CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS AND LEARNING IN KINDERGARTEN: EVIDENCE FROM THREE DISTRICTS IN GHANA

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Ghana Education Evidence Day

06-08-2018

OUTLINE

- Key findings
- Policy Issue
- Study Design
- Results
- Conclusions and policy lessons

KEY FINDINGS

- *Basic schools need instructional space to accommodate kindergarten classrooms*
  - The physical environment of KG classrooms must be upgraded to be more conducive for learning
  - The spacing in KG classrooms needs to be improved to encourage child-centred learning

- *Kindergarten teachers need support*
  - Having attendants and teaching assistants makes teachers more effective
  - Pre-service and in-service training in early childhood development and care makes teachers more effective

POLICY ISSUE

- "Investing in the early years is one of the smartest things a country can do to eliminate extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow."
  - UNICEF
- "Evidence that an additional dollar invested in **quality** early childhood programs yields a return of between $6 dollars and $17 dollars."
  - World Bank

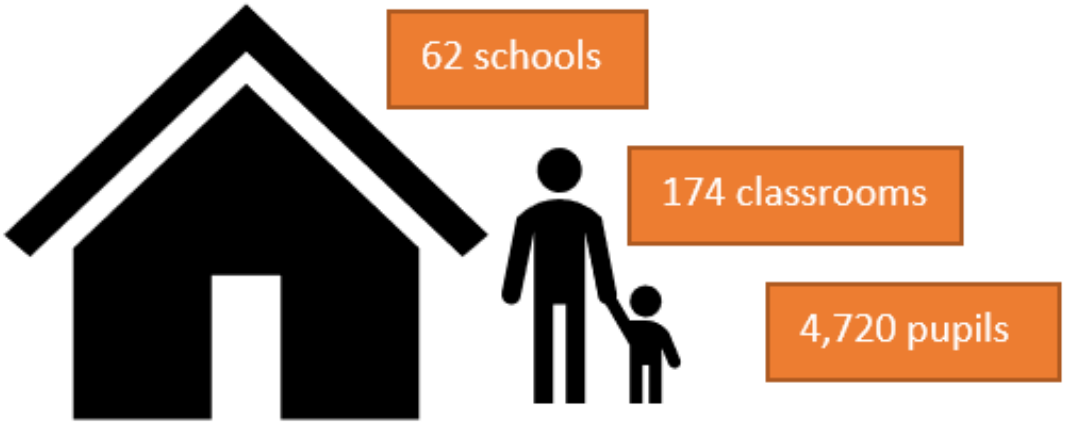
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *How conducive is the classroom environment for learning in early grades?*
  - *Outcomes: classroom learning environment (teaching and learning materials, structural quality, sensory distractions and instructional support)*

