REMIE
Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research

Hipatia Press
www.hipatiapress.com

Instructions for authors, subscriptions and further details:

http://remie.hipatiapress.com

Early Childhood Education Policy and Practice in Ghana: Document and Evidence Analysis with McDonnell and Elmore's Framework of Policy Instruments

Francis R. Ackah-Jnr[1], John Appiah[2], Kwaku Addo-Kissiedu[3], Alex Kwao[4]

1) Griffith University
2) Auburn University
3) University of Development Studies
4) University of Cape Coast

Date of publication: October 15th, 2022
Edition period: October 2022 – February 2023

To cite this article: Ackah-Jnr, F.R., Appiah, J., Addo-Kissiedu, K., & Kwao, A. (2022). Early Childhood Education Policy and Practice in Ghana: Document and Evidence Analysis with McDonnell and Elmore's Framework of Policy Instruments. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, *12*(3), 295-321. http://dx.doi.org/10.447/remie.9964

To link this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.447/remie.9964

REMIE – Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research Vol. 12 No. 3 October 2022

Early Childhood Education Policy and Practice in Ghana: Document and Evidence Analysis with McDonnell and Elmore's Framework of Policy Instruments

Francis R.Ackah-Jnr
Griffith University

John Appiah
Auburn University

Kwaku Addo-Kissiedu
University of Development Studies

Alex Kwao
University of Cape Coast

(Received: 21st February 2022; Accepted:4th October 2022; Published: 15th October 2022)

Abstract

Early childhood education (ECE) in Ghana has grown from a traditional approach to a more formalised and modernised system of care and education services for young children. As a valued practice, ECE reflects a distributive, regulatory or redistributive policy. The paper analyses Ghana's ECE policy implementation using McDonnell and Elmore's framework of five elemental instruments. We supported the analysis with ECE policy documents and research in ECE. Enabling and inhibiting policy instrument factors affecting ECE were identified and ways were devised to enhance the latter. We found that while ECE policy and practice has somewhat addressed equity and access issues, concerns exist regarding implementation factors such as quality teacher training and parent involvement for promoting effective programs. The paper recommends the need to evaluate ECE and provide planned and ongoing opportunities to advance the professional development, capacity, and motivation of ECE implementers, especially early childhood teachers.

Keywords: early childhood education, policy implementation, policy instruments, success and inhibiting factors, Ghana

ISSN: 2014-2862
DOI: 10.4471/remie.9964

Hipatia Press
www.hipatiapress.com

REMIE – Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research Vol. 12 No. 3 Octubre 2022

Política y Práctica de la Educación de la Primera Infancia en Ghana: Análisis de Documentos y Pruebas con el Marco de Instrumentos de Política de McDonnell y Elmore

Francis R.Ackah-Jnr
Universidad Griffith

John Appiah
Universidad Auburn

Kwaku Addo-Kissiedu
Universidad de Estudios de Desarrollo

Alex Kwao
Universidad Cape Coast

(*Recibido: 21 Febrero 2022; Aceptado:4 Octubre 2022; Publicado: 15 Octubre 2022)*

Resumen

La educación de la primera infancia (ECE) en Ghana ha pasado de un enfoque tradicional a un sistema más formalizado y modernizado de servicios de atención y educación para niños pequeños. Como práctica valorada, la ECE refleja una política distributiva, regulatoria o redistributiva. El documento analiza la implementación de la política ECE de Ghana utilizando el marco de cinco instrumentos elementales de McDonnell y Elmore. Apoyamos el análisis con documentos de políticas de ECE e investigaciones en ECE. Se identificaron factores habilitadores e inhibidores de instrumentos de políticas que afectan a la educación de la primera infancia y se diseñaron formas de mejorar estos últimos. Descubrimos que, si bien la política y la práctica de ECE han abordado de alguna manera los problemas de equidad y acceso, existen preocupaciones con respecto a los factores de implementación, como la capacitación docente de calidad y la participación de los padres para promover programas efectivos. El documento recomienda la necesidad de evaluar ECE y brindar oportunidades planificadas y continuas para promover el desarrollo profesional, la capacidad y la motivación de los implementadores de ECE, especialmente los maestros de la primera infancia

Palabras clave: educación de la infancia, implementación de política, instrumentos de política, factores de éxito y inhibición, Ghana

