

Education Research in Global Contexts

Global Education

Linking Theory and Practice

Edited by

Kristy Kelly



Global Education

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Global Education: Linking Theory and Practice

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*Dedicated to
Dr. Penny Hammrich
Dean of the School of Education
Drexel University*

May 13, 1964–August 11, 2022

She devoted her life to education and nurturing others.

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List of Abbreviations

BBMP	Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike
CAP	Custom and Practice
CIE	Comparative and International Education
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
COPA	Comité des Parents
COVID-19	Coronavirus-19 Disease
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EA	East Asia
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EGMA	Early Grade Math Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GALOP	Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GES	Ghana Education Service
GIR	Gross Intake Rate
GOP	Republican Party (Grand Old Party)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPA	Innovations for Poverty Action
IS	Integrated Studies
K-12	Kindergarten Through 12th Grade
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning, Asexual and Many Other Terms (Such as Intersex, Nonbinary and Pansexual)
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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MEXT	Ministry of Education Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
NA	North America
NECCD	National Early Childhood Care and Development Policy
NGO	Nongovernment Organization
NNTTC	National Nursery Teacher Training Center
NTC	National Teaching Council's
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OISE	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
PCI	Peace Child Israel
PRRI	Public Religions Research Institute
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
QP4G	Quality Preschool for Ghana Project
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
SC	Scheduled Castes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SR	Sadaka Reut
SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
ST	Scheduled Tribes
TIPPS	Teacher Instructional Processes and Practices Scale
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WE	Western Europe

About the Editors

Editor

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These volumes are the product of countless conversations about the need to bring global, comparative, and international education research and practice into the field of teacher education. I would like to offer my gratitude to colleagues at Drexel University's School of Education, a pioneering institution and one of the first to offer an online global and international education master's degree. Special thanks to Bill Lynch who served as the Dean of the School of Education and saw potential in the Global Education Colloquium (GEC) when he hired me as the Program Director of the Global and International Education Program. Rebecca Clothey mentored and supported me as a junior faculty member, and through the years. Tina Richardson encouraged me to start the GEC. Funding from the School of Education, College of Arts and Sciences, Office of Global Engagement, Temple University, and University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center and South Asia Center allowed the Colloquium to expand. Penny Hammrich first inspired the idea to turn the Colloquium into a publication.

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Global Education Colloquium (GEC)

The GEC at Drexel University was founded in 2013, on the premise that providing a forum for rich dialogue about issues facing education today would lead to more engaged research and creative exchange of ideas, and in turn improve practice.

The chapters included here emerged from GEC presentations by leading education scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in the field. Their original presentations are linked below.

Chapter 1 Improving Classroom Quality and Children’s Learning in Early Childhood Education: Evidence From a Policy-Research Partnership in Ghana

Sharon Wolf, J. Lawrence Aber, Jere R. Behrman and Edward Tsinigo

GEC link: *Longitudinal Experimental Impacts on the ‘Quality Preschool for Ghana’ Interventions on Classroom Quality, Teacher Professional Well-Being, and Children’s School Readiness: Implications for System-level Reform*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SizOmDWtFGA>

Chapter 2 Intersectional Influences of Socioeconomic Status, Gender, and Location on Education Consultants’ Opportunities and Experiences

Caroline (Carly) Manion

GEC link: *Exploring the Intersections and Implications of Gender, Race, and Class in Educational Development Consulting*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgzzWrfpD1s>

Chapter 3 Sowing Seeds of Change Through Binational Encounters in Israel

Karen Ross

GEC link: *Sowing Seeds of Change: Education for Partnership Between Jews and Palestinians in Israel*
https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1513041/uiconf_id/28273021/entry_id/1_1sqjtw17/embed/dynamic

Chapter 4 Gender and Sexuality in Early Childhood: Lessons for African Feminists

Deevia Bhana

GEC link: *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Educational Space: A Three-Ply Yarn Approach* (link unavailable)

Chapter 5 To Be Roma, to Be Disabled: Management of Ethnic Identity and Disability

Andria D. Timmer

GEC link: *Separate and Unequal: High School in a “Gypsy” Village*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkcO1bA0ebc>

Chapter 6 The Politics of Knowledge and Cultural Survival for Uyghur Immigrants in Türkiye

Rebecca Clothey

GEC link: *A Diaspora in Cultural Crises: Non-Formal Education and Ethnic Uyghur Migrants in Turkey*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-MCzLXjIj8>