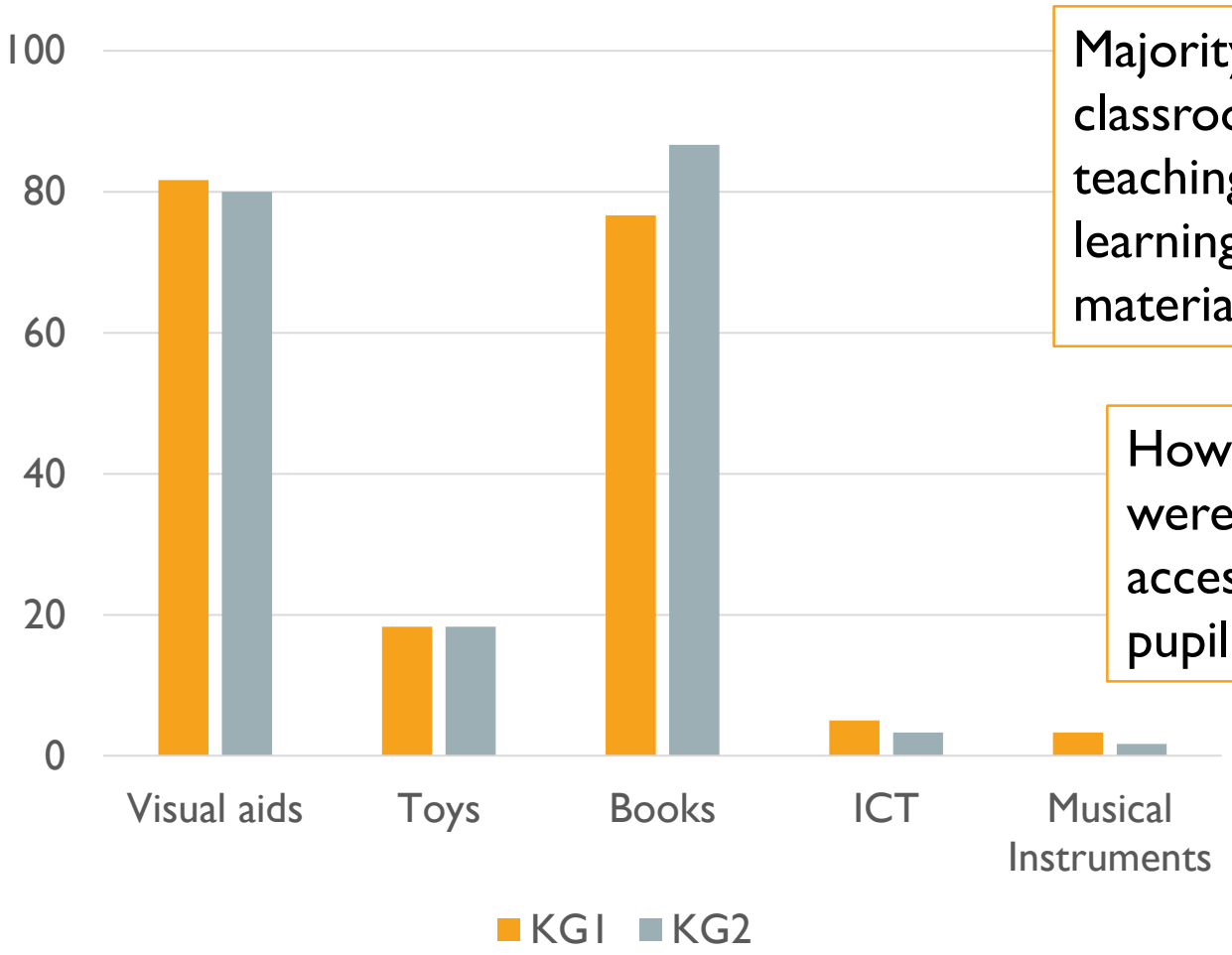
- *How does the classroom environment influence student performance?*
  - *Outcomes: Pupil performance (literacy, numeracy and reasoning*

SURVEY DATA

- Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the University of Ghana Ethics Committee for Humanities
- Approval to conduct research in basic schools was obtained from the GES National and District offices
- Fieldwork was conducted in May-June 2016



KEY FINDINGS



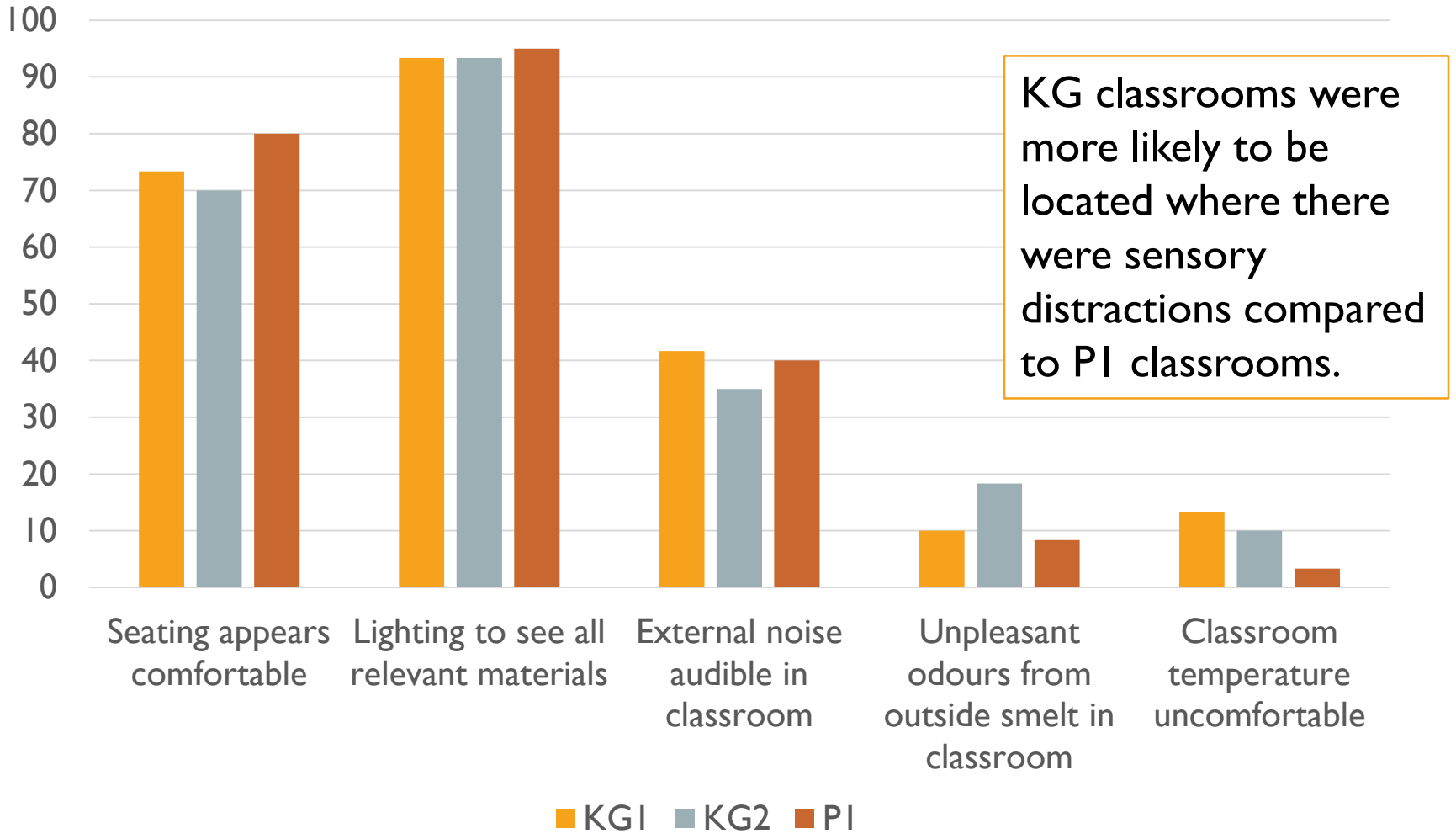
Majority of KG classrooms had teaching and learning materials