ISSN: 2014-2862
DOI: 10.4471/remie.9964

Early childhood education is a crucial policy and practice. In Ghanaian context, ECE programs, services and practices have grown as an integral part of the education system over half a century when Ghana's first president, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, recognised the importance of early childhood and youth for building a strong and prosperous independent nation (Dillard, 2009). Early childhood education has witnessed dramatic changes in the last two decades, attracting increased state-stakeholder attention, support, collaboration and resources. Ghana's ECE as a distributive, redistributive and/or regulatory policy (Lowi & Ginsberg, 1994), recognises the invaluable role of parents (Ackah-Jnr, 2021). This paper analyses implementation of Ghana's ECE policy using McDonnell and Elmore's (1987) and McDonnell's (1994) framework. It assesses if implementation is succeeding and what challenges exists. The analysis used ECE policy documents and research evidence from the field to identify the enabling and inhibiting factors of ECE and to devise suggestions for enhancing practice. We also discussed how implementation affects accessibility, equitability, and quality of care and education. The paper first presents an overview of the ECE policy and practice. In this paper the term ECE is used interchangeably with ECCD.

ECE Policy, Provision, and Implementation in Ghana

The need for countries to develop ECE policies has been highlighted in research (Bertram & Pascal, 2016; Dillard, 2009; Schleicher, 2019; Vandenbroeck, 2020). Such policies, as a significant part of early childhood settings, provide legislative framework and direction governing care and education services for children, and serve as indices of the roles, tasks and responsibilities of educators, parents, and other stakeholders. By ECE policy implementation, we mean the actions undertaken by governments, and other relevant stakeholders and partners in relation to educational practices to address the production, delivery, and sustenance of ECE programs. Implementation entails a purposeful and multidirectional change process aimed at putting specific principles and actions into practice that affect the education system (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Early childhood education includes all arrangements of providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or program content (Schleicher, 2019). In 2004 the Ghana Ministry of Education introduced an Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) policy, also Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy, to guide the provision of care and education services and programs to children from birth to 8 years (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). The policy recognises the close interconnections between care and education and the inseparability of development and learning (Elliott, 2006; Vandenbroeck, 2020). Ghana's ECE policy aims to promote the survival, growth, development, and protection of young children. It places responsibility of ECE at the doorsteps of government to ensure parents continue to discharge their traditional responsibilities of taking care and nurturing their children. The government of Ghana is mainly responsible for formulating ECE-focused programs and creating enabling environment for parents, caregivers, and children as well as ECE services and sectors to operate effectively in providing the needed care and education. Through job creation, the government seeks to empower parents, while providing developmental projects including education, health, and recreational facilities, learning centres and other facilities to meet the needs of children. These opportunities are designed for parents take advantage of, play effective roles, and contribute meaningfully towards educating their children. There is commitment to ensure universal access to quality ECE for every child in Ghana by 2030 (ESP 2018-2030) and the use of play-based approach to improve children's learning and development (Ministry of Education , 2018).

Ghana's ECCD policy focuses on children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development and the expansion of early childhood development services such as immunization, weighing and nutrition to all children (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). It further aims to protect children's rights, enabling them to develop the full cognitive, emotional, social, and physical potential (Duchesne & McMaugh, 2019; Bredekamp, 2011; Essa & Burnham, 2019). The policy also seeks to promote and protect young children's rights to survival, growth, and development, which are considered essential to future human resource development and nation building. The ECCD policy is conceived as a poverty reduction

strategy to invest in young children, and a means of addressing the issue of poverty, and ultimately improving the standard of living of Ghanaians (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). In simple terms, ECE has economic and labour-promoting functions, and as well bears a social and education mission (Vandenbroeck, 2020). While formal ECCD programs include Creche, Daycare, Nursery and Kindergarten (KG) for providing care and education services, only the KG (4-5 years) is free and compulsory for all children attending public early childhood centres and schools in Ghana.

Multi-Sectoral Implementation Approach to ECE Policy in Ghana

Ghana's ECE policy implementation involves a multi-sectoral approach to providing quality care and education services for young children. Central government is the key stakeholder responsible for formulating and implementing or leveraging the ECE policy (Ackah-Jnr, 2021). It foremost provides the enabling policy environment, including legislation and other supporting acts to govern ECE programs. It is also responsible for mobilising the necessary resources, including human, finance, material, and other facilities to ensure effective implementation. Because ECE policy requires a well-defined institutional framework to translate its goals and objectives into actual programs, at the national, regional, district and community levels, the government works through its ministries and partners with other agencies to deliver ECE services. This is done in accordance with Ghana's decentralization program (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004).