Chapter 7 What Religion Can Teach Us About Schooling and Citizenship-Making in the 21st Century

Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher

GEC link: *A Return to God? Muslim Youth, Education, Politics, and Identity in a Post-Modern World*
https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1513041/uiconf_id/28273021/entry_id/1_29uec097/embed/dynamic

Chapter 8 Decisions Taken in Undecidable Terrain: Donor Intervention, Discourses, and Perpetuation of the Educational Myth in the Democratic Republic of Congo
Bjorn H. Nordtveit

GEC link: *Imperialist Methodologies: Evaluation in Donor-Driven Projects*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLPqLr8vwAM>

Chapter 9 The Role of the Teacher in Education Reform: Views From Japan and Indonesia
Christopher Bjork

GEC link: *High Stakes Schooling: Asian Experiences with Testing, Accountability and Education Reform*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTsR4Dc5fs4&embeds_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fdrexel.edu%2F&embeds_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fdrexel.edu&feature=emb_logo

Chapter 10 Deciding What to Champion: Local Female Elected Officials Prioritize Their Power
Supriya Baily

GEC link: *Making Room for More Indira Gandhis: The Evolution of Women Leaders in Local Elections*
https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1513041/uiconf_id/28273021/entry_id/1_8h6cp8zj/embed/dynamic

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Introduction: Linking Theory and Practice in Global Education

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Abstract

Teacher education programs play a crucial role in helping teachers develop a global perspective. While many teacher education programs are making efforts to incorporate global education into their curricula and pedagogy, there are still some gaps and challenges. One of the key challenges is limited resources for teaching about global education. This book aims to fill that gap with clearly written chapters by leading scholars and professionals in global education, linked to open-access virtual presentations by authors about their work, and suggestions of how to incorporate them into teacher education classrooms. The authors hope this volume will be useful for expanding the number of programs bringing global perspectives to the next generation of teachers and their students. This chapter introduces the field of global education and some of the key subfields including peace education, comparative and international education, education and development, human rights education, and sustainable development education. This chapter offers a framework for linking theory and practice through teacher education and outlines the goals of the book.

Keywords: Global education; peace education; comparative and international education; human rights education; sustainable development education; teacher education

The chapters in this volume emerged out of a speaker series at Drexel University, called the Global Education Colloquium (GEC). The monthly speaker series was organized by the Global and International Education program, led collectively by Jennifer Adams, Rebecca Clothey, and Kristy Kelly, from 2013 to 2021. The GEC was founded on the premise that providing a forum for rich dialog about global issues impacting teachers and students, we could find solutions to those challenges. The GEC is composed of faculty, students, staff and community members who make global education their central focus for research and teaching, and those

who incorporate global and education analysis into their areas of their primary pursuit. Our mission is to connect theory with practice to develop a coherent vision that would lead to more engaged research and best practice initiatives in education.

The GEC is interdisciplinary, with research spanning from micro to macro levels of analysis, quantitative and qualitative research methods, and theoretical to applied orientations. The GEC shares a commitment to producing rigorous scholarship aimed at understanding education institutions, education process, and the social and cultural factors that affect them. We frame education – whether studied locally, globally, or internationally – as shaped by and with the potential to shape social change taking place on a global scale.

Leading global education scholars and professionals were invited to share their work with the GEC members. Most of the talks were livestreamed and interactive even from the start in 2013. We recorded and made all talks publicly available on the GEC website at Drexel University’s School of Education. Education faculty around the world have incorporated these talks into their undergraduate and graduate courses, especially those preparing the next generation of K-12 teachers interested in incorporating global issues into their classrooms. To that end, we invited the many contributors to the GEC to share updates on their research and practitioner work with us. This book is the product of this work.

The chapters in this book have been written to be incorporated into teacher education preparation programs around the world. They may be used individually, or with their associated archived GEC talk, or the book may be assigned as a full text. The concluding chapter offers practical suggestions for how chapters might be assigned by type of education (formal, informal, and nonformal), regions of the world (Asia, Africa, Middle East, global connections), or thematically (gender and sexuality, neoliberalism and globalization, early childhood education, peace education, and inclusive education). It concludes by providing suggestions for incorporating chapters into teacher education courses as part of classroom discussion, via learning by teaching pedagogy, and policy analysis.

Global education is an approach to education that emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging with the interconnected and interdependent world in which we live. It focuses on developing knowledge, skills, and values that enable individuals to participate effectively in a globalized world and to work toward a more sustainable and equitable future. It involves teaching about global issues, such as climate change, human rights, sustainable development, inequality, and intercultural understanding. It also involves exploring the connections between local and global issues and promoting global citizenship and social responsibility. Global education can take many forms, including classroom instruction, experiential learning, service learning, and community engagement. It is often integrated into existing K-12 subjects and curricula such as social studies, science, and language arts.

What Is Global Education?

Global education has its roots in the field of Comparative and International Education, which has its roots in the late 19th century and early 20th century, when scholars and educators began to take an interest in the ways that education systems differed across countries and cultures. In the early years of the field, scholars focused on comparing educational systems in different countries to understand the factors that contributed to their success or failure. During the mid-20th century, the field of comparative and international education expanded rapidly, as scholars from around the world began to collaborate and share their research findings. This period was marked by a growing interest in the role of education in economic development and the spread of Western education models to other parts of the world. In the latter part of the 20th century, the field shifted its focus to issues such as gender, multiculturalism, and globalization. Researchers began to explore the ways that education systems were impacted by social and cultural factors and how education could be used as a tool for social change and development.

Today, the field of global education continues to grow and evolve, as scholars work to understand the complex relationships between education, culture, and society. The field is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on insights from anthropology, sociology, political science, economics, and other social sciences, and it has become an important tool for policymakers and educators around the world. It encompasses a variety of subfields including comparative education, international education, peace education, human rights education, and education and development.

Comparative education is the study of educational systems, practices, and policies in different countries or regions, with the aim of understanding the similarities and differences between them. It involves comparing educational systems across different contexts and analyzing the factors that contribute to their success or failure. The field of comparative education seeks to answer questions such as: How do different countries approach education, and what are the underlying cultural, political, and economic factors that influence their systems? What are the similarities and differences between educational policies and practices in different countries, and how do they impact student outcomes? How can education systems in different countries learn from each other and adopt best practices to improve student learning? Comparative education involves both quantitative and qualitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, case studies, and cross-national analyses. It is a multidisciplinary field that draws on insights from education, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, and other social sciences. Comparative education is used by policymakers, educators, and researchers to learn from the experiences of other countries and to identify innovative practices that can be adapted to local contexts. It also helps to promote cross-cultural understanding and collaboration in the field of education.

International education refers to educational activities that involve a global perspective and a focus on intercultural understanding, exchange, and cooperation. It involves learning about different cultures and languages and engaging in

activities that promote international understanding and global citizenship. International education can take many forms, including study abroad programs, international student exchange programs, global learning initiatives, and international development projects. It also includes the study of international issues such as globalization, human rights, and sustainable development, and the promotion of intercultural communication and understanding, each of which may be considered their own subfields. International education is important because it helps individuals to develop a global mindset and the skills needed to thrive in a globalized world. It promotes intercultural understanding and communication and helps to break down barriers between cultures and countries. It also contributes to the development of a more peaceful and sustainable world by promoting cross-cultural cooperation and collaboration. International education is often supported by international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, and the World Bank, as well as by governments, nongovernmental organizations, and educational institutions.

Peace education is an interdisciplinary field that aims to promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to create a culture of peace and nonviolence. It involves teaching individuals how to resolve conflicts peacefully, how to build relationships based on respect and empathy, and how to work together to address social and environmental issues that contribute to violence and conflict. Peace education can take many forms, including classroom instruction, community workshops, youth programs, and nonformal education initiatives. It focuses on developing critical thinking skills, intercultural communication skills, and conflict resolution skills, as well as promoting values such as respect, tolerance, and compassion.

Peace education helps individuals to develop the skills and attitudes needed to create a more peaceful and just society. It promotes a vision of a world without violence or war and encourages individuals to take action to address social and environmental issues that contribute to conflict and inequality. It is supported by a variety of organizations, including UNESCO, the United Nations, and many nongovernmental organizations. What makes peace education unique is how it is often integrated into community-based programs, adult education, and other nonformal initiatives in postconflict contexts. Some of the key goals of peace education include creating a culture of peace and nonviolence, promoting human rights and social justice, developing positive relationships based on respect and empathy, fostering intercultural understanding and cooperation, and encouraging civic engagement and social responsibility. While not unique to peace education, curriculum and pedagogy interventions in this field center these goals and evaluate impact.

Human rights education promotes the understanding, awareness, and respect for human rights, as well as the skills and attitudes needed to defend and promote human rights. It seeks to empower individuals and communities to recognize and address violations of human rights and to promote the values of dignity, equality, and justice. Like peace education, human rights education takes many forms including formal education in schools and universities, nonformal education in community settings, and informal education through media, art, and cultural activities.

It can be integrated into a wide range of subjects, including history, social studies, civics, and language arts. The goals of human rights education include promoting awareness and understanding of human rights and the principles of social justice and equality; developing the skills and attitudes needed to defend and promote human rights, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication; fostering a culture of respect for human rights and diversity and combating discrimination and prejudice; and empowering individuals and communities to take action to address human rights violations, including advocacy, activism, and community organizing. Scholars in the field of human rights education study a range of topics related to the theory, practice, and impact of human rights education, often focusing on curriculum and pedagogy, evaluation and impact, teacher education and professional development, policy and governance, global citizenship, diversity and inclusion, and social justice.

Education and development is a field that examines the relationship between education and social and economic development. Education and development scholars view education as a key factor in promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, and promoting social well-being. This field often intersects with health, social mobility, development of human capital, policy, citizenship education, immigrant and refugee education, and sustainable development. This field is supported by a variety of organizations, including national governments, multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, and nongovernmental organizations. There is also a growing recognition of the importance of private sector involvement in education and development, particularly in the areas of skill development, workforce training, and sustainable development.

In the field of education and development, scholars and practitioners work to improve education policy which involves analyzing and evaluating the policies and practices of governments and other organizations related to education and development, including issues of access, quality, and equity. They also often work in education planning which involves developing strategies and plans for the provision of education and training at the national, regional, and local levels, considering the social and economic context. Specialists also work on curriculum and pedagogy, including improving the role of technology and new media in teaching and learning around the world.

Sustainable development education is another important field of global education. It refers to development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development involves economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and education can contribute to each of these dimensions in important ways. Sustainable development education focuses on education about climate change, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable consumption and production. It also can focus on technical skills, business skills, and leadership skills, as well as education about the role of markets, trade, and globalization in economic development. It also includes research and practitioner work on human rights, gender equality, and social justice, as well as education about cultural diversity and intercultural understanding. Overall, the sustainable development

education field centers education as a key factor in promoting sustainable development and argues that investing in education is essential for achieving global sustainable development goals.

These are just a few of the subfields of global education. As others have argued before, the field is a scholarly field and professional area that is diverse in terms of topical focus, practical implementation, regional and cultural context, and education impact. It is also diverse in terms of theoretical framework as scholars rely on methods and theories from other disciplines including sociology, political science, psychology, anthropology, history, economics, policy, and international relations. The focus may be local, international, global, or translocal and may include early childhood education, elementary, secondary, tertiary, or adult education. Scholars may look across organizational or systems level or across space, time, and geography. It is a field broadly inclusive of all methods, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, units of analysis, disciplinary traditions, and issue areas.

Linking Theory and Practice

Global education plays a dual role as both a theoretical framework and a practical approach in education. Global education as a theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of the world. It explores how global issues – such as sustainability, cultural diversity, human rights, poverty, and conflict – are interrelated and how education can address these challenges. It also provides theoretical insights into how global inequalities, cultural exchange, and systems of power operate. This includes exploring issues like postcolonialism, globalization’s impact on education systems, and cultural hegemony. The theory of global education promotes the idea of global citizenship, encouraging individuals to think beyond national borders and adopt a more inclusive worldview. It seeks to empower learners to become informed, responsible, and active participants in global society. As a theoretical approach, global education questions existing practices and policies in education that perpetuate inequality. It seeks to embed social justice, equity, and respect for human dignity in education systems.

In practice, global education involves integrating global themes into the curriculum. Topics such as climate change, international human rights, global economies, and cultural diversity are included in various subject areas. It also focuses on fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and adaptability – skills essential for thriving in a globalized world. Practices such as international student exchange programs, service learning, or virtual collaborations with schools in other countries allow students to engage directly with global issues. Global education emphasizes culturally responsive teaching methods that value diverse perspectives, experiences, and knowledge systems. It encourages educators to create inclusive classrooms that reflect global realities. Finally, global education plays a significant role in professional development, equipping teachers with the tools, resources, and perspectives needed to address global topics and prepare students for participation in a globalized society.

While many teacher education programs are making efforts to incorporate global education into their curricula and pedagogy, there are still some gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. One of the key challenges is limited resources for teaching about global education. Many teacher education programs may not have sufficient resources or materials for teaching about global education, such as textbooks, classroom resources, and professional development opportunities. This book aims to fill that gap with clearly written chapters by leading scholars and professionals, linked to open-access virtual presentations by authors about their work, and suggestions of how to incorporate their work into teacher education classrooms. Teacher education programs play a crucial role in helping teachers develop a global perspective. We hope this volume will be useful for expanding the number of programs bringing global perspectives to the next generation of teachers and their students.

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Chapter 1

Improving Classroom Quality and Children's Learning in Early Childhood Education: Evidence From a Policy–Research Partnership in Ghana

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Abstract

This chapter critically reviews opportunities and challenges in designing and conducting actionable research on improving preprimary school quality and children's learning and development, with a case study in Ghana. We describe the development of a research–practice partnership among university-based researchers, a local research organization, and Ghana's Ministry of Education. The partnership developed and evaluated an in-service teacher training and a parental awareness program. Both programs pursued the same goals of increasing child-centered and play-based learning and improving children's school readiness. We discuss the successes and challenges of scaling-up a successful teacher in-service training program. In addition, we describe unexpected findings of the parental awareness program that pose several new research questions. Implications for future research on measuring and improving preprimary educational quality through similar research–practice partnerships are discussed.

Keywords: Early childhood education; preprimary; classroom quality; teacher training; school readiness; Ghana; sub-Saharan Africa

Children's participation in early childhood education (ECE) is increasing worldwide. Many high-income countries have already achieved nearly universal ECE access for children ages three to five (OECD, 2015). ECE access is lower in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), with regional averages ranging from 17.9% of 3- and 4-year-olds in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to 61.7% in Latin America and the Caribbean (McCoy et al., 2018). Despite relatively low enrollment in SSA, demand for ECE is growing. Research on ECE quality in SSA is limited. Process quality – which refers to the nature of children's daily interactions and experiences in the classroom – is considered the driver of child development and learning (Pianta, 2005). Structural quality – which refers to regulable resources, such as class size, student–teacher ratio, and teacher training and education (Slot et al., 2015) – is considered important for improving learning outcomes only to the extent that it promotes process quality (Phillips et al., 2000; Pianta, 2005). Global reports suggest that overall, the structural quality of services in SSA is low (UNESCO, 2015), while research on process quality and children's learning is scarce. For governments to successfully monitor and improve ECE quality at scale, researcher–governmental partnerships are needed to help define context-specific quality and develop both monitoring tools and teacher training models.

This chapter summarizes a 5-year partnership among US.-based academics, Ghana's Ministry of Education (MOE), a local research organization, and other stakeholders to develop and evaluate a nationally scalable in-service teacher training and parental awareness program to improve ECE process quality and children's learning. We reflect on what it takes to grow and sustain a multi-stakeholder partnership. We also consider the role of a critical partner based in Ghana – Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) – and the long-term and ongoing relationship building they conducted with the government that was central for the project. We focus on key areas in assessing research and policy partnerships as proposed by Georgalakis and Rose (2019), including bounded mutuality, sustained interactivity, and policy adaptability, and consider each of these qualities in reflecting on the processes and outcomes related to the project.

Ghana's ECE Landscape

In 2004, Ghana's government adopted the National Early Childhood Care and Development (NECCD) Policy, which highlighted access to quality ECE as central to improving early childhood development and reducing learning inequalities. In 2007, 2 years of ECE – called *kindergarten 1* (KG1; for 4-year-olds) and *kindergarten 2* (KG2; for 5-year-olds) – were added to the universal basic educational system that previously had begun in primary school. As a result, Ghana has one of the highest ECE enrollment rates in SSA at 75% net enrollment in 2015–2016 (Ghana Ministry of Education, 2016). But classroom quality and learning are low (Ghana Education Service, 2013).

Similar to primary schools, Ghanaian ECE tends to focus primarily on academic skill development (Agbenyega, 2018), reflecting the demands of many parents for highly structured and “academically rigorous” education (Bidwell & Watine, 2014; Jukes et al., 2018). Researchers have raised concerns that the “traditional” educational approaches used in many African countries (e.g., rote instruction and memorization) are developmentally inappropriate for young children (Agbenyega, 2018; Akyeampong, 2017). These practices contrast with “modernist” approaches to ECE (i.e., child-centered, activity- and play-based approaches) that address social skills and unique needs of very young children (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). When adopting the NECCD Policy, the government also created a kindergarten curriculum rooted in progressive, modernist approaches. The curriculum stipulates that play and creative activities, as opposed to academic work, should be central (Ghana Education Service, 2013). Both public and private ECE programs are expected to comply with the national curriculum. Yet a 2012 Government Kindergarten Situational Report concluded that teachers had not been systematically trained in the curriculum and that most teachers had not incorporated the curriculum into their practices (Ghana Education Service, 2012). The report concluded that training kindergarten teachers was a top educational policy priority, with a secondary priority to engage parents.

Public and private sectors. The private ECE sector in Ghana, as elsewhere in SSA, has grown recently. The sector has responded quickly to families’ demands for expanded ECE, particularly in urbanizing areas. The majority of these private ECE programs charge low fees, cater to low-income families, and struggle to cover their costs (Baum et al., 2018). Parents often perceive them to be of better quality than public programs (Dixon & Tooley, 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2018), contributing to their growth (e.g., Bidwell & Watine, 2014).

While public and private kindergartens in Ghana are required to follow the national curriculum, a major concern for policy makers remains low educational quality and inadequate standards enforcement in both sectors. However, the public and private sectors differ in terms of structural characteristics. For example, there are few requirements for private sector teacher credentials, while public sector teachers are required to have diplomas in Basic Education obtained from approved colleges of education (Asare & Nti, 2014). Public sector teachers are civil servants and receive guaranteed remuneration levels and job security, while private sector teachers are generally paid less with no job security (Osei, 2006).

The role of parents. Parenting is a critical input to early childhood human capital formation (e.g., Schoellman, 2016). In our early meetings, stakeholders raised the important roles of parents in ECE and advocated that parents be included in the project. In promoting achievement across primary and secondary school, significant roles of families, family–school relations, and parental involvement in education have been clearly identified (e.g., Hill & Chao, 2009). Whether the same associations for parental involvement hold in low-resourced, low-literacy environments like Ghana, where many parents themselves have not completed their primary or secondary education, is much less researched.

While parenting practices in early childhood have been well-documented and researched across diverse contexts (e.g., [Bornstein et al., 2015](#); [Mesman et al., 2018](#)), less research exists on parents' ECE involvement and their engagement with teachers in SSA. For younger children, regular communication between parents and schools may be particularly beneficial as it allows for working together toward school readiness. At the time of our study, there was very little literature on parental engagement in ECE settings and its effects on children, or on evidence-based intervention strategies to promote parental engagement.

The Quality Preschool for Ghana Project (QP4G)

The QP4G project began in 2014. IPA had completed a scoping study of the state of ECE in Accra (along with three other African cities) and was in discussions with Ghana's MOE about next steps. A MOE priority was to improve ECE quality. IPA reached out to the authors to collaborate to find or develop a cost-effective scalable model of transformational teacher training and to test the added benefits of engaging parents via an awareness campaign to align parental expectations with these new teacher practices.

At project initiation, a steering committee composed of various stakeholders was established that met twice in 2015 to guide the project, offer advice and direction, and provide insight into how best to address some of the pitfalls that would arise over the course of the project. The Steering Committee was responsible for ensuring the feasibility of the QP4G project in a direction consistent with the overall plans of the MOE. Steering Committee members participated in field visits to the project's schools. In addition to actively engaging the steering committee, a Policy Level Influence Plan was created to strategically engage decision makers to ensure the study remained a priority for policymakers and private sector influencers. This was done through consistent communication, holding meetings with key stakeholders, and incorporating various influencers into different parts of the implementation through monitoring, coaching and general oversight of trainings.

At the initial planning meeting, we discussed the needs of ECE teachers and the importance of conducting an impact evaluation to understand causal program effects. The project that was devised in collaboration with the advisory group aimed to build capacity and support for implementation of the 2004 kindergarten curriculum and to enhance the quality of kindergarten education. The goal was to develop and rigorously evaluate a scalable model of transformational teacher training to provide high-quality ECE and to test the benefits of a parental awareness campaign designed to align parental expectations with these practices. The programs were designed to improve classroom process quality and to enhance the development of children's school readiness within existing educational systems (i.e., district governments, a local teacher training center, and schools).

The implementing organization for the teacher program was the National Nursery Teacher Training Center (NNTTC), a teacher training center that is

funded partially by the Ghana Education Service (GES) in the MOE. NNTTC is the primary training center for ECE certification in Accra. We worked with NNTTC leadership and a nonprofit organization, Sabre Education, to condense and enhance their 8-week preservice training to be delivered in a 5-day in-service training format and to train district ECE coordinators to serve as teacher coaches. The parental awareness intervention (three videos) was created by hired local media consultants and implemented by ECE coordinators who work in the district education offices, who screened the videos and led discussions with caregivers through school Parent–Teacher Association meetings. IPA trained these district officers, and IPA and the researchers oversaw the video creation.

