachers, and work hard to influence them to commit to their work.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that kindergarten teachers in rural school settings are more efficacious in instruction and engagement than those in urban settings. This implies that teachers in rural kindergarten schools are more confident in their capabilities to deliver quality instructions and motivate pupils than teachers in urban schools. Again, rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy differs across the different categories of teaching experience in terms of instruction and engagement but not for classroom management. This implies novice and experienced kindergarten teachers in rural and urban school settings in Ghana have similar confidence levels about their capabilities to organize and execute actions that lead to a positive learning environment. Lastly, besides job satisfaction, gender, academic and professional qualification as well as teaching and learning resources influence kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. This is to suggest that job satisfaction does not predict rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. This study is inimitable in the sense that it is the foremost primary

study to examine rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy in Ghana. This study adds new dimensions to the teacher efficacy literature and assessment of teacher effectiveness and helps policymakers develop a new teacher evaluation model for training, monitoring, and evaluation of both pre-service and in-service teacher education in Ghana.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The findings of the study have implications for research and practice. Given the importance of teachers' teaching efficacy in predicting teacher practice and improving students' learning outcomes, the managers of the Ghana Education Service should work hard through professional development programmes to improve and sustain kindergarten teachers' self-efficacy in areas of instruction, classroom management and engagement to enhance teachers' commitment and effectiveness toward the implementation of the standard-based curriculum in Ghana. Again, classroom management appears to be a major concern for kindergarten teachers with different categories of teaching experience in Ghana. Given that effective classroom management is a prerequisite for effective teaching and student learning (Jones & Jones, 2012) as both cannot happen in classrooms that are ineffectively managed (Poulou et al., 2019), a greater portion of teacher education curriculum should focus on helping pre-service and in-service teachers to acquire theoretically sound knowledge and practical skill in classroom management to become effective classroom managers. When this is done, it will boost teachers' confidence in positively managing the classroom, providing high-quality instruction, developing challenging lessons, and keeping students on task to realize the goals of the standard-based kindergarten curriculum for the individual students and the nation at large. Lastly, achieving the goals of the standard-based curriculum requires the total commitment of teachers. This study has identified that job satisfaction did not predict rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. This is an indication that kindergarten teachers in rural and urban school settings are not satisfied with some dimensions of their jobs (poor working conditions and workload, salary, social representation of the profession, promotional opportunities, and supervision) that would make them fully committed to their jobs. Policymakers and the managers of the Ghana Education Service should explore the many factors that contribute to teachers' job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, find ways of meeting the needs of teachers, and work hard to influence them to commit to their work. For instance, teamwork and collaborative work environments are identified to have a productive and substantial influence on teacher job satisfaction (Randelangi et al., 2022). It is, therefore, suggested that the Ghana Education Service should strengthen and provide the needed resources for kindergarten teachers to engage in professional learning communities to promote collegiality among teachers, share learning experiences, develop collaborative skills, and enhance their professional competencies and practices. Again, distributed leadership in schools has been recognized as one of the many ways to increase teacher job satisfaction (Asmuri & Hamzah, 2022; Kang, 2019). It is the sharing of leadership responsibilities among the staff of the kindergarten schools rather than being centralized in one person (Bush & Ng, 2019; Dambrauskiene, 2019). Distributed leadership has the potential to improve job satisfaction among

kindergarten teachers by promoting collaboration, professional identity, shared decision-making, and boosting their morale.

A significant limitation of this study is that the participants were drawn from one administrative region out of the sixteen regions in Ghana. Therefore, a large-scale study with samples drawn from all sixteen administrative regions in Ghana would be beneficial in ascertaining rural and urban kindergarten teachers' teaching efficacy. Lastly, this study was based on teachers' self-report and did not include the measurement of actual teaching skills and knowledge. A study that supplements teachers' perception of their teaching efficacy with direct observation of classroom management, instructional, and engagement practices of teachers would be helpful in Ghana.

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