The implementation strategy for the ECE policy involves the creation of conducive environment for developing ECE programs, promotion of integrated services, establishment of conventional and non-conventional ECE systems, training of caregivers, capacity building for individuals and institutions towards the growth and sustenance of the system and mobilization of resources (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). Several institutional arrangements are in place to foster ECE delivery: a National ECCD Co-ordinating Committee with membership drawn from government ministries such as Education, Health, Local Government; associations such as the Ghana Association of Teachers, Universities; and recognized associations of ECCD practitioners. At the Regional level,

Regional ECCD Committees are appointed from among the Regional Co-ordinating Council, and any other relevant stakeholders of ECCD according to guidelines provided by the National ECCD Co-ordinating Committee. Within the Districts, the District Committee on Children, a technical Committee of the District Assembly responsible for advocacy and planning for children, is charged with the handling of ECCD issues. At the District sub-structure level, Zonal, Urban, Town, and Area ECCD Committees shall be formed. Membership shall be made up of government officials, Traditional Authorities of the area, as well as representatives of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), parents, ECCD practitioners and ECCD related institutions. At the Community/Unity Level, communities are encouraged to form ECCD Committees, the composition of which shall be made up of such persons as the Unit Committee Member, Assembly Member, Chairman of Town/Village Development Committees, Faith-Based Organizations, Teachers and Community Health Staff (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). How has the leadership of these actors or implementing agencies supported the practise of ECE?

McDonnell and Elmore Policy Implementation Framework

McDonnell and Elmore (1987) and McDonnell (1994) identify five policy instruments as conditions for translating policy goals into actions. These instruments are a useful framework for analysing education policy. The essential conditions enabling or inhibiting policy implementation are mandates, inducements, capacity building, system-changing, and persuasion (Anderson & Togneri, 2005; Fowler, 2014; McDonnell, 1994; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). The framework is based on: (1) existing theories about the effects of governmental action, and (2) observed patterns in the choices of policymakers (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Figure 1 shows the five policy instruments.

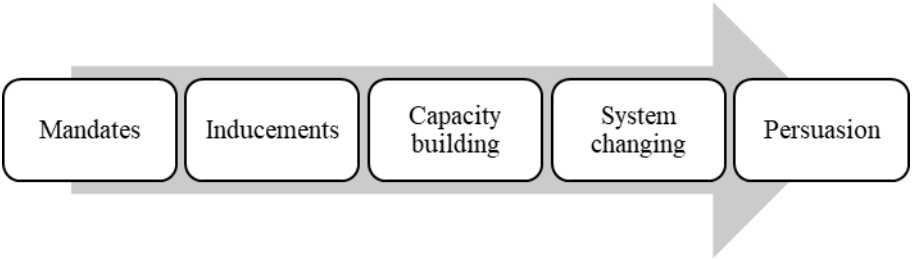

Figure 1. *McDonnell and Elmore Policy Framework (1987; 1994)*

Mandates comprise laws, rules and regulations that govern the activities of individuals, agencies, and organizations. They may take the form of a statute, an administrative rule, a court decision, a school board policy, and a school or classroom rule, intended to produce compliance (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Mandates are conceived as situations where policymakers impose competency tests for teacher candidates or establish laws to regulate the activities of schools implementing a policy. The expected effect of mandates in policy implementation is compliance, or behaviour consistent with what the rules prescribe. In their pure form, mandates entail no transfer of money, but require enforcement which is usually costly to the enforcing agency. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) further claim that mandates involve imposing both compliance and avoidance costs on individuals and implementing agencies. While compliance costs are borne by individuals and agencies because they behave consistently with mandates, avoidance costs are borne because of circumventing mandates, bargaining with enforcement agencies about the terms of compliance, or using political influence and litigation to change mandates (McKean, 1980, cited in Fowler, 2014). The benefits of mandates accrue primarily to specific individuals or groups such as disadvantaged students who may benefit from state-mandated programs at local schools, although mandates are often intended to benefit the broader society.

Inducements, according to Fowler (2014) and McDonnell and Elmore (1987), denote financial transfers in terms of grants and loans and their appropriate use. Defined as the transfer of money to individuals or agencies

in return for certain actions, inducements are of two components (1) