



Ministry of Education  
REPUBLIC OF GHANA



# The perils and promises of listening to parents: Encountering unexpected barriers to improving preschool in Ghana

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## National Education Week

Reforming the Education Sector for Effective Service Delivery: Embracing Innovations

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# Summary

- The **Quality Preschool for Ghana** study found that teacher trainings delivered in conjunction with parental awareness trainings were less effective than those without
- Researchers conducted **follow-up qualitative interviews** to understand teachers' and caregivers' experiences



# Acknowledgements

**Partners:** Innovations for Poverty Action, National Nursery Teacher Training Center, Ghana Education Service, Sabre Education

**Funders:** UBS Optimus Foundation, World Bank Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund, Early Learning Partnership, British Academy.

**Collaborators:** J. Lawrence Aber (NYU), Jere Behrman (Penn)

Teachers, head teachers, caregivers and children who participated in this study.

# The Background

## Quality Preschool for Ghana (QP4G) study

- In-service teacher training and coaching program for pre-primary school teachers focused on increasing activity-based learning, child-centered pedagogy, and positive behavior management techniques. Refresher trainings during the year.
- Randomized control trial, delivered with and without parental awareness meetings, across 240 schools in the Greater Accra Region

## Key findings:

- The **teacher training delivered alone** improved classroom quality and children's literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills.
- **When delivered with parental awareness meetings**, all impacts on children, and impacts on some elements of classroom quality, were null.



# Follow-up Qualitative Interviews

To understand teacher and caregiver experiences in the intervention

## 25 Teachers

Topics: KG quality, communication with caregivers, PTA Meetings

## 25 Caregivers

Topics: KG quality, communication with teacher, PTA Meetings and Caregivers' Role in Education, Child Performance in School / Goals for Child

Randomly selected from “high achieving” and “low achieving” children.

Open Coding, with general / neutral codes to units of text.





# Key Findings

From Caregiver Interviews



# Caregivers Value Preprimary Education

## Academic foundation

*“Those who go early at two years, around two years, they perform normally academically better than those that wait.”*

*“Kids who attend crèche and nursery, when asked questions they are able to answer, unlike children who did not attend preschool, they are not able to do anything.”*

## Behavior socialization

*“Those who do go to the preschool are more obedient and respectful than those who did not attend preschool”*

*“The one who is going to school behaves a little more decent”*

*“They are respective, they act like they are really students they act like they really taught them good manners in school.”*

# Caregivers Focus on Academics and Material Resources When Determining a Quality School

- Caregivers see academic development as key for quality kindergarten
- Fewer caregivers brought up the role of play or creativity in the classroom or home – not as important for them
- Caregivers also concerned about state of the physical environment and available resources

# Discipline viewed as central for socializing children

Caregivers often saw teacher's discipline as a way to positively affect their child's behavior.

Caregivers see it as the teacher's responsibility to administer discipline, encourage good behavior, and discourage bad behavior.

*"The child has a hard heart so sometimes you have to beat him before she will respond to instruction"*

*"Just like what I told you, there are some teachers when children send their work to them they would shout on them to go and sit down but this one didn't say that. He took a cane and only said "if you do not write it well, I will beat you. That means she wants the child to learn and progress."*



# Perspectives on the types of disciplined varied

There was **roughly an equal amount of caregivers** who supported corporal punishment as there were those who were against it or believed in the minimization of its use.

A majority of the caregivers that watched the QP4G film said that talking and encouragement were better, “gentler” ways to raise their child. Some of these caregivers said that they applied specific techniques from the video like sitting quietly in a chair. **These caregivers negatively characterized the teachers who beat their child.**

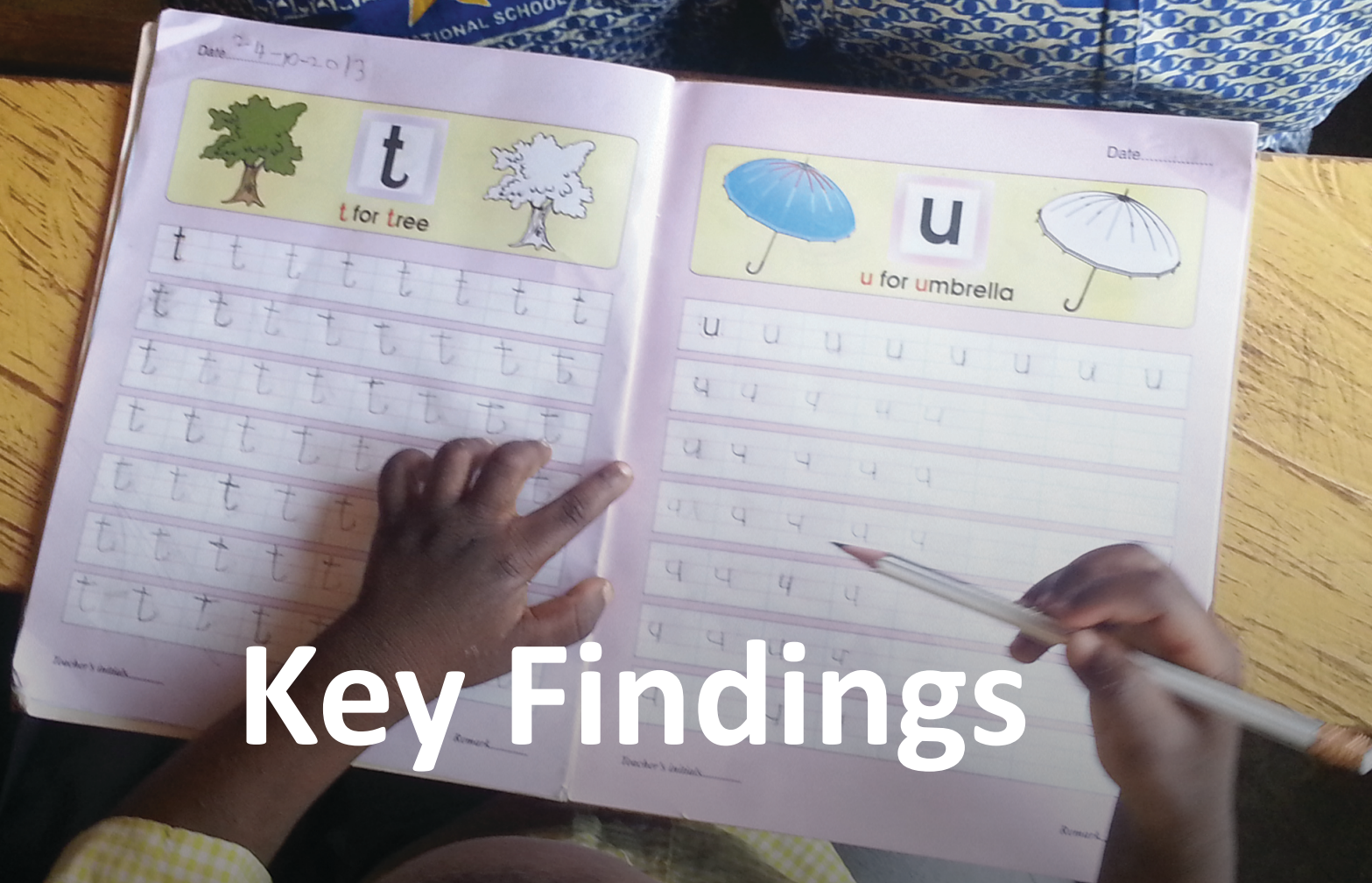
# Caregivers view their primary responsibility as providing the necessities for their child to stay healthy and go to school

**In-home support:** Bathing, feeding, preparing the child for school, and picking them up at the end of the day.

**School support:** largely involved paying school fees

*“Now taking care of children is money especially my children, they like to play a lot and with toys also, so I work hard to get them some. I take care of their feeding, the clothing and health too”*





# Key Findings

From Teacher Interviews



# Teachers see parents pushing back on positive behavior management practices

*“When the topics were discussed, some of them did not agree. They were like ‘I gave birth to my child so why shouldn’t I beat him if the child is misbehaving?’”*

*“Like getting the child some learning materials so that as they are playing they can be learning at the same time. And sometimes they have to stop using the cane but a parent voiced out and said that her kids are stubborn so without the cane... So I told her that with some parents they said the kids are always happy whenever they are around so they should avoid the cane and they will be fine.”*

# Teacher communication with parents focused on concerns

Teachers communicate with parents about explicit concerns or needs they have for children far more frequently than for neutral or positive subjects.

*“Me I don’t really discuss anything with them unless I want to talk about a child or a need something from the parent when we are doing something.”*

*“...we have to call the parent to witness his behavior and his attitude toward learning and the father saw it. Just recently when we reopen school, I tried talking to the father and most parents especially.... So, I was trying to counsel him about that and he was really happy. So, you see right now I have seen him improving so that’s an example.”*



# Teachers often feel frustrated when they attempt to communicate with caregivers

The types of relationships between teachers and caretakers vary greatly. While some teachers rely on caretakers' assistance, others are suspicious of some parents.

*"...if I want to see them to discuss something with them even, you can't see them-maybe you will say when you go home, call your mother or father to come, they won't come"*

*"your irresponsible parent who left you here and careless about you (says in local dialect). Then beating the child, assaulting them; I have nothing, I have no book for you."*

# Summary

## Caregivers

- Preprimary education as foundational to academic and social development
- Focus on academics and material resources when determining quality
- Discipline is central for socialization, but perceptions about disciplinary practices varied
- Primary responsibility related to providing necessities

## Teachers

- See caregivers as pushing back on intervention activities
- Communication with caregivers focused on concerns
- Frustration with communication with caregivers

# Questions and Conclusions

How to **build on caregivers' existing value of preprimary education** to expand notions of quality education?

- Spending time in the school? (E.g., Lively Minds)
- The home environment as a learning environment

How to **improve communication** between teachers and caregivers to also include positive feedback about children?

- Encouraging broader reasons for communication.

**Who do parents listen to / when do they change their minds about something?**

- Perspective taking from own experiences as a child can build empathy (e.g., IRC's Behavioral Insights Team in Tanzania)



UBS Optimus Foundation



# Thank you



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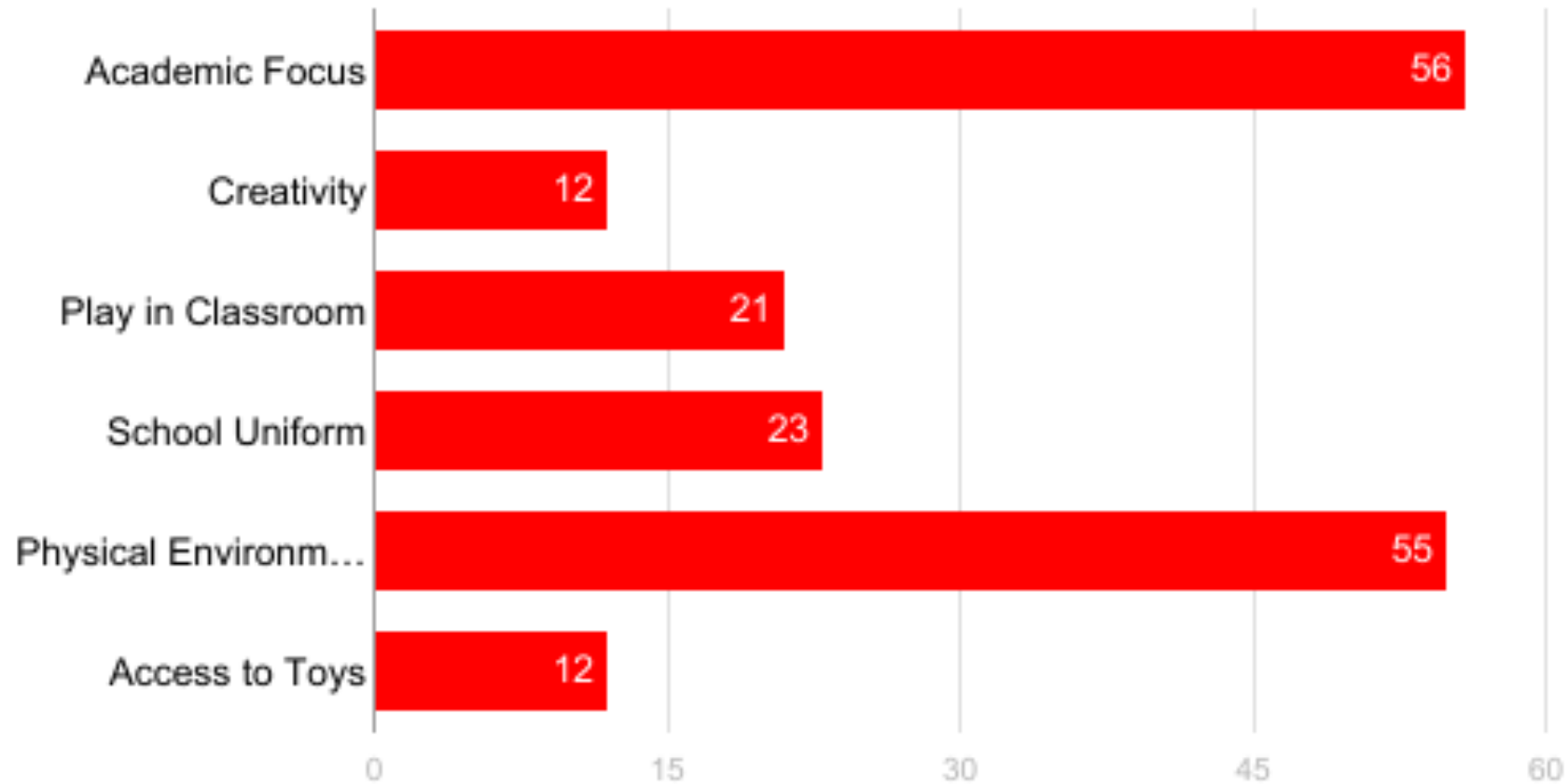
*This project was funded by UBS Optimus Foundation (<http://www.ubs.com/optimus>), the World Bank Early Learning Partnership, and The Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF).*



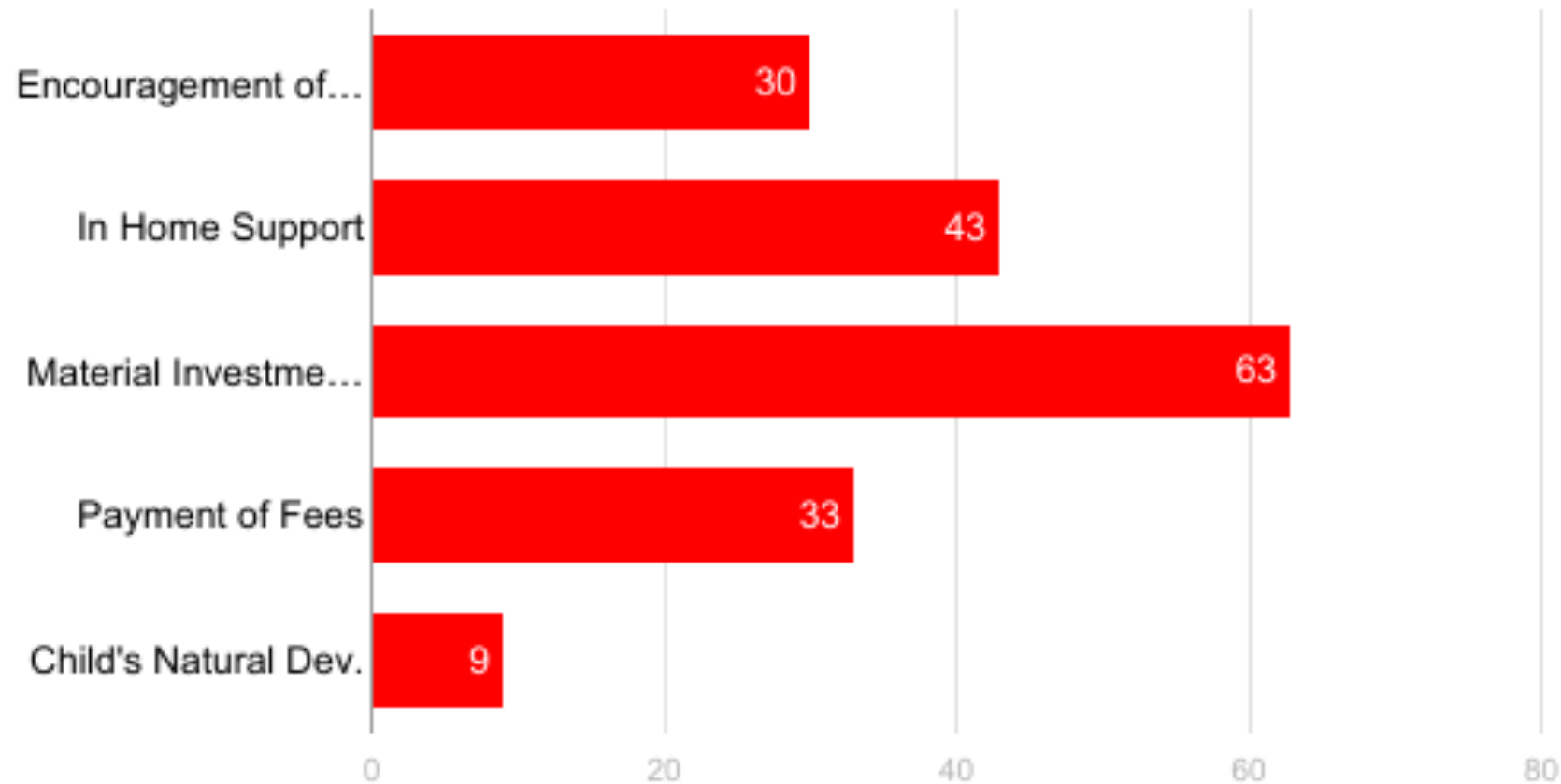
# **Additional Slides**



# Educational Preferences Sub-Codes Distribution



# Role of Parent Sub-Codes Distribution





# Back to Godiva



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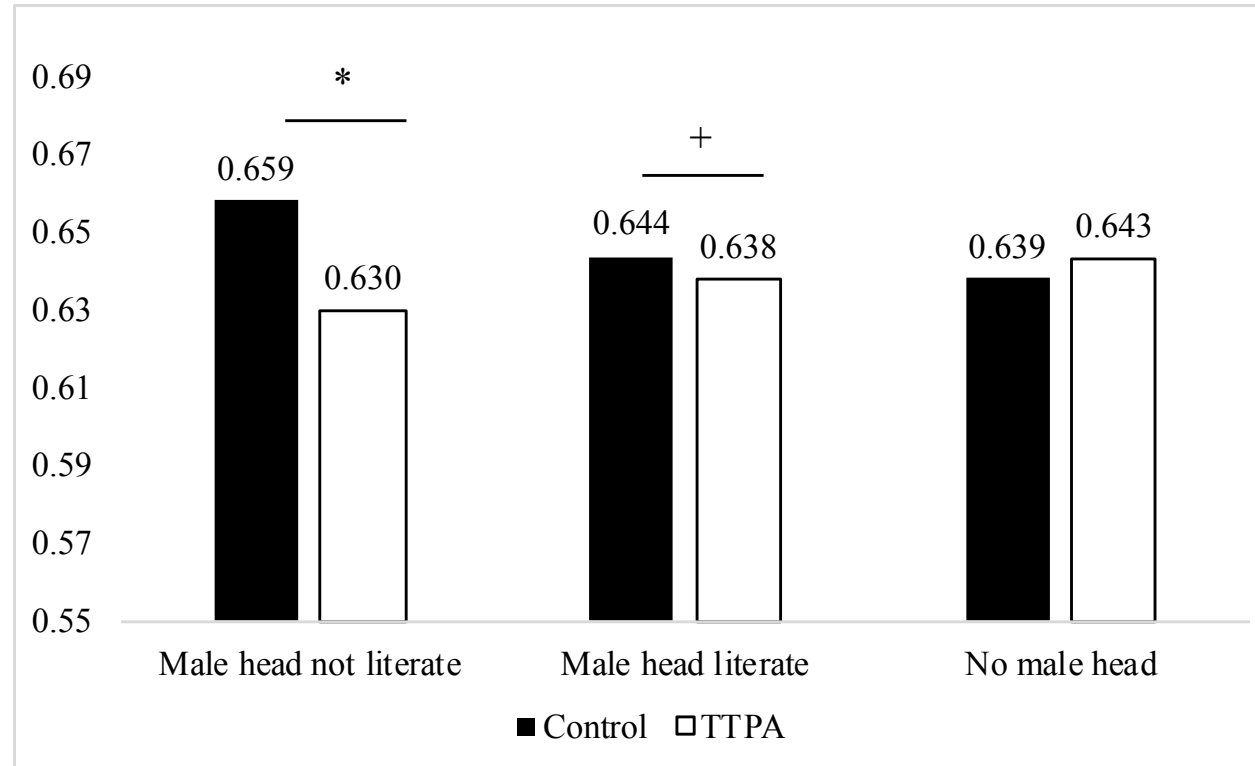


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# Some evidence that parental resistance was limited to parents with low education

Impacts of TTPA on children's school readiness by male household head literacy status



Wolf et al. (revise & resubmit).  
*Developmental Science*.

\*  $p < .05$ , +  $p < .10$ .