

Improving quality education through Leadership Communities of Practice

Study report

November 2024

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List of abbreviations

DEOC	District Education Oversight Committees
DESP	District Education Strategic Plan
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
GES	Ghana Education Service
JHS	Junior High School
KG	Kindergarten
KEEA	Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem
LCoP	Leadership Community of Practice
LtP	Learning through Play
MoE	Ministry of Education
PTA	Parents and Teachers Associations
SMC	School Management Committees
SDG	Strategic Development Goal
TLRs	Teaching and Learning Resources

Executive summary

This study aimed to explore how Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoPs) could strengthen Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Ghana. Specifically, the research sought to answer two key questions: how leadership is generated through inquiry-based learning cycles in LCoPs, and what effects an effective LCoP has on ECE practices at the stakeholder and school levels. The study was carried out across three districts—Ho West, Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA), and Binduri—and involved key stakeholders, including education partners, School Management Committees (SMC), LCoP facilitators, and community members.

The data for the study was collected through interviews, group discussions, and observations. Key informants included implementing partners, SMC members, and LCoP facilitators. In-depth interviews were conducted remotely, and thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes across the data.

The study found that inquiry-based learning cycles were central to fostering leadership within LCoPs. These cycles promoted ongoing collaboration, reflection, and problem-solving, which allowed participants to share leadership responsibilities and engage in decision-making. Leadership qualities such as facilitation skills, empathy, and the ability to create a collaborative environment were developed within these communities. The distributed leadership model facilitated collective ownership over educational improvements, empowering community members to actively contribute to the leadership process.

All stakeholders shared that the LCoPs led to increased involvement in school activities and decision-making, improving communication between schools and communities. Stakeholders, including parents and local community members, became more engaged in school management, which enhanced accountability and transparency in educational practices. This increased participation contributed to a greater sense of responsibility for educational outcomes and strengthened the partnership between schools and communities.

At the school level, it was observed that the LCoPs led to notable improvements in ECE practices. Teachers gained a deeper understanding of the play-based curriculum, which translated into more interactive and child-centred teaching methods. As a result, classrooms became more engaging and supportive of children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. The involvement of parents and the broader community in school activities also resulted in increased student enrolment and attendance. Improved facilities, such as better classrooms and the provision of learning materials, made public kindergartens more competitive with private institutions, attracting more parents to enrol their children.

In conclusion, the study demonstrated that LCoPs are effective in fostering leadership and improving ECE practices in Ghana. The inquiry-based learning cycles within these communities fostered leadership development and community engagement, leading to tangible improvements in teaching methods, school management, and educational outcomes. However, continued support is needed to sustain these efforts and expand the LCoP model to other regions of Ghana to further strengthen the ECE sector.

1. Introduction

The government of Ghana introduced two years of compulsory, free kindergarten education in 2007 and a play-based curriculum in 2018. This is because the government recognises the benefits of early childhood education (ECE) and investments made in this area over the past two decades towards Strategic Development Goal 4.2, which specifically seeks to ensure that by 2030 "all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education". Indeed, Early Childhood Education (ECE) strives to provide a comprehensive approach to the child's social, emotional, physical, spiritual, language, and cognitive skill learning and development. Improving early learning through high-quality ECE is vital to creating the productive, competitive, and resilient nation that Ghana's Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2018–2030) envisions (Ministry of Education, 2020). Furthermore, investment in childhood education prepares children for school and returns 4% to 16% more than the initial investment, with significant effects on brain and cognitive development, including long-term benefits on learning and skill acquisition, and 25% more lifetime earnings in adulthood (Barros & Ewerling, 2016; Mendenhall et al., 2021).

Several challenges, however, as outlined in the 2017 Education Sector Analysis in Ghana, are hindering the achievement of the expected results, including fragmented coordination for quality ECE implementation and inadequate teacher professional development leading to poor understanding and use of the play-based curriculum. In addition, poor school leadership that does not involve relevant stakeholders in school development plans hinders the effective implementation of quality ECE. As a result, children are left behind without a strong foundation and readiness to access higher levels of education (Ministry of Education, 2017). In fact, just 2% of pupils attain the desired standards for literacy after their early years of education (Ministry of Education, 2015).

School leadership is widely acknowledged as crucial for improving student learning outcomes as their role is pivotal in creating a conducive learning environment within schools (Leithwood et al., 2020). Leadership does not necessarily refer to a formal position or the authority of a single person. Rather, it can be practiced by different relevant actors within an organisation as well (Aubrey et al., 2013; Spillane et al., 2004). Douglass, (2019) shows that leadership influences a set of practices that may have a positive impact on children's learning, development, and well-being. He further clarifies that true leaders use the power of influence rather than positional authority to engage and align people, focus their teams, sustain momentum, and perform. This is often referred to as distributed, shared, collective or relational leadership, in contrast to a hierarchical structure (Douglass, 2019).

Community involvement in school management by members, families, and parents/guardians has several advantages. According to Cornwall (2008), community involvement enhances educational delivery, resulting in higher learning outcomes and better prepared students for an ever-changing global environment. In addition, when parents donate their time, labour, materials, land, and cash, they are more likely to be involved in school activities, such as attending teacher meetings and reviewing teachers' performance. Teachers and school personnel, in turn, feel more obligated to provide better education for pupils to meet the needs of parents and communities (Aryeh-Adjei, 2021).

In Ghana, the formal educational system is structured into three phases: (i) basic education (kindergarten 1-2 and primary grades 1-6 and junior high school (JHS) grades 7-9); (ii) senior high secondary education (grades 10-12, including technical and vocational education), and higher/tertiary education (comprising technical universities, colleges, and universities). According to Abreh, (2017), many basic schools were initially established by local communities, which provided land for school buildings and teacher accommodation. Over time, the government assumed control of most school

operations. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has policy and oversight responsibilities for public schools, while Ghana Education Services (GES) has management responsibilities with the support of School Management Committees (SMC), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), local communities, and other stakeholders.

The Ghanaian government has made numerous efforts throughout the years to enhance community engagement in school management. They include the 1951 Acceleration Development Plan (ADP), the Education Strategic Plan (ESP), and the District Education Strategic Plan (DESP) (Ministry of Education, 2003). Section 9 and subsection 2 of the Ghana Education Service Act of 1994 also included provisions for community engagement (Ahiabor, 2017). The purpose of these Acts was to ensure local stakeholders' full engagement and ownership in school management in their respective communities (Addae-Boahene, 2007). Furthermore, the formation of District Education Oversight Committees (DEOC), School Management Committees (SMC), and Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA) is aimed at revitalising the standing of communities and their members in school leadership (Abreh, 2017).

