

# The Impacts of Teacher Training and Parental Education on Kindergarten Quality in Ghana

## Abstract

Many students arrive at primary school already behind, experiencing a lack of skills that may compromise their long-term learning and wellbeing. In Accra, Ghana, researchers evaluated the impact of an affordable, in-service kindergarten teacher training, with and without a parental awareness program. Results showed that the training improved the number of the play-based, child-friendly activities teachers used and improved the quality of teacher-child interactions. However, adding the parent education component had a negative effect on teachers' use of emotional support and positive behavior management, and a small negative effect on child outcomes.

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<b>TIMELINE:</b>	2015-2017
<b>STUDY SAMPLE:</b>	240 schools; 480 Kindergarten teachers; 3,600 parent-child pairs
<b>SECTOR:</b>	Education
<b>TOPICS:</b>	Early Childhood Development, Education Quality, Human Capital & Skills, Training & Mentoring

## Key Findings

1. The in-service teacher training improved the number of the play-based, child-friendly activities used while teaching and improved the quality of teacher-child interactions.
2. The in-service training led to a small positive improvement in children's school readiness, primarily in the domain of social-emotional development.
3. Adding the parent education component had a negative effect on teachers' use of emotional support and positive behavior management, and a small negative effect on child outcomes.

## Policy Issue

Although most children across sub-Saharan Africa have gained access to free primary education, many students arrive at school without the skills they need to succeed there. The early childhood years represent a crucial window for development, as it is during these early years that children form the basis for future learning. Because of this, there is a growing consensus that investments in early childhood have high returns, and that missed opportunities to promote early childhood development could lead to lasting deficits in children's educational attainment and future wellbeing. This research examines two ways to raise the quality of preprimary education in Ghana: training kindergarten teachers, and educating parents about how to encourage high-quality kindergarten education in their child's school.

## Evaluation Context

In 2007, the Government of Ghana expanded two years of preprimary (kindergarten) education to be included in the country's universal education. The quality of preprimary education in Ghana is low, particularly in urban and semi-urban settings, where low-cost private and public preschools account for over 90 percent of preprimary options. The majority of kindergarten teachers are untrained, and many only have a primary education. At the same time, parents of kindergarteners are

largely uninformed about what high quality kindergarten teaching looks like, and they may pressure teachers to use methods that are developmentally inappropriate (for example, rote repetition of letters and numbers).

The research will take place in six districts of the Greater Accra Region, across public and private schools serving children enrolled in kindergarten, aged 4-6 years.

## Intervention Description

Researchers evaluated the impact of a short, in-service kindergarten teacher training program delivered by the National Nursery Teacher Training Center (NNTTC), with and without a parental awareness program, on teacher well-being, classroom quality, child learning, and parental knowledge of and attitudes towards early childhood education. Researchers randomly assigned 240 schools to either receive the training, both programs, or neither (comparison group). Each group was comprised of 80 schools (40 public, 40 private).

***In-service teacher training:*** NNTTC's training for kindergarten teachers and head teachers began with a five-day course, followed by a two-day refresher training four months later, and a one-day refresher four months after that. The program offered experiential training for teachers, and included ongoing monitoring and support. The training focused on helping teachers provide age-appropriate/play-based

instructional techniques and an encouraging, positive classroom environment.

***Parental awareness:*** This program consisted of three educational sessions (one per term) held during PTA meetings. District counselors screen videos, followed by discussion, which focused (1) play-based learning, (2) parents' role in child learning, and (3) encouraging parent-teacher and parent-school communication.

