



The Impacts of Fast Track Transformational Teacher Training in Ghana



Educators and policymakers want to strengthen teacher preparation in order to improve student learning, but evidence is lacking about what makes training most effective, especially in early childhood education. Researchers evaluated a pre-service mentoring and training program for student teachers of kindergarten in Ghana’s Western region.

Key Findings*

- » The training program significantly improved student teachers’ implementation of the curriculum and knowledge of early childhood education and development.
- » The program’s impacts on teachers’ professional well-being were mixed: FTTT teachers had higher levels of motivation and feelings of personal accomplishment, but lower levels of job satisfaction when placed as full-time teachers.
- » One year after being placed as full-time teachers, these improvements had not translated into improved child learning or development outcomes.
- » An additional four-day head teacher sensitization training did not have any impacts on teaching quality or child outcomes.

* These results are preliminary and may change after further data collection and/or analysis.

RESEARCHER

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TIMELINE

2016-2017

PARTNER

Sabre Charitable Trust

SAMPLE

135 student teachers; 1,604 children

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The Challenge

Child learning outcomes remain low across sub-Saharan Africa, despite increased access to free primary education and higher school enrollment. Early childhood education (ECE) represent a crucial window for development, as it is during these early years that children form the basis for future learning. However, many early childhood teachers are undertrained, resulting in poor learning and development outcomes for

their young pupils. Experiential learning, in which teachers practice the pedagogies and techniques that they are studying, is commonly thought to be a critical ingredient for training teachers. Yet, many teaching schools do not provide intentional training and mentoring for student teachers, and rigorous evaluation of these teaching training programs is necessary to re-evaluate their structure and efficacy.

The Program

The Fast Track Transformational Teacher Training Program (FTTT) is a training program for Ghanaian teachers implemented by Sabre Charitable Trust in partnership with Ghana's colleges of education. FTTT provides kindergarten (KG) student teachers with guidance through mentorship and in-classroom training throughout their student teacher year. Students attend intensive training workshops (14 days), top-up training

sessions (8 days), and receive in-classroom coaching (28 days). Trainings focus on developmentally appropriate kindergarten curriculum and techniques. During the in-classroom coaching, trainers observe the teachers and model best teaching practices in their classrooms. They also help teachers address school-specific challenges and reach practical solutions.

Evaluation

Researchers worked with Sabre Charitable Trust and Ghana Education Service to conduct a randomized evaluation of FTTT. The evaluation assessed the impact of the enhanced student teacher training on teacher knowledge, classroom quality, teacher well-being, and child school readiness for student-teachers, and after being placed as full time kindergarten teachers.

Participants in this study were students enrolled in the Holy Child College of Education in Takoradi, in the Western region of Ghana. Student teachers attended the college for two years of coursework, and in their third year of training were placed in kindergarten

classrooms as student teachers.

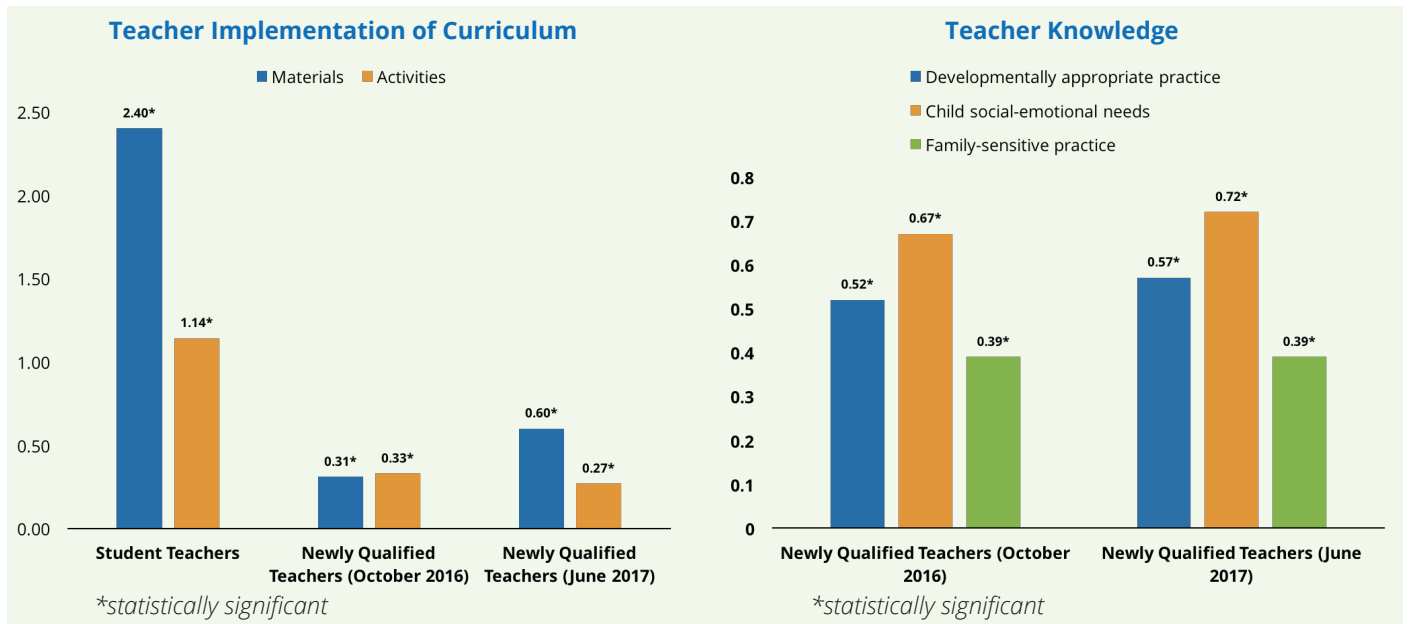
During their student-teaching year, 135 student teachers were randomly assigned to either the FTTT program or a comparison group. The following year, when student-teachers became full-time newly qualified teachers, half of the schools that received a treatment teacher (68 schools total) were randomly assigned to receive an additional head teacher sensitization training or no additional training. Researchers studied newly qualified teachers at the beginning of their first year in October 2016 and followed up at the end of the school year in June 2017.