There have been various theories about how parental and community involvement in schools can impact the quality of education. These include managing student attendance and homework, overseeing school spending and teacher performance, providing resources (labour, cash, etc.) to improve school facilities, accommodations, and infrastructure (Yamada, 2014), teacher hiring, and advocating at the local and national levels for changes that might enhance educational access, retention, and completion (Kwaah & Nishimuko, 2023). Bamberg, (2003) argues that such committees form the indispensable link between the school and community; they turn schools into centres of community life. This results mostly from the fact that communities support schools in fostering leadership efficiency and effectiveness through ethics and compliance. It is expected that participation of the community in school leadership will lead to strengthening accountability, improvement in students learning and performance, maximisation of limited resources, efficiency, and effectiveness of school management. This can be done by raising money for schools, ensuring students' regular attendance and completion, constructing, repairing, and improving school facilities, and contributing to labour, materials, and land (Aryeh-Adjei, 2021). However, while it is the responsibility of the school to develop students' knowledge, abilities, and values, this can only be done by working effectively with parents, the community, and other stakeholders. Anani-Bossman (2021) and Woermann & Engelbrecht (2019) believe that in the African setting, this is considerably more than mere economic trade, but relational pathways of interdependence and trust, and that the school's potential is dependent on the quality of long-term connections with external stakeholders and reputation in society at large (Davis, 2021).



Figure 1: Location of the districts of implementation

It is in view of this that the project "*Strengthening Play Based Early Childhood Education in Ghana through Leadership Communities of Practice*" was initiated to explore contextualised leadership principles supporting quality play-based learning in ECE. This initiative is a collaborative effort between four development partner organisations namely, Sabre Education, Afrikids, Right to Play and VVOB – *education for development*. The project was implemented in the Ho West district – Volta region, Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA) district – Central region, and Binduri district – Upper east region (see Figure 1).

2. Leadership Communities of Practice

The purpose of the "*Strengthening Play Based Early Childhood Education in Ghana through Leadership Communities of Practice*" project, as displayed in the theory of change in Figure 2, is to establish Leadership Communities of Practices (LCoPs) within the educational system to better support learning through play in ECE.

Figure 2: LCoP theory of change of the project

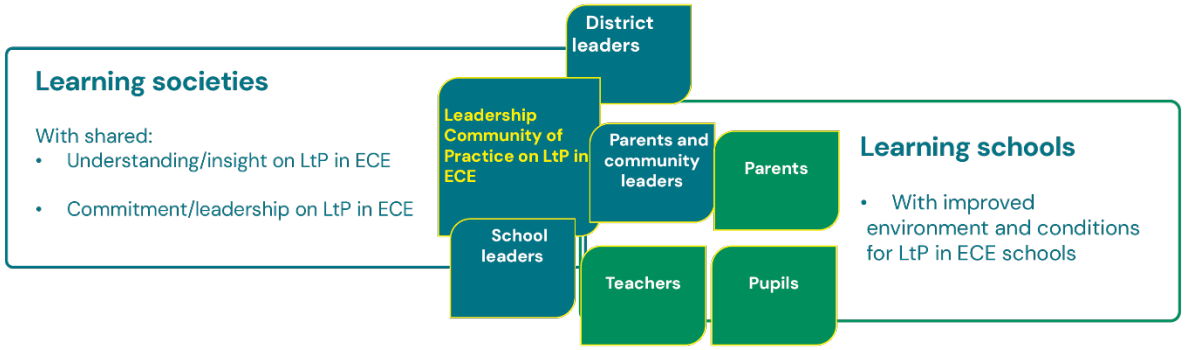


2.1. Members of the LCoP

Members of the LCoPs are seen as agents of sustainable change towards improved teaching and learning in ECE. Zosh et al. (2017) shows that learning through play works best when children experience moments of joy, meaningful connection, active engagement, iterative learning, and social interaction. Thus, members are expected to play a great role in ensuring that the characteristics or conditions for learning through play are met in ECE in the selected schools and that members of these school communities have a better understanding and appreciation of what is required for effective early childhood education. Aryeh-Adjei (2021) defines a ***community*** as a group of people within a physical boundary, which is the school, connected by social and cultural ties, sharing common values, beliefs, and worldviews.

The LCoPs were established at the **school level** to create learning societies with a stronger understanding and commitment to learning through play in ECE. The ultimate goal was to develop better learning environments for KG classes, as illustrated in Figure 3. At the community level, SMC members were the primary target group. In Ghana, the SMC is a legally mandated governing body in every public school, tasked with promoting the interests of the school and its learners to ensure access to high-quality education. While members of the SMC are not necessarily parents of enrolled students, they are individuals capable of supporting schools in improving educational quality. However, many SMCs are currently dysfunctional, with members often reluctant to attend meetings.

Figure 3: Composition of the Leadership Community of Practice (LCoP)



Additional community leaders, such as representatives of chiefs, artisans, and market queens were also part of these established LCoPs, chosen based on their level of influence in the community. Additionally, district leaders, who are usually ECE coordinators, were included to co-facilitate the sessions together with SMC leaders. LCoP facilitators were trained to apply an inquiry-based learning approach to engage a community of leaders in the promotion of learning through play in and outside the school. At the school level, the head teacher and KG teachers were also included. By forming this comprehensive community of practice, it is anticipated that parents, community leaders, teachers, and school leaders will collaborate to discuss challenges, share best practices for implementing play-based learning approaches, and foster accountability and commitment to the education of KG learners.

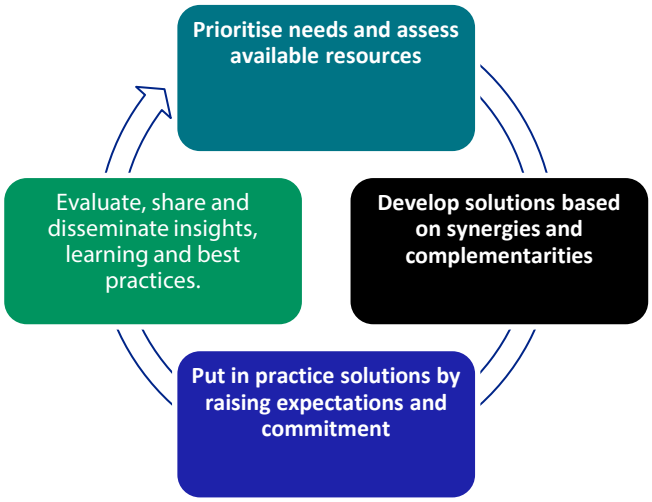
In the three districts, two schools were selected to be part of the project. The idea behind bringing together **two schools** was to ensure that schools' communities learn from one another. LCoP members' responsibilities include but are not limited to active participation in the LCoP sessions, implementation of agreed upon solutions to address challenges hindering the use of LtP in ECE in respective schools, communities, and districts, sharing experiences with other members of LCoP and giving feedback on shared experiences.

2.2. Inquiry based learning cycle

These LCoPs were expected to be inquiry- and evidence-driven, focusing on the development and implementation of solutions for specific issues in the context of strengthening learning through play in ECE in respective school communities. Members collectively question teaching and leadership routines in ECE, examine teaching and learning and engage in supporting each other's professional growth**.** ***Inquiry*** is defined as the process by which the collaborative network can identify challenges and create solutions to common challenges (Katz et al., 2009; Wenger et al., 2011).

The two school communities that form each LCoP meet every **two months in six (6) sessions** during the life of the project (Figure 4). Each of these LCoP sessions takes place in person (face to face).

Figure 4: Inquiry-based learning through Leadership Communities of Practice



Effective LCoP sessions are guided by **six key enablers** (Katz et al., 2009; Wenger et al., 2011): *purpose and focus,* ensuring clear objectives and actionable outcomes; *relationships*, fostering trust, openness, and confidentiality; *collaboration*, where members work together to share best practices and solve challenges; *inquiry*, using evidence-based discussions to question and improve practices; *leadership*, with shared roles but a designated facilitator for each session; and *accountability*, where members support and hold each other responsible for agreed actions and targets.

2.3. Selected communities

Among the three districts, two communities one from the urban or peri-urban and another one from the rural area were selected with the idea that the communities are able to learn from one another. In the district, further selection was done to include for instance in KEEA the level of engagement in the communities because given the short-term aspect of the project it was necessary to have communities that are already supportive in terms of contributing to the overall development of the community. In Ho-west, the selection driven by the district offices was done considering schools which were less reached by education interventions. For Binduri, preference was given to districts with no or low participation of the community in the school. They also considered communities where KG were given little to no attention. Figure 5 provides details on the schools or communities selected per area.

> *A partner in* Binduri district indicated that w*hen the idea of LCoP came up, they considered the following:*
>
> - *Schools that had no or low participation in the running of schools by community members…[and] did not see the importance of the KG as part of the school system.*
> - *Schools where KGs were given little or no attention and had the worst learning situations including sitting under trees and pavilions.*
> - *Schools that combined KG 1 and KG 2 in one space because they didn't see the need to separate them.*
> - *Communities where parents felt the KG was a place to keep children and for them to go to the farm because they had nowhere to keep them safe and to be able to work effectively on their farms.*

Figure 5: Leadership Communities of Practice formed in the three districts

Volta region - Ho West LCoP	Central region - KEEA LCoP	Upper east region – Binduri LCoP
Kpedze Awlime EP Primary school	Abeyee M/A KG school	Aniisi
Abutia Kpota EP Basic School	St. John Catholic, Agona	Kukparigu

3. Methodology

The main objective of this study is to generate insights and evidence on the potential of leadership communities of practice (LCoP) to strengthen ECE education in Ghana. An in-depth qualitative study was carried out to generate evidence on the potential of partnerships and enhanced leadership to strengthen the ECE system in Ghana. This qualitative data collection was complemented by additional quantitative data collected as part of monitoring activities.

The study focuses on answering the following learning questions:

1. **How is leadership generated through inquiry-based learning cycles in Leadership Communities of Practice?**
2. **What are the effects of an effective LCoP in support of ECE practice at the level of stakeholders/boundary partners and the level of schools?**

The first question aims to explore the generation of leadership within Leadership Communities of Practice, with a particular focus on leadership development processes within educational communities of practice. Emphasis is placed on the significance of relationships, leadership dynamics, and essential leadership qualities. Existing literature offers empirical evidence supporting the role of inquiry-based learning cycles in **fostering leadership** among educational leaders and community members. The iterative nature of inquiry cycles promotes ongoing communication and interaction, facilitating the establishment of a supportive network conducive to **leadership development** (Barton & Haydn, 2006)**.** Moreover, inquiry-based approaches empower participants to actively engage in leadership processes, with educational leaders serving as facilitators who guide discussions and promote critical reflection, thereby distributing leadership responsibilities among participants (Louis et al., 2010). Effective leadership within inquiry-based learning cycles entails fostering a **culture of inquiry**, where individuals feel empowered to question assumptions and explore innovative solutions (Lambert, 2003). Key leadership qualities include facilitation skills, active listening, empathy, and the ability to create a supportive learning environment conducive to collaboration and risk-taking (Bryk et al., 2015). Furthermore, active participation in inquiry cycles fosters a sense of agency and efficacy at the individual level, thereby enhancing leadership practices (Bolam et al., 2005). Collaborative inquiry processes enable individuals to strengthen their leadership capacity, nurture positive relationships, and drive continuous improvement in educational practice. To respond to this question, the main data source will be the LCoP sessions' observation, which will be complemented by additional interview questions.

To evaluate the effects of an effective LCoP in supporting Early Childhood Education (ECE) practices at both the stakeholder and school levels, the study takes a multi-faceted approach. First, it assesses stakeholders' **perceptions of the LCoP's impact** to gauge their views on improvements in ECE practices and outcomes. Next, it investigates tangible **changes in stakeholders' behaviour or practices**, such as increased participation in school activities and the adoption of new strategies, reflecting shifts in engagement and implementation (Wenger et al., 2002). Finally, the study examines **changes in school practices related to ECE**, identifying how the LCoP has influenced these areas (Fullan, 2015). This comprehensive approach aims to provide a clear understanding of the LCoP's effectiveness in enhancing support and practices at multiple levels (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Data collection will rely primarily on interviews with various stakeholders, supplemented with learning collected from group discussions during partners CoPs and LCoP support sessions.

