Public and Private Kindergarten School Quality in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana

Background
Innovations for Poverty Action, the National Nursery Teacher Training Center in Ghana, and researchers from New York University are conducting a randomized evaluation to measure how a kindergarten teacher training program and a parental awareness program in Greater Accra impact classroom quality and children’s learning and development. The study also assesses whether the programs have different impacts on public and private schools.

This brief presents findings from the fall 2015 baseline survey that reveal differences in Ghana’s public and private kindergartens. The data are drawn from 240 schools and 3,435 students from six districts in the Greater Accra region.  

Key Insights
1. Private schools are newer, have smaller class sizes, and are more likely to teach in English.
2. Head teachers in private schools are more likely to have training in early childhood development and have more years of experience.
3. Children who attend private schools come from wealthier, more highly educated families, and have higher scores on early learning skills than children in public schools.
4. However, classroom teachers in private schools are less educated and less likely to have early childhood development training.
5. One dimension of classroom quality—measured by emotional support and behavior management—is lower in private schools compared to public schools.

Private sector schools are much more likely to teach exclusively in English, and not in a mother tongue, despite the national policy mandating that teachers in kindergarten classrooms teach primarily in mother tongues.

Percent of schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>English &amp; mother tongue</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>95%</td>
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1 Districts include La Nkwantanang-Madina; Ga Central; Ledzokuku-Krowor; Adenta; Ga East; and Ga South.
While head teachers in private schools are more likely to be trained in early childhood development and have more years of experience, classroom teachers in private schools are less educated and less likely to have early childhood training.

On average, head teachers in private schools have 6.4 years of experience compared to head teachers in public schools that have 4.5 years of experience. There are no differences in the years of experience between teachers in public and private schools.

The differences in children’s academic skills may be due to differences in household characteristics. Children enrolled in private schools have caregivers with higher levels of education and come from wealthier households. The primary caregivers of children in private schools:

- Are twice as likely to have education beyond secondary school (40.2% versus 20.3%).
- Have higher levels of wealth and lower levels of food insecurity.
- Engage in more activities with their children and encourage them to recognize letter and numbers more than caregivers of children in public schools.
- Are much more likely to pay school fees (93% compared to 24%) and pay higher school fees on average (171 compared to 74 cedis per term).

**Conclusion**

There are significant differences between public and private kindergartens, as well as a clear divergence in the ages and socioeconomic status in the children enrolled in public versus private schools. Private schools serve wealthier families, have smaller class sizes, and children attending private kindergartens are slightly more likely to have the skills to be “school ready.” However, public schools have more qualified classroom teachers, and classroom quality (defined as instructional support, classroom organization, and emotional support to students) is similar across public and private kindergartens. Efforts to target improvements in the quality of the education sector in Ghana will need to take these differences into account to ensure system-level change in both the private and public sectors.

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All comparisons shown are statistically significantly different at p<.05