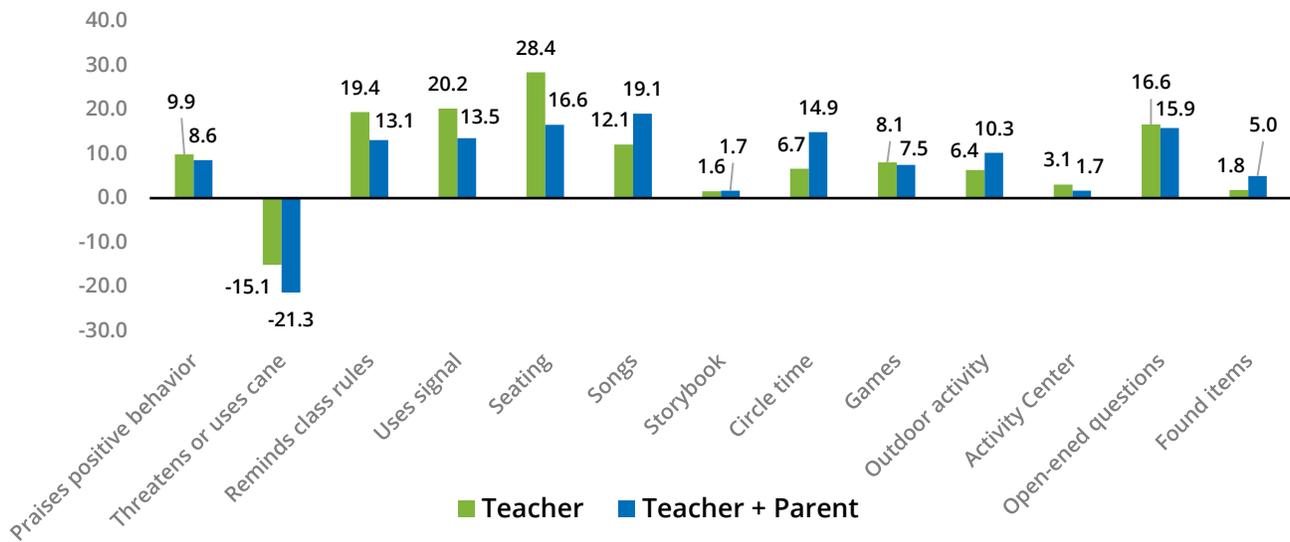
In addition, at each of the 240 schools, researchers randomly chose 15 kindergarten students and measured their school readiness skills, including early academic skills, social-emotional development, and behavioral outcomes. Researchers also planned to follow one cohort of students as they started primary school in order to understand whether the program had any effect on children's learning outcomes in their first year of primary school.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM YEAR 1 OF THE PROGRAM

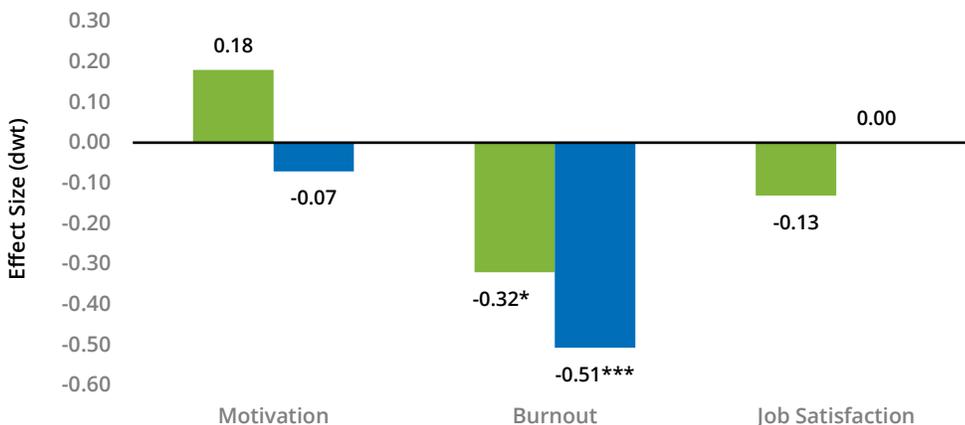
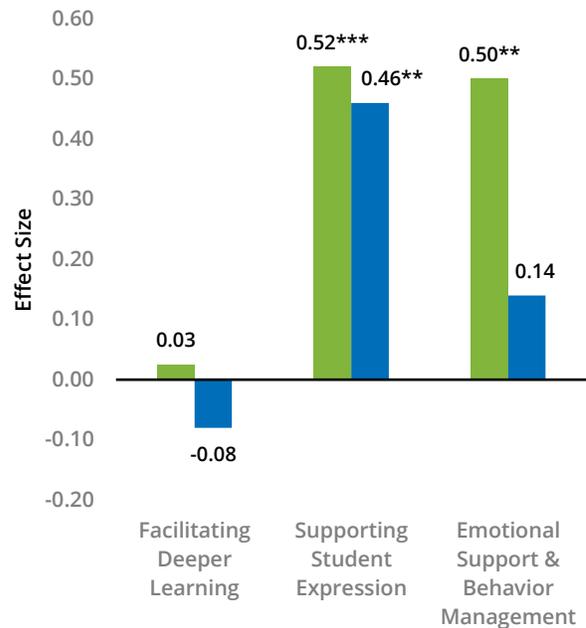
**Teachers who were offered the training implemented many of the activities encouraged in the training.** In observing teaching practices, we look for a set of practices specifically that were incorporated

into the training. We find that on average, teachers in the training program implemented **1.5 activities** compared to the comparison group teachers; and these increases occurred in a wide range of different types of activities.

Percent Increase in Classrooms Displaying Each Behavior

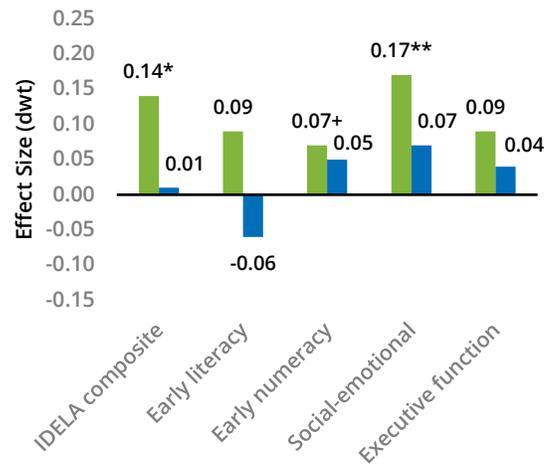


In addition, the teacher training improved the quality of teacher-child interactions in the classroom. Specifically, the program improved teachers' supporting of student expression (e.g., supporting students to reason and problem solve, consider student ideas) and emotional support and behavior management (e.g., positive climate, consistent routine). The program did not improve teachers' facilitation of deeper learning (e.g., scaffolding, quality feedback). These skills might need more intensive and content-focused training. Notably, **the addition of the parenting program did not enhance the impacts of the program.** In fact, there were negative impacts on teachers' employment of emotional support and behavior management strategies.

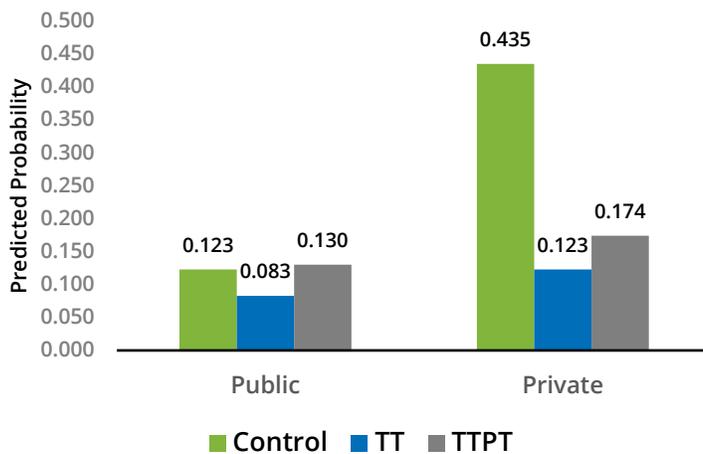


The teacher training reduced teacher burnout, but did not improve motivation or job satisfaction.

**The in-service teacher training improved children’s overall school readiness score, primarily in the area of social-emotional development.** However, the addition of the parenting program negatively impacted child outcomes in the areas of early numeracy and early literacy, and classroom emotional support and behavior management. This suggests that there was a negative result from the parenting program.



### Reductions in Turnover in the Private Sector



### The teacher training reduced teacher turnover in the private sector.

Specifically, the training reduced the probability that a teacher would leave the kindergarten classroom by the third term from 43.5% to 12.3% (teacher training condition) and 17.4% (teacher and parent training condition). Notably, in private schools the program reduced turnover to levels similar to the public sector.

## Conclusions

- The in-service teacher training was largely effective in making classrooms more child-friendly and developmentally appropriate. These changes had the largest impact on children’s social-emotional development compared to other developmental domains. Policymakers should consider how to build on this to and integrate a more enriching literacy and numeracy experience for children.
- Social-emotional skills are considered critical components to promote child wellbeing and academic learning. Thus, a follow-up of children in the spring of 2017 will enable researchers to measure if impacts on socio-emotional development

lead to future impacts in other developmental domains.

- The role of parents is critical, and results suggest that parents may require much more intensive training than the brief intervention tested in QP4G. Careful consideration must be given as to why the parenting component had negative impacts on child development.
- Finally, the program was found to be equally effective in the public and private sector, suggesting that the conditions for teachers may not differ greatly across the sectors and that trainings could be useful for teachers in both public and private schools.