3.1. Research design

This study examines three LCoPs across three regions, focusing on two key levels: (1) leadership development within the LCoPs and (2) the effects on the practices of stakeholders involved in LCoPs and their boundary partners within schools. This research adopts a qualitative design, specifically a descriptive study. As Nassaji (2015) explains, the goal of descriptive research is to explore and describe a phenomenon and its characteristics, focusing on "what" rather than "how" or "why" something occurs. The study combines key informant interviews and observations of Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoP) sessions to provide a comprehensive understanding of how leadership is developed and sustained within LCoPs through inquiry-based learning cycles. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Implementing Partners, School Management Committee (SMC) members, and LCoP facilitators. Additionally, the research incorporated reflections from group discussions with partners and LCoP facilitators during monthly meetings and support sessions. Session monitoring reports and SMC and facilitators survey, including both closed and open-ended responses, further enriched the findings.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

To address the research questions, data were collected through a combination of key informant interviews, group discussions, and observations. to provide a comprehensive understanding of how leadership is developed and sustained within LCoPs through inquiry-based learning cycles. ***Focus group discussions*** with partners and facilitators during monthly meetings, as well as LCoP support sessions, offered valuable reflections. ***Key informant interviews*** were held with implementing partners (Sabre education, Afrikids, and Right to Play), LCoP facilitators, and SMC members. Initially, interviews with SMC members from three districts were planned. However, after conducting one interview in the first district, data saturation became evident due to repetitive responses. As a result, interviews with SMC members were limited to partners and facilitators from the remaining districts (KEEA and Binduri). To further validate the saturation, two open-ended questions were added to a survey administered to SMC members across all districts, which confirmed the saturation of data. Additional insights were gathered from ***session monitoring reports***, which included both closed and open-ended questions. Table 1 provides an overview of participants that took part of the data collection.

Table 1: Overview of participants included in the study

Actors	Number
Key informant interview	
Partners (Sabre, Afrikids, and Right to Play)	4 participants
LCoP facilitators	4 participants
SMC chair	1 participant
Group discussions	
Partners (Sabre, VVOB, Afrikids, and Right to Play	11 participants
LCoP facilitators	6 participants
LCoP monitoring reports	3 districts * 6 sessions
Survey with LCoP members	43 participants

In-depth interviews were conducted remotely via Teams or Zoom and were recorded with participant consent. Before each interview, interviewers explained the research's purpose and obtained verbal consent to proceed and to record the conversation. All interviews were transcribed for analysis.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and emerging themes across the data. Each interview was examined for key points, and comparisons were made across interviews (Menter et al., 2011). The process of clustering and coding key ideas helped reveal patterns, which were subsequently analysed (Klevering & McNae, 2018). The findings are organized around the main themes and ideas that emerged from the interviews and observations.



4. Findings

4.1. Leadership practices in LCoPs

1. Challenges and barriers

At the start of the LCoP sessions, participants were asked to mention challenges or barriers faced by the community in accessing KG education. The main challenges or barriers that families in the community face when accessing kindergarten education relate to financial issues and poverty, which are the most frequently mentioned obstacles. Many families struggle to afford necessary resources such as uniforms, books, bags, and other learning materials, despite free tuition. There is also a significant lack of teaching and learning materials (TLMs), inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient furniture in schools. Ignorance and lack of knowledge about the importance of early childhood education are prevalent, leading to some parents undervaluing or neglecting to enrol their children in kindergarten. Additional issues include teacher absenteeism, lack of parental support, single-parent challenges, and the need for better school facilities such as fencing and water supply. Some parents prioritize farming over their children's education, and others underestimate their children's readiness for school.

2. Goal setting and planning

One of the key things highlighted from the interviews was that the inquiry-based learning cycle contributed to transforming how LCoP members and facilitators approached their meetings. Previously, SMC meetings lacked focus and clear outcomes, often covering unrelated issues without concrete plans for action. Through the inquiry-based approach, LCoP sessions instilled a strong emphasis on setting specific goals and planning purposefully, encouraging participants to identify priorities and engage in targeted discussions. This preparation included members to meet at the community level beforehand, come prepared with key points, and actively participate in discussions with the other community. The result was more productive, interactive sessions where decisions were reached efficiently. The process also underscored the importance of arriving at meetings with a clear agenda and the need to reach concrete conclusions at the end of every session, unlike the indecisive discussions of the past.

> *When it comes to the session itself, previously when SMCs met, they would discuss issues from hair through the body to the toes without a focus, this was an issue. And at the end of the day, nothing concrete was decided to be executed with a timeline. But with these LCoP sessions with the element of focus and purpose, we realise that when we go, we know what we are going to discuss. The LCoP members even meet at their various community levels to discuss issues before coming to the session. This makes the discussion very interactive, lively, and decisions were quickly taken for execution. So, the LCoP session was actually an eye-opener for us. We learnt that when we go for a meeting, we need to know what we are coming to talk about. The meeting must be conclusive, unlike before whereby they would sometimes postpone a lot of issues because they would debate and debate… without concluding on any issue. But this did not feature in the LCoP sessions.* ***Ho-West district, Facilitator.***

Throughout the learning cycle, discussions and engagements in the Leadership Communities of Practice focused on identifying one main challenge, exploring various context-based solutions, and implementing the best solution in each community school.

At the end of the second session, the main priorities selected by the Leadership communities of practice as highlighted in Table 2 included the provision of playgrounds for KG students in both schools, ensuring appropriate furniture for KG classrooms, and supplying teaching and learning resources (TLRs) while also addressing the need to separate KG 1 and KG 2 classes, which were currently combined in a single classroom in both schools. In Binduri, although it was recommended to select one priority, the Leadership communities of Practice agreed that the two issues were identified as equally important.

Table 2: Selected priorities and identified resources per district

District	Priority	Identified resources and opportunities
KEEA	Provision of a playground for KG students in both schools.	• Availability of local materials in the community that can be used to build a playground such as grass, wood, old tyres, etc.) • Local artisans (i.e., Carpenter) • SMC/PTA members are ready to contribute some money.
Ho -West	Provision of KG appropriate furniture.	• SMC/PTA members ready to contribute with some money • Community members ready to Supply/donations of wood logs • Local artisans to make the furniture at less or no cost
Binduri	TLRs and separate the KG classes. In both schools, KG 1 and 2 are hosted in one classroom.	• Parents, community members and community artisans to provide empties for shopping centres and the carpenter to make shapes. • Teachers and head teachers can use cardboard and other materials to decorate classrooms. • To seek support from philanthropies, other authorities and NGOs for support

Prioritising challenges in the KGs encouraged communities to re-evaluate and set goals for learning environments, particularly for KG classrooms, challenging previous norms that relegated these classrooms to outdoor or substandard spaces. After identifying the priorities, community members identified available resources and opportunities from the communities on which they can leverage.

After identifying their priorities, the LCoPs worked to identify resources and opportunities available within their communities on which they can leverage on. Key resources included local materials such as grass, wood, and old tires, which could be used to construct playgrounds. Members also though of negotiating local artisans, such as carpenters, to contribute their skills at reduced or no cost to create furniture or playground structures. Additionally, members of SMCs and PTAs committed to

contributing financially or donating materials, such as wood logs, to support these initiatives. Teachers and head teachers were also commended for using materials like cardboard to decorate classrooms and enhance their appeal. Furthermore, the LCoPs identified opportunities to seek external support from philanthropists, NGOs, and local authorities to supplement community efforts and provide additional resources.

Interviews with participants observed a shift in community attitudes, with an increased emphasis on the need for enclosed, well-equipped spaces for early learners rather than relying on makeshift or inadequate structures. Facilitators began advocating for these quality learning environments as a fundamental goal, integrating this new standard into their planning to enhance learning outcomes for KG students. Consequently, SMC/PTA and community members now have a better understanding of the kindergarten system and how it should effectively operate.

> *More focus on (school) improvement was on the upper primary, JHS and so forth. So much attention was not being paid to the kindergarten in the communities. So, for instance, they will prefer to give a dilapidated building or a building that is not so nice to the kindergarten and then you see the JHS, and others are in very nice classrooms compared to the KGs, so that is how it's been going on.* ***KEEA district, Partner.***

> *But one key factor I equally learnt in this particular project is the fact that I got to understand that KGs specifically need to be in an enclosed place where at least the environment, the classroom will be designed in such a way that it can enhance learning. Unlike in the past where we felt like ohh, KGs can be under trees, KGs can be under any uncompleted structure and the rest of the classes from P1 to P6 will have better classrooms. But this project has come to open my understanding that if there is any best single class in the school, it is given to the KG. And I think I would have already begun to advocate for that where schools will ensure that KG classes are in an enclosed place.* ***Binduri district, Facilitator***

3. Innovative solutions

The leadership communities of practice leveraged selected challenges as opportunities to implement and test innovative solutions. Through a collaborative approach, the communities explored resourceful and sustainable strategies to improve local facilities and resources. See Table 3 for more details on the solutions. The most effective strategy was **community fund mobilisation** through diverse approaches and active involvement of parents, artisans, and local leaders. This strategy enabled community fund mobilisation and fostered a strong sense of ownership and community involvement. The community also managed to source a large majority of necessary Teaching and Learning Resources (TLRs), such as empty bottles, through donations.

Table 3: Selected solution and best solution identified per district

District	Selected solutions	Best solution
KEEA	• Solicit support from the community (for grass, wood, old tyres, etc.) • Use local artisans (i.e., carpenters) • Support from PTA	• PTA request contributions from parents (10-15 cedis). • Solicit help from the community (Donations and in- kind support– working on the playground at their own time)
Ho -West	• Mobilization of funds • Supply/donations of wood logs • Use of local artisans at less or no cost	• Community fund mobilization (using multiple strategies - organizing Community Durbar, donation, IGF community project.
Binduri	• Parents, community members and community artisans to provide empties for shopping centres and the Carpenter to make shapes. • Teachers and head teachers to use card boards and other materials to decorate classrooms. • To seek support from philanthropies, other authorities and NGOs for supports	• Community supported with majority of the TLRs (empty bottles, …)

4. Shared leadership

The findings on shared leadership in schools highlight a significant shift in community involvement and responsibility for education. Community members, especially parents, now see schools as a shared responsibility rather than relying solely on government oversight. Engaging communities in LCoP has proven transformative, particularly in fostering a culture of shared leadership in schools. The participants highlighted how involving parents and community members in school activities reshapes their perception of education as a collective responsibility rather than a task solely for educators or the government. Key insights include:

Shifts in Community mindset

There has been a notable change in how communities perceive their role in education. Previously, many community members felt disconnected from school affairs, viewing involvement as the domain of educators alone. However, through the sessions, parents and local stakeholders now see the value of their engagement, understanding that supporting the school directly benefits their own children. This shift has fostered a sense of ownership and pride, with community members actively contributing to school initiatives.

> *There has been a tremendous change in the mindset of the people in the community. Because formerly they thought that being involved in the affairs of the school was difficult, so they didn't involve themselves very much. But, after introducing these sessions to them, we see that all of them are eager to do something to support the community. Because they have now*

realised that it's their own children who are in the community. And whatever that is they are doing. They are doing to support their own children. **KEEA district, Facilitator.**

Empowerment of community members

The learning cycle has shown that all community members, regardless of their education level, can positively influence early childhood education. As illustrated by one member in Binduri district, initially, she doubted her role due to her inability to read or write. However, after participating, she realised that her life experiences could help guide children at home, contributing to their learning journey beyond the classroom.

Just like one of the SMC members said, when we were having our last session, that when we began with this particular project, she was asking herself, I am not educated, I cannot read or write, what role am I going to play when it comes to learning through play or early childhood development education? And once she participated in the programme, she got to understand that yes, the little that they also do, that learning is not only at the school level, but their experience can also help in guiding the learners at home. **Binduri district, Facilitator.**

Eagerness to support with available resources

Communities are not only willing but eager to provide tangible support to schools. While financial resources may be limited, parents are contributing what they can. In KEEA district, facilitators noted that families are sharing the little they have, underscoring a newfound willingness to invest in their children's education through meaningful contributions.

So, one thing I'm happy about is that all parents are eager to support the school. So, you go and find someone who will say I will provide this, of course, we will not have a society where everybody is wealthy or has everything. But the little that they have, they have, they are ready to share. **KEEA district, Facilitator.**

And so, this role has also helped them in a way to be able to support the school in many ways, either in the form of getting furniture, in the form of attending school meetings regularly or in the form of providing TLRs (Teaching and Learning Resources). They initially didn't know that some of those things that are lying around freely in the community are part of the things that they can use as TLRs. **Binduri district, Facilitator**

Resourcefulness in using local materials for learning

The learning cycle has encouraged communities to leverage local resources creatively, utilising items readily available in their environment such as Teaching and Learning Resources (TLRs). For instance, community members in Binduri district are now aware that materials available in their surroundings can be valuable learning tools—an insight they previously overlooked.

5. Accountability

Engaging communities in leadership communities of practice has significantly improved community accountability in supporting schools. By establishing clear expectations, fostering transparency, and

building commitment among community members, the learning cycle has made accountability a shared, continuous effort. Key insights include:

Clear understanding of responsibilities

Through the structured design of LCoP sessions, community members receive specific assignments to complete between meetings, which they often work on collaboratively. This approach ensures that participants understand their responsibilities and prepare for discussions by engaging with the topics beforehand. As noted by a facilitator in Ho-West, the result is more focused, cohesive discussions where participants can make meaningful contributions with fewer divergent views, as key issues have already been discussed and aligned at the community level.