STUDY GROUPS

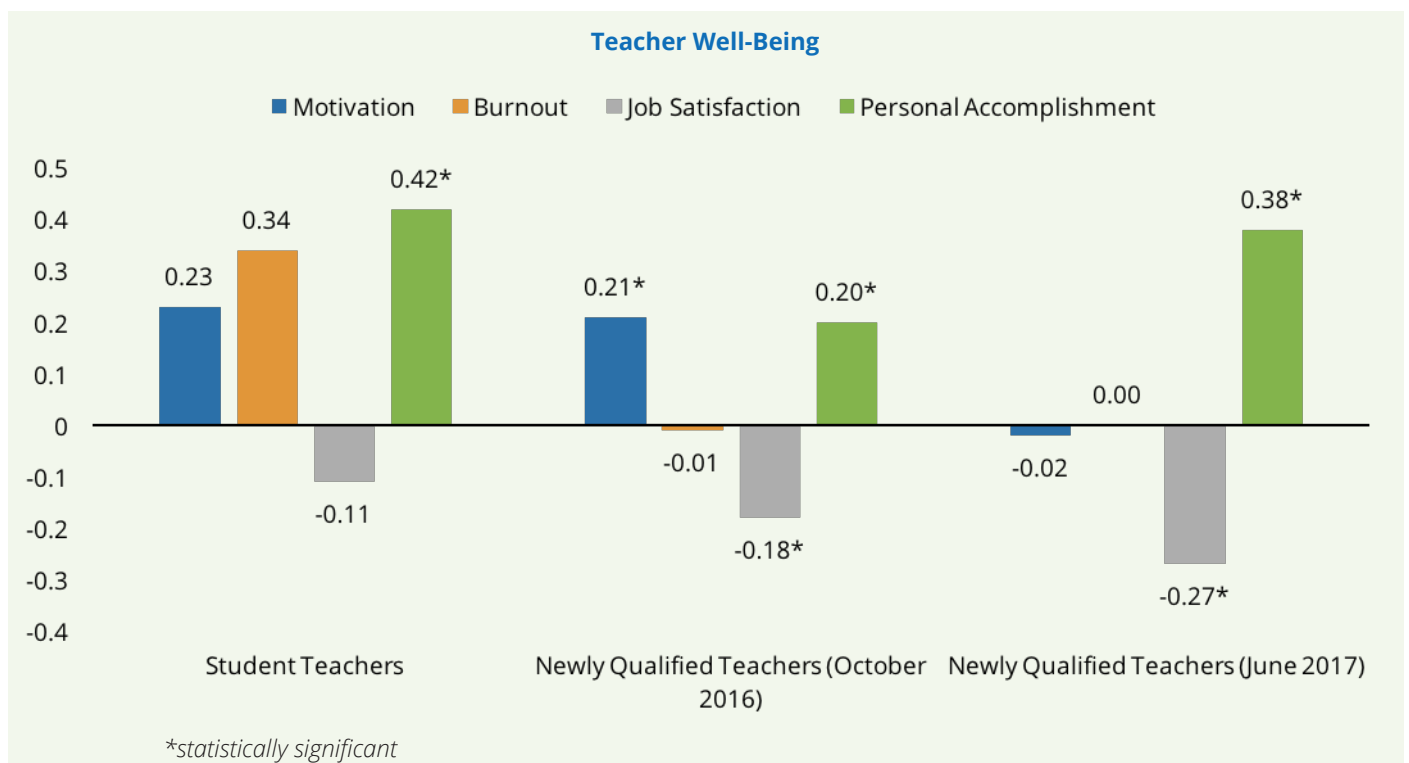
- » **Fast Track Transformational Teaching (FTTT) program:** Student teachers in this group received FTTT's in-service coaching and mentoring as student teachers.
- » **FTTT plus Head Teacher Sensitization Training:** The head teachers in these 34 placement schools were invited to attend a short, in-service training focused on similar topics as the FTTT training. The training was meant to increase head teachers' receptiveness of the practices reinforced in the FTTT training. Head teachers were also encouraged to be effective mentors and supervisors to their student teachers.
- » **Comparison:** Student teachers in this group were not offered any extra training or mentorship during the student teaching or placement year.