Six of the nine most disadvantaged districts in the Greater Accra Region were selected based on distance from the teacher training facility. Two-hundred-and-forty schools were randomly sampled, stratified by (a) district, and (b) public/private sector. Programs were randomized after the first round of baseline data collection to one of three conditions: (1) in-service teacher training program only; (2) in-service teacher training program plus parental awareness program; or (3) control condition.

Impact Evaluation Results

The impact evaluation allowed the project partners and stakeholders to test the two programs' effectiveness in improving teaching quality and child outcomes. Our regular engagement with our steering committee and governmental partners helped establish program ownership and led to vested interests in the research findings. We found that this brief, affordable, and scalable program improved several dimensions of teaching quality, teacher knowledge about early childhood development, and children's school readiness. The teacher training and coaching program produced a replicable and scalable model for the government to improve ECE quality in peri-urban areas (Wolf et al., 2019). Impacts on classroom processes (including Emotional Support and Behavior Management, and Supporting Student Expression) were moderate – 0.5–0.6 standard deviations – while impacts on children's academic and social–emotional outcomes were small – 0.13–0.18 standard deviations. These effect sizes are in line with many ECE teacher professional development studies. We found little evidence of impact heterogeneity by gender or baseline proficiency, suggesting that QP4G improved outcomes for these subgroups equally.

We also found moderate-sized reductions, much larger in the private sector, in teacher burnout and leaving the profession mid-year. Private sector teachers had lower educational qualifications and less teaching experience and were significantly younger compared with public sector teachers. The training may have improved self-efficacy among private sector teachers who had relatively fewer skills and training at baseline than public sector teachers. One implication is that private sector teacher retention may improve if schools invest in effective teacher professional development.

Results of the added effects of the parental awareness intervention were surprising. Rather than enhance teacher training program effectiveness, the parental awareness intervention *counter-acted* impacts on some dimensions of classroom quality and on all child outcomes. This led to follow-up qualitative research in which we found that parents worried that child-centered and play-based learning structures would hinder their children’s learning and pushed back on teachers implementing these methods. In addition, parents viewed their roles as providing basic necessities for their children, rather than “teachers” at home, and relied on teachers to support their children’s learning (Wolf, 2020).

Importantly, when the originally planned study ended, we raised further grant funds to continue to follow the children, making it the first longitudinal impact evaluation of an ECE quality improvement intervention in SSA. These additional follow-ups have allowed us to examine medium-term persistence and fade-out of impacts. We found small persistent impacts of the teacher training intervention for children’s social–emotional skills 1 year later (Wolf, Aber, Behrman, & Peele, 2019), and persistent impacts for children’s language and executive function skills 2 years later (Wolf, 2019). We also found negative impacts of the parental awareness program on numeracy outcomes 2 years later (Wolf, 2019).

Policy Engagement

The impact evaluation led to important evidence-based insights on the two programs’ effectiveness. We leveraged lessons from the implementation of and evidence from the project toward the achievement of three broad goals: (a) policy engagement, development, and implementation, (b) capacity strengthening, and (c) dissemination and data use. These activities have helped educationalists and policymakers consider how the QP4G findings could be used in their work through program planning, budgets, educational programs, or policy formulation and implementation.

Policy engagement, development, and implementation. In line with our team’s commitment to cocreating evidence and empowering policy makers to use evidence, we undertook several relationship-based engagement activities: stakeholder engagement, supporting ECE policy development, and supporting educational programming and implementation. This sustained interactivity led to a broad base of support and investment in the project.

Our efforts to maintain stakeholder engagement throughout the project included a wide, participatory process with our steering committee of designing intervention tools and materials to ensure buy-in from all stakeholders and promote program sustainability. This included quarterly meetings with membership comprising IPA, GES, private school associations, UNICEF, and NNTTC. After the project, our IPA partners continued to support the development of Ghana’s ECE policy, working with the Technical Working Group for ECE policy to make modifications, reviewed the final version of the indicator framework, and made additional ECE policy inputs. The broad goal of the policy is to create a systematic accountability framework to strengthen the subsector for efficient and

effective kindergarten service delivery to improve equitable access and quality education for all 4- to 5-year-olds. The policy focuses on five areas, including planning and management, curriculum development and implementation, teacher pre- and in-service training, family and community engagement, and monitoring, regulation, and quality assurance. The lessons from QP4G implementation and results provided considerable evidence to support the inputs that IPA made into the policy. New ECE policy was presented to the cabinet in August 2020, approved in September 2020, and launched in 2021.

Finally, our efforts to support educational programming and implementation were guided by the QP4G findings, which helped to shape the content creation and implementation of key government-led educational programs. IPA provided input into the National Teaching Council's (NTC) compliance framework for ECE service providers, which sets guidelines for ECE teacher training institutions (both preservice and in-service) and ECE instructors or teachers. The content includes play-based teacher training approaches, mentoring and coaching for teachers post-training, and equipping teachers with skills to engage parents/communities. The training module of this compliance framework is expected to be aligned with the ECE policy: Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP). IPA contributed toward the development of the training and school-based support and instructional leadership modules for GALOP, using lessons learned and evidence from the QP4G project. In addition, IPA supported the creation of assessment forms for the new kindergarten curriculum based on the QP4G project for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. These forms are expected to guide teachers' timely assessments of children's progress in kindergarten. In addition, IPA participated in workshops to develop the tools and also reviewed tools prepared for all four competency areas of the curriculum.

After QP4G ended, IPA also supported the creation of kindergarten inspection tools for the National Inspectorate Board through review and inputs on initial drafts. The kindergarten inspection tools cover lesson observation, school leadership, and compliance with MOE requirements for the establishment of a kindergarten. The culmination of this work is a plan by IPA and Pre-Tertiary Directorate of MOE to create an ECE Evidence Committee to ensure the alignment of evidence from ECE research with MOE and GES initiatives and to strengthen policy implementation. The ECE Evidence Committee is expected to be modeled after the QP4G Steering Committee but broadened to cover all ECE-related research.

Finally, we also conducted a comprehensive costing analysis of the teacher training and coaching program to inform our governmental partners of the financial costs for any future scale-up. We found that the QP4G per-teacher cost was \$402, which translates into a per-child cost of \$16. These estimates provide concrete figures for the government to consider when scaling-up the program.

Capacity strengthening. The QP4G project had an inherent capacity-strengthening strategy targeted at the district educational officials who participated in the project. The project was designed to use existing systems and structures at the district and national educational offices to build district

educational officials' capacities and ensure scalability. The capacity strengthening goal was to narrow the capacity gaps of district educational officials by equipping them with the necessary tools and resources and enhancing their skills and knowledge for conducting monitoring and coaching for teachers and head teachers and facilitating parental awareness trainings.

Dissemination and data use. Part of IPA's mission is to disseminate research results and facilitate their use in program design and evaluation through participatory conferences, print materials, and web-based tools that translate data into publicly accessible information. The academic researchers and IPA representatives gave presentations at both national and international conferences including at the Ghana National Education Week (2017, 2018, 2019), Accra; Ghana Teacher Prize (2018), Accra; Public Finance and Public Management in Africa workshop (2018), Accra; and Comparative and International Education Society (CIES 2019) in California, USA. We also created print materials, including policy briefs, academic publications, and project evaluation reports. Finally, the project summary, teacher training and survey materials, academic publications, and research results were posted on the project website and linked to deidentified survey datasets published on the World Bank Microdata Library.^{1,2} Varied users including implementing organizations, academics, development practitioners, and educationists across the world have accessed and used these materials.

Challenges and New Directions

We encountered several limitations and challenges throughout the project, some of which have led to new directions for our research and partnerships. The first and perhaps most important challenge pertains to the surprising counter-active impacts of the parental awareness intervention on teaching and child learning outcomes. It is clear that a better understanding of parental roles in shaping educational quality in SSA is needed. The counter-intuitive results were surprising but uncovered important dynamics between parents and teachers that have not been considered to date and that likely will continue to shape educational reform efforts in many countries. Interestingly, a recent randomized control trial (RCT) in Mexican secondary schools found similar results, where student achievement at schools in low-income areas that provided parents with information on supporting their children's education had no impacts. In an additional treatment arm where parents also received extra money and some decision-making power, student achievement also did not improve, and teacher trust eroded (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2020). These findings, along with ours, suggest that a greater basic understanding of parent-teacher relationships is needed in order to strengthen – rather than weaken – them, in future intervention research.

¹<http://www.poverty-action.org/study/improving-kindergarten-quality-ghana>

²<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/ghana-quality-preschool-impact-evaluation-2017>