However TLMs were not always accessible to pupils

KEY FINDINGS

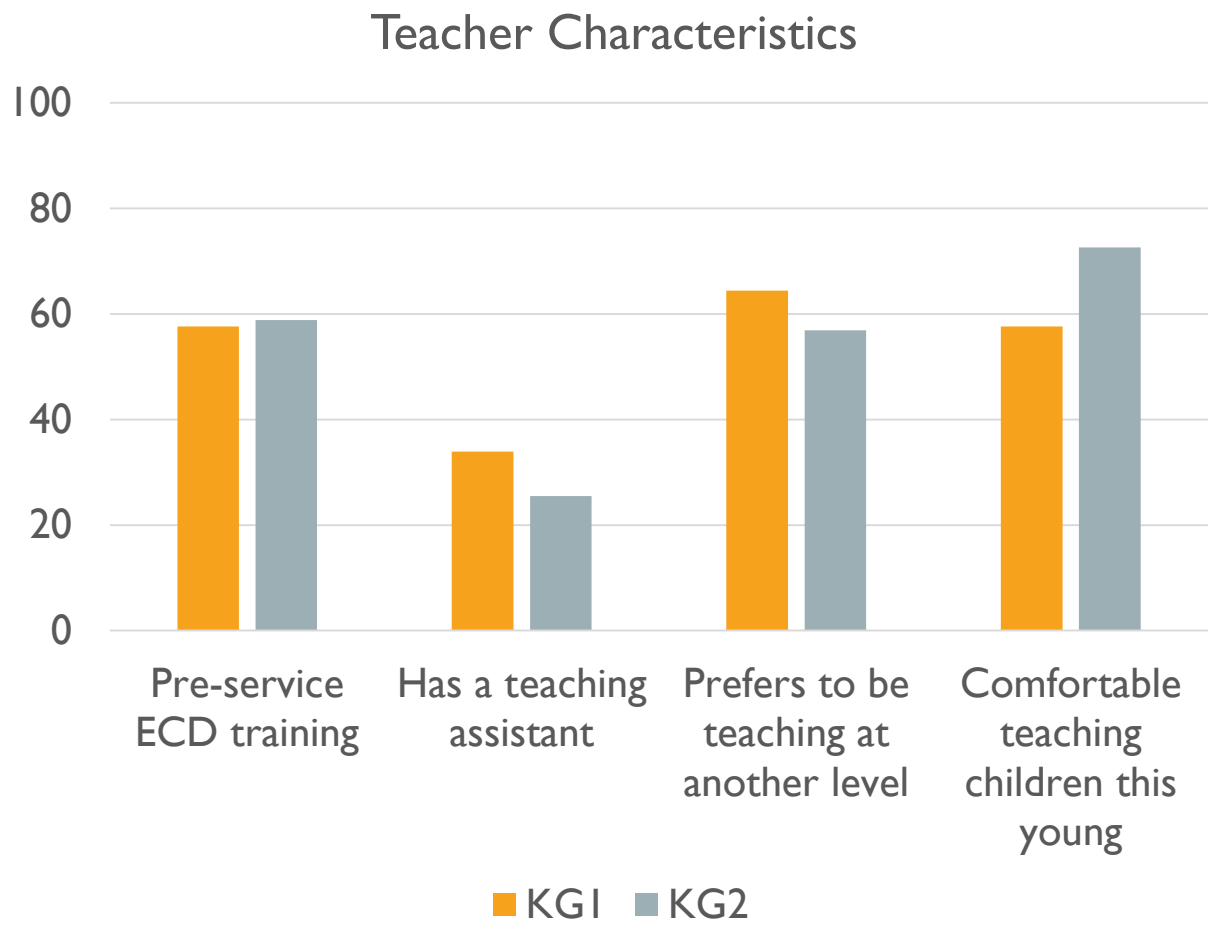
Kindergarten classrooms were of lower structural quality than P1 classrooms