> *You see the design of the LCoP session, every time we close a session we give them assignments for the next session. So, because they go to carry out their assignment together and when they come back, they realise that they were all part of the discussion that took place at their community level. So, they are able to make contributions to whatever is being discussed during the sessions. So, you do not see too many divergent views during the discussion because this has been discussed at their level before they come.* **Ho-west district, facilitator**

Transparency in resource management

Transparent practices in resource mobilization have built trust within the community. In KEEA, facilitators observed that maintaining an accurate record of financial resources, such as funds collected and spent, helped ensure that all community members could see exactly how resources were managed. This transparency made community members more willing to contribute, knowing that resources were being accounted for openly and responsibly.

> *I think that what actually helped was the proper account that was taken. They had a book and were writing all the monies that were coming. And then it was just so there was transparency with the monies that came in. And you know when there's transparency, people are always willing to support.* **KEEA district, facilitator**

Sustained commitment and initiative

The learning cycle has fostered a culture of accountability that persists even when facilitators are not physically present. In KEEA, facilitators found that committed local leaders have taken ownership of community support for the school, actively leading efforts even between formal sessions. A facilitator from Binduri put it like this "*So, we take the lead, the SISOs and the headteachers to usually give the support to ensure that those planned activities are carried out successfully".* This sustained accountability has become part of the community's fabric, as evidenced by headteachers' reports of continuous community involvement and proactive efforts to support the school without external prompting.

> *I feel they will continue because we have got some leaders who are very committed and then they influence their school to show their interest in supporting. And even when we are there or not there. Because sometimes after the session we usually don't go there (to schools) but in about one month, we go there once or twice to observe, you go and meet them at the school doing what they're supposed to do when you ask them for updates, they (SMC members) are able to tell you*

what they are doing to support the community and even the headteacher testify, so they will continue. **KEEA district, Facilitator**

Although it was also mentioned that in some cases it was also challenging for all members to be available to support at the school level.

OK, so a major challenge was the commitment of some of the committee members. You know, we had a committee of eighteen people. So, when we meet, they know the date and so they will be there. And then when they have to go and execute, some of them will not be present. Maybe due to their work or some other engagement that might keep them, but for some reason, some people were not available during the time of work on the ground. **KEEA district, Facilitator.**

Therefore, these illustrate that the LCoP approach has empowered communities to take responsibility for their roles in education. By clearly defining tasks, promoting transparency, and reinforcing the value of consistent commitment, the learning cycle has established a culture of accountability, ensuring that community members are actively engaged and collectively invested in supporting local schools.

6. Leadership influence

Increased community commitment in rural areas

Rural communities, often close-knit due to a few family networks, exhibit stronger commitment and cohesion. Local leaders in these areas tend to be highly dedicated, reinforcing ongoing support and engagement even with minimal external intervention.

If you look at the progress or work, in general, you realise that in the rural community, they are more cohesive. Yeah, they are more together than in the urban community. Because the rural community is made up of two or three families. They are expanded to constitute, to be habitant of that area, when there is no chieftaincy problem, you realise that understanding one another is easier compared to the urban community. **Ho-west district, Facilitator.**

Active district-level engagement and ownership

The active involvement of the Ghana Education Service (GES) at the district level, especially during project planning and monitoring, has been crucial. In instances like KEEA, GES district officers independently coordinated learning cycle activities and logistics after initial guidance, showing increased ownership and collaboration. This hands-on approach demonstrates that sharing information effectively with key stakeholders fosters self-reliance and proactive planning among community and district representatives.

One example is the visit we did there in June. I only gave the director the information that this is going to happen and so they informed the officers. They did all the planning and preparations themselves, together with the community. And so, they even had a schedule for the whole day programme. Once they had the information that this is what we're going to do, we were just coming to participate in their session. And so, they had a programme lineup and everything. **Ho-west district, partner.**

I think one good thing we had from KEEA is that we had a special role for one person, XXX (name removed). XXX is a community participatory officer who is like a link between the district GES and the community. I think one of their roles is to go into the community to sensitise and speak with parents about new initiatives within the district. So that helped because the communities already know her. **KEEA district, partner.**

Involvement of community chiefs

Involvement from local chiefs, particularly in rural areas, has an amplified project impact, with rural chiefs often investing personally in community projects. Unlike urban chiefs, who oversee multiple schools and face challenges in providing targeted support, rural chiefs can offer focused contributions, thus reinforcing the community's sense of value and accountability. This selective investment by rural chiefs helps ensure sustained project engagement and underscores their commitment to educational improvement.

So, the amount of money personally the rural community chief invested into the project we can't see that from the urban community chief. Because the urban chief is superintending on a number of schools in the town, as their chief, but there are so many schools. So, you find it very difficult to personally single out one school and make such an investment. It can be seen as not being partial or not giving fair treatment to school under his leadership. So, he is very careful how he personally is involved. But he has done something though to show his level of commitment to the project. **Ho-west district, Facilitator**

7. Learning communities

Engaging communities in leadership communities of practice (LCoPs) can significantly contribute to transforming them into vibrant learning communities. This transformation occurs as members actively exchange ideas, resources, and support, fostering an environment where schools can collectively improve and innovate. Key findings highlight several effects of this engagement:

Idea exchange and shared learning

By bringing together different community stakeholders, especially in leadership roles—LCoPs facilitated the exchange of ideas on how to enhance educational outcomes. This community learning helps schools adopt effective practices observed in neighbouring institutions, creating a network of shared success.

Leveraging urban community advantages

Urban communities, often with more active Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), demonstrate how organized parent involvement can drive school improvement efforts. This proactive support provides resources and engagement that may be less available in rural areas, highlighting the importance of structured community involvement in educational leadership. Since urban schools initially showed stronger implementation of learning-through-play techniques, urban teachers have taken on mentorship roles to support teachers from rural areas, sharing effective practices and offering guidance.

When we bring in the urban community, the advantage that the urban has over the rural community is that the urban has a solid PTA. Most of them their PTA is more proactive than in the rural communities, so urban communities are able to a large extent to provide. **Ho-west district, Facilitator**

Schools as learning centres

Some schools have become informal "*learning centres*" where other schools visit to observe and learn from their successes. As the schools improved in terms of the resources and settings in the classroom, the schools served as models to show what materials or settings are working in their contexts. For instance, in one school the artisans supported the construction of a playground and are now serving as a model for the district and partners to demonstrate how the playground should be constructed. Facilitators and school leaders recommend these schools to neighbouring communities as models of effective practices, creating a ripple effect of learning and improvement across regions.

Yes, those are the main things that we can see, and the positive is that, like some of the schools are now serving as like, learning centre. Or should I use the term tourist centre for learning? Because, we have had 4-5 or even 6 schools visiting some of the schools to see things for themselves through the recommendation of the SISOs. **Binduri district, Facilitator.**

Encouragement through friendly competition

Competition among communities fosters motivation to improve and outperform neighbouring schools. Learning from one another and doing the same thing in their own communities. This friendly rivalry drives schools to innovate, adopt best practices, and enhance their educational environments, further fuelling community pride and commitment to ongoing improvement.

Increased parent involvement in classrooms

LCoP sessions have encouraged parents to become more involved in their children's classrooms, many for the first time. In Binduri, a partner observed that *"The 5th LCoP session was the first time some parents entered the KG classroom and spent time there, they appreciated what a great foundation they will have if their children continue to have a great start with lots of TLRs to learn with".* They gain insights into the learning process, observe foundational teaching methods, and often bring valuable resources and skills directly into the classroom. This increased parental presence has a direct positive impact on student learning and helps sustain a collaborative educational culture.

Now parents care about the welfare of their learners, especially in providing them with educational needs unlike before. Unlike before, you know, they just prepare their kids to go to school, some just drop them and turn away. But now they get into the school, they try to interact with the teachers to get to know how their children are doing. And so, there are more visits by parents to their school. And because they enter the classroom, they see how nice the classroom is. Some go about asking the teachers what is happening and because also have the information (of the changes in schools) through community engagement, they want to go and see how truthful the information they're getting is. **Ho-west district, partner.**

Skill-sharing by community members

Community members with specific skills are now more engaged in the educational process, contributing through activities like storytelling or practical demonstrations. This involvement enriches students' learning experiences and brings real-world expertise into the classroom, broadening students' educational exposure beyond traditional instruction.

> *So, some of them also come with some resources, you know some of the things that the teachers need to teach their children, they teach them directly because they are more experienced than how teachers will explain it. We now have skilled community members feeling free to come to the classroom to visit the school anytime they want and participate in the children's learning by teaching their children a skill. There is someone who also comes for storytelling time and shares a story with them.* **KEEA district, partner.**

Sustainable learning culture

This successful cycle of improvement fostered a sustainable learning culture within the communities, allowing them to continue addressing new priorities beyond the initial set goals. After achieving early priorities, each community shifted focus to tackle additional challenges that further enhance the educational environment:

- **Ho-West**: Prioritizing the development of **playgrounds**, reinforcing the importance of interactive and physical play for children's development.
- **KEEA**: Addressing **toilet facilities**, focusing on improving sanitation and hygiene for students, which is essential for a safe and healthy learning environment.
- **Binduri**: **Supporting teachers**, emphasizing the importance of ongoing teacher support to enhance their skills and ensure effective learning outcomes for students.

4.2. Effects at school level

1. Improving school environment and support for the KGs

With all priorities set by the district having been achieved, the school environment is getting better with schools established separate classrooms specifically designed for KG, equipped with age-appropriate furniture, such as smaller tables and chairs, which fit young children's needs better. These dedicated spaces promote a sense of ownership and make KG classrooms more conducive to interactive learning. Playgrounds were enhanced to include areas designed for active, social play.

> *The classroom environment was not so ideal, so that was the situation before the LCoP came in. So, aside from them having bottles and stuff like that they should be having things related materials that they need to be using for teaching in the classroom to be given to the children, but those ones too were not available.* **Ho-west district, partner.**

This addition supports play-based learning, encouraging children to engage with peers, practice motor skills, and explore their creativity. The playgrounds now provide an essential space for children to learn through movement and social interaction. Classrooms now have an array of low-cost, innovative TLRs. In Binduri, this also contributed to initiating peer learning across schools in the district, a partner

noted that *"One of the project schools which had an innovative teacher manage to fix their KG with low cost TLRs and the class is so beautiful that the other 20 schools where we work visit the school to learn from her, she is also out to support other to fix their classrooms to make it beautiful for learners"*.

These materials were created with community donations, such as recycled bottles and local materials, making learning hands-on and accessible. TLRs encourage sensory exploration and allow children to interact directly with their learning environment. Many classrooms have been decorated with vibrant visuals, known as "*talking walls*" that display letters, numbers, and colourful images. These visuals engage children's curiosity and serve as constant learning tools, reinforcing literacy, numeracy, and other concepts even outside structured lesson times.

> *Because of the level of the schools we are operating in, you know we operate in rural, hard-to-reach and underserved communities. You see, most of the children in those schools, especially the older ones in class 4, class 5, and class 3, have never had the opportunity to experience how regular KG class should look like. Because that is not the system they went through. With the inception of the project, we got the teachers to liven up the classrooms with TLRs, the talking walls and the registrar's systems. So, it looks lively and interactive, and exciting. So, because of that, older children from Class 4, Class 5, and Class 3, see it as a reference centre. So, when they come to school, they are so fascinated by it, they want to come into the classroom just to look into the KG set up.* **Binduri district, partner.**

Change in perception and prioritisation of KG

The improvements to KG classrooms shifted the perception of these spaces from mere play areas to essential learning environments. Educators and community members now see these classrooms as foundational to children's development, leading to more consistent support and attention.

> *With the level of involvement now in the KG education, initially early childhood had been relocated to the background. Many people regard KG as a place where you just dump your kid to just sleep, sing and come home. They don't even pay attention to the kids at that level, even in the school. The teachers and the headmasters regard the KGs as a place for playing. But with this programme they have realised that the play is not just a play, but it is a purposive play which must be done purposively with a focus on helping the child to learn. So, some of the support they denied the KGs, from this programme at least they are being recognised and well supported. The programme has taught the schools to prioritise even the KGs to any other levels.* **Ho-west district, facilitator.**

2. Improving teaching

The project contributed significantly to improving teaching outcomes in KG by enhancing teacher interest in ECE and building their capacity to effectively implement play-based learning. This session summarises key aspects of teaching improvement.

1. Increased teacher interest in Early Childhood Education

Shift in perception of teaching at KG level

Initially, KG teaching was seen as a less prestigious role, leading to feelings of demotion and low morale among teachers reassigned from higher grades. The project changed this by highlighting the

importance of ECE and introducing play-based learning, which inspired teachers to see the value in KG education. This was observed in all the districts. In Ho-west, a partner noted: *"In KGs, teachers from other class levels underate them, they think that because they deal with kids, they do not know a lot, so most KG teachers are demotivated and discouraged… Because of teacher shortage, a primary 5 teacher was reassigned to handle KG".*

Professional growth and specialisation

Exposure to Learning through Play motivated teachers to pursue further education in ECE. For example, a teacher reassigned from primary grade 5 developed a passion for ECE through the program and is now studying it formally to better support young learners.

> *When she was brought from basic five to the KG, she looked at it as a form of disgrace or demotion. So, she was very sad, and we had to go and talk to her, talk to her… and even after that she was not content until we started the programme. Then she developed interest in the programme and developed interest in teaching. As we speak now, she is securing a degree in early childhood education. She has decided to specialise in early childhood education, because the programme has actually motivated her to do so.* **Ho-west district, facilitator.**

2. Enhanced teacher capacity for Play-Based Learning

Clearer understanding of the KG curriculum

Many teachers were initially unfamiliar with the KG curriculum and lesson planning requirements. The project provided training that helped them understand the unique needs of young learners and integrate playful, activity-based methods into lessons effectively.

> *As I mentioned earlier on, the teachers didn't have an idea, they were new, and posted there at the KG, so they didn't have that understanding of the KG curriculum really well. Specifically for the one that was sent from the primary because the curriculum for the KG and then the primary is different and even the way they write the lesson plan is different. And so, once they were taken through and they understood it, they wrote their lesson plan perfectly, integrating games and activities in the lesson plan. And so, they have mastered it.* **Ho-west district, partner.**

Mastery of play-based pedagogy

Teachers learned to design engaging, child-centred lessons that incorporate games and interactive activities. This method makes learning livelier and allows children to explore and manipulate materials in dedicated "*learning centres*" where they actively participate and discuss what they learn.

> *And so, the KG teacher says that she feels a sense of pride every day when she gets to school, and she sees some of the older children standing by her class waiting for her to open the class. So, they can just enter the class and see because they are excited. Most of them (older students) tell her that they wish their classrooms were like this, and then she tells them that they have passed the stage.* **Binduri district, partner.**

Adapting teaching methods in rural areas

Teachers in rural areas, who had limited prior exposure to play-based pedagogy, quickly adapted these new methods. Their teaching transformed into a more engaging, student-centred approach due to continuous support and on-the-job learning provided by the project.

> *Then if you look even at the teachers that we had, they never knew that you could teach lively like this through play. Most especially in the rural community, the teachers we had in that class had never participated in any of our play-based pedagogy before the inception of the programme. So, they picked the concept without going for actual training, so they learned on the job based on the inputs we were making as a part of this project.* **Ho-west district, facilitator.**

3. Improving learning

The project contributed to improved learning outcomes, particularly in terms of increased attendance and enrolment, by creating an engaging and supportive school environment for young children.

1. Higher attendance and engagement

Through the introduction of play-based learning, children now look forward to attending school. The interactive and enjoyable learning methods made children more eager to attend, even on days when they were feeling unwell. Playful, active learning encouraged a positive association with school, reducing the tendency for children to run home early out of boredom. Children frequently express their desire to attend school every day, including weekends, indicating a strong attachment to the school environment and enjoyment in their interactions with both teachers and classmates. This suggests that the project has created a more welcoming and motivating atmosphere for students.

> *Children would usually run away from school every day because they become bored. With this introduction of play based using a lot of active play, even if the child is sick. That child will want to come to school. They think that when I come to school and then play with my colleagues, he or she will be fine.* **KEEA district, facilitator.**

> *Then aside from that, even when it's Fridays, the children ask the teachers if they are coming to school the next day and that means they like being in school because of the environment and how friendly the teachers are with them, coupled with the interactive ways of teaching and engaging them. They really feel at home when they are in school.* **Ho-west district, partner.**

2. Increased enrolment and community impact

The upgraded KG classrooms, with new furniture, interactive materials, and play spaces, have made the schools of intervention more attractive to parents, often drawing students away from private schools. Parents now prefer to enrol their children in these improved public schools, resulting in higher enrolment figures and, in some cases, the need for double-track systems to accommodate demand. With the noticeable improvements in these public KGs, the community recognizes these schools as viable, quality education options, leading to increased enrolment and greater community engagement in school activities.

> *Because we have chairs and tables, parents are sending their children (to school), so now the school have to be double track. The community is now gaining a good achievement, children are leaving the private sector coming to our school. We have a private school in the nearby town, children will*

go there but as of now the parents are withdrawing their children from these schools to our community school. **SMC, Chair Ho-west district.**



5. Conclusion

The study on Strengthening Play-Based Early Childhood Education in Ghana through Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoPs) highlights the transformative impact of community-driven leadership in ECE. The LCoPs successfully engaged school communities in overcoming challenges such as financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient teaching resources. Through collaborative priority setting, accountability, and resource mobilisation, these initiatives led to significant improvements in kindergarten learning environments, teaching practices, and overall community involvement.

Key outcomes of the LCoP approach include:

- **Enhanced school environments with age-appropriate furniture, interactive materials, and dedicated learning spaces.**
- **Increased enrolment, driven by improved facilities and a welcoming atmosphere that attracted more parents.**
- **Greater parental involvement in their children's education.**
- **Teachers' deeper understanding and implementation of play-based curricula, resulting in more interactive and engaging classroom practices.**
- **Empowered community members, particularly in rural areas, who embraced shared leadership roles, fostering a culture of accountability and sustained engagement.**

These findings demonstrate that building leadership communities of practice around shared educational goals empowers communities to take initiative, fosters collective investment in student success, and promotes a sustainable approach to educational support, even in resource-constrained settings. The cycle of setting and achieving priorities, followed by identifying and addressing new needs, reflects a proactive and sustainable model for continuous improvement within these communities.

In conclusion, the LCoP approach has fostered an environment where schools evolve into interconnected learning communities. This collaborative model not only improves the quality of education but also creates a culture of shared responsibility, benefiting both schools and communities through mutual growth and support. The project inspired teachers to view KG education as both meaningful and rewarding, fostering personal and professional development. The training and play-based methods provided by the project equipped teachers with skills that significantly enhanced their teaching effectiveness, creating a positive and interactive learning environment for young children.

The project's focus on play-based learning and enhanced school facilities has transformed KG environments, making them more inviting and engaging. These improvements have led to increased attendance and enrolment, indicating strong gains in learning outcomes and community involvement. The new, welcoming KG environments have attracted more parents to enrol their children, and the improved classrooms have made public KGs more competitive with private schools, even resulting in double-track enrolments in some areas.

While the results are promising, continued efforts are required to address resource sustainability, deepen stakeholder engagement, and expand the play-based learning model across communities.

Ultimately, this approach has proven pivotal in positioning KG education as a cornerstone for lifelong learning and development.

Future research on the Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoP) approach could focus on scaling its implementation across diverse districts and extending the study period to assess long-term sustainability and impact on teaching and learning outcomes. Quantitative and qualitative analyses can explore how improved play-based environments influence student development, and teacher practices. Additionally, investigating strategies for resource sustainability, stakeholder leadership dynamics, and the model's adaptability to different cultural or socio-economic contexts will help refine the approach for broader application and deeper systemic changes in education.



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