

TEACHER CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PLAY- BASED EARLY LEARNING IN GHANA AND SIERRA LEONE

PROJECT BACKGROUND

“Teacher Capacity Building for Play-based Early Learning in Ghana and Sierra Leone” is a KIX/GPE and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) supported research project being conducted by the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana and Associates for Change (AfC) in Ghana along with the Division of Education Studies, University of Sierra Leone. The KIX IDRC research seeks to bring together multiple stakeholders in early childhood education in Ghana and Sierra Leone to enhance the capacity of teachers to implement innovations in play-based learning at early childhood level of education. These innovations in play-based approaches will assess the shift in teaching towards more play-based approaches by evaluating the teaching and learning outcomes across a variety of schools in urban and rural areas along with the cost of implementation. The purpose is to generate evidence of what works to improve classroom practice of play-based learning in early childhood education in Ghana and Sierra Leone.

The overarching objective of the study is to explore how the selected education innovations can help close the trained teacher gap at early childhood education level and within community-based learning centers, particularly in rural and extreme poverty zones across Ghana and Sierra Leone.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Generate knowledge on innovative pedagogies to improve the capacity of teachers in early childhood education to implement play-based learning in the classroom.
- Bring together multiple stakeholders to collectively collaborate to upscale the innovative pedagogies for play-based learning in the classroom.
- Identify ways to improve gender, physical and social inclusion in play-based learning in early childhood education.
- Identify the least-cost innovation for teacher training in play-based pedagogies that offers an opportunity for scalability.
- Identify low-cost approaches to the training and deployment of volunteer teachers at the early grade level to serve in remote rural areas.

Learners at the early childhood level



Source: Fieldwork

Research Design and Methodology

The project adopts a mixed-methods research, specifically, a sequential exploratory approach. This design is characterized by an initial qualitative phase of data collection and analysis, followed by a phase of quantitative data collection and analysis, with a final stage of interpretation and explanation of qualitative and quantitative results.

Stakeholder and Government Partnerships

The study adopts a Collaborative Learning and Adaptation (CLA) approach to engage stakeholders in civil society organizations and government agencies. This study will help produce substantial evidence, promote policy development and support the dialogue on building early childhood teachers' capacity to enhance learning through Play-Based Approaches.

Countries and Education Innovations of Focus

- **Ghana:** Right to Play (RTP) and Sabre Education
- **Sierra Leone:** Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL)

Sampled Sites

- 4 districts where Right to Play and Sabre Education, Ghana have a direct implementation of pre-service and in-service training of early childhood educators on play-based methods.
- 4 districts in Sierra Leone where Teach for Sierra Leone is training and placing volunteer teachers in early childhood centers to teach using play.
- At least 2-3 teacher training colleges in each country that are involved in or near the innovator programs will also be selected for study, likely those where UNICEF and the Governments have been working on early childhood preservice curriculum improvements.

PROGRESS

- **Literature Review:** A Systematic review of high-quality literature on early childhood education in Africa has been conducted, touching on areas such as; relevance of Play-based Learning; Educational Innovators in the early learning space and their interventions.
- **Meta-Analysis:** A meta-analysis has been done to investigate the effectiveness of teacher capacity building methods for play-based learning around the globe that can be replicated in Ghana and Sierra Leone.

Play-based learning center in a classroom



Source: Fieldwork

Qualitative exploratory study

The first phase of the qualitative exploratory study has been conducted across selected Basic Education schools across 2 regions in Ghana and Sierra Leone. The study samples include 4 college principals/vice principals, 8 College of education tutors, 48 basic school head teachers, 24 early childhood teachers (KG1-P2), 8 district directors of education/SISOs, 8 early childhood education district coordinators, 4 district programme coordinators/facilitators.

At the school level the study was conducted in selected schools across 2 regions in

Ghana as represented below:

- **Target population:** The target population at the school level were; Headteachers, Teachers teaching at the early childhood level (KG1-P2), Early graders, Parents/PTA members. At the college level, the target population consisted of; District directors of

education/SISOs, Early childhood education coordinators, District programme coordinators/facilitators.

- **Instruments/Tools:** School Level Instrumentation included; Interview guide for headteachers, Interview guide for early childhood teachers (KG1-P2), Lesson observation instrument for early childhood classrooms (KG1-P2), Post-lesson observation interview guide for early childhood teachers, Play-based interaction with early graders (KG1-P2), Interview guide for parents and/or PTA members; District Level Instrumentation: Interview guide for District Director of Education, Interview guide for Early Childhood Education Coordinators, Interview guide for School Improvement Support Officers, NGO Level Instrumentation, District programme coordinators and facilitators of the innovators.

NEXT STEPS

Second phase of qualitative exploratory study: The first phase of the qualitative exploratory study is to be conducted across selected Colleges of Education across 2 regions in Ghana and Sierra Leone respectively. At the college level, the target population includes; College principals/vice principals, College tutors and Third year students offering early childhood education.

Quantitative data collection and analysis: This is a quasi-experimental design using inputs from the findings of the preceding qualitative survey in Phase 2 to develop survey instruments and hypotheses to test the effects of play-based innovations in early childhood education in Ghana and Sierra Leone. In this study, the treatment population will be schools that are beneficiaries of the innovations by Sabre Education and Right To Play in Ghana; and Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) in Sierra Leone. The population for the control group, however, will comprise schools with limited or different play-based innovations from both government and non-state actors.

Early childhood learners



Source: Fieldwork

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