KEY FINDINGS



KG classrooms were more likely to be located where there were sensory distractions compared to P1 classrooms.

KEY FINDINGS

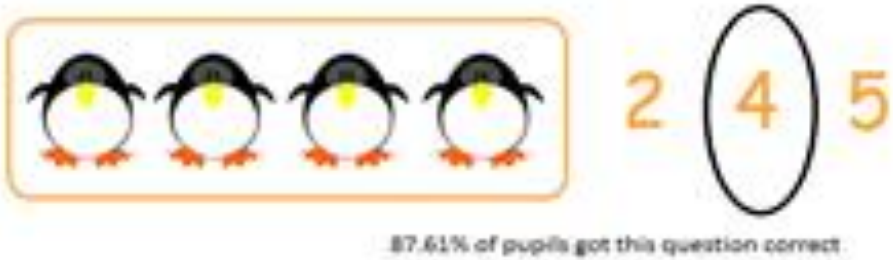


About a third of teachers were not comfortable teaching at this level

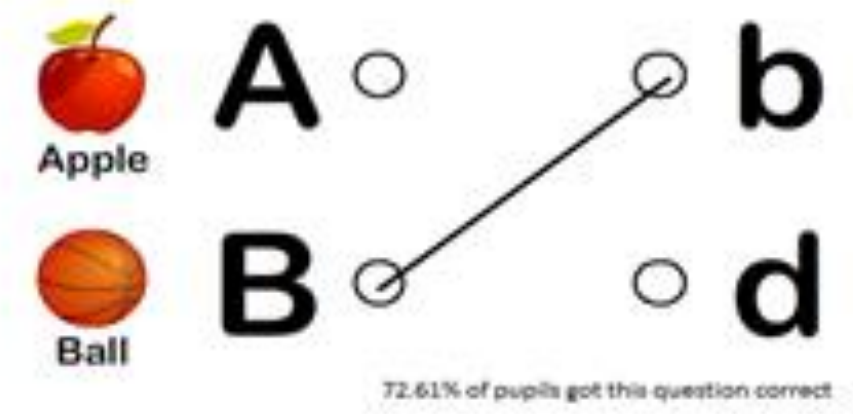
Linked to them not having had ECD training or having teaching assistants

KEY FINDINGS

55% correct



87% correct



73% correct

Pupils performed worse on reasoning type questions

KEY INFLUENCES ON PERFORMANCE

KG1

- non-ECD teacher training (-)
- class size (-)
- teacher comfort level with grade (+),
- Language spoken at home and language of instruction match (+)

KG2

- layout and design (+),
- learning materials (+),
- teacher experience (+)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve spacing in early grade classrooms
2. Improve physical environment in kindergarten classrooms
3. Support teachers by providing teaching assistants
4. Provide consistent in-service training on early childhood to equip early grade teachers with the requisite skills.

DISSEMINATION EVENTS

- *Takeaways from district dissemination events:*
  - Study findings were in line with anecdotal evidence of practitioners
  - Dissemination should also be done at the national level
  - Teaching assistants and attendants are needed but there are limited resources at the district and school level to pay for them
  - Assemblies continue to build 6-unit classroom block instead of 8-unit blocks that can accommodate kindergarten and primary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- International Growth Centre (IGC)
- Ghana Education Service Basic Education Division
- Adentan Municipal Education Directorate
- Awutu Senya East Municipal Education Directorate
- Ga East Municipal Education Directorate
- Shai Osudoku District Education Directorate

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Questions or comments?

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