Results

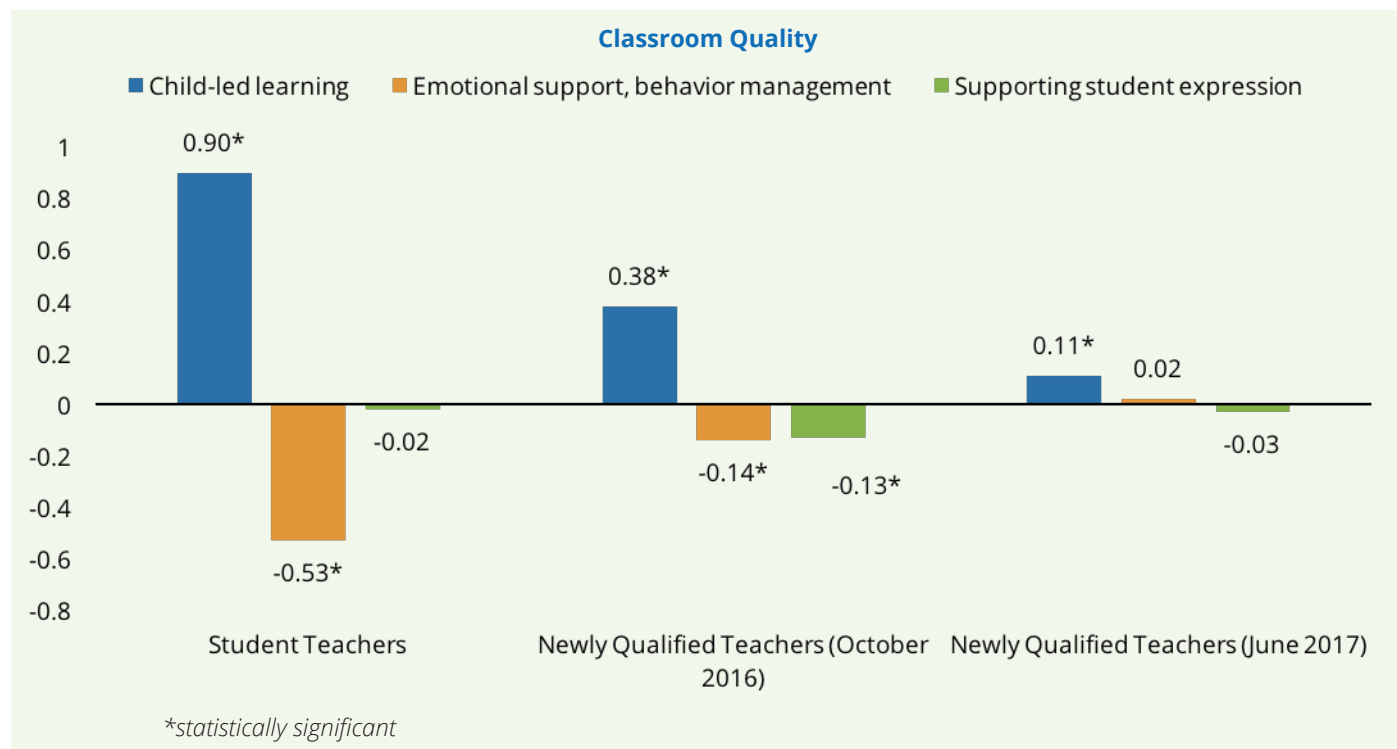
FTTT teachers were significantly more likely to implement the KG curriculum as intended, which included using more developmentally appropriate materials and activities in their teaching. These effects were very large for student teachers and carried forward in their posting year with some drop off in effect size. The FTTT teachers also demonstrated moderate to large increases in knowledge of early childhood education and development as newly qualified teachers.



FTTT teachers had higher levels of motivation and personal accomplishment than their counterparts that didn't receive the training, but also reported less satisfaction with their jobs as newly qualified teachers. It is possible that this relative dissatisfaction was a result of the mismatch between the knowledge they gained in a high-quality classroom environment during their training and the limited resources and support they encountered once they were posted in schools throughout the country.



Impacts on classroom quality were also mixed. Newly qualified teachers who had received the FTTT training used more child-led learning activities than their comparison group counterparts, but also reduced their support of student expression and positive emotional support and behavior management techniques. The impacts on all aspects of classroom quality lessened over time, indicating that in the absence of ongoing training, program impacts faded.



There were no significant differences in children’s learning or development outcomes between those classrooms with teachers who had completed the training and those who had not.

The four-day head teacher training did not have any impacts on teaching quality or child outcomes. A more intensive approach may be needed.

Conclusion

While the FTTT is widely recognized in Ghana to have transformed teaching practice in the student teacher placement classrooms, and improved the skills of college tutors, this study has shown that FTTT-trained newly qualified teachers struggle to implement the new pedagogy and active play-based learning approach in their posting classrooms. It is notable that the FTTT training and the national kindergarten curriculum is quite different from the traditional approaches to education in Ghana. Further rigorous research is

needed to better understand the systemic and infrastructural challenges faced by newly qualified teachers in their first posting year, to ensure that they are better supported and equipped to enact the new pedagogy as directed by Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Education. Sabre Charitable Trust has committed to testing some interventions to support newly qualified teachers as it continues to support the replication and expansion the FTTT with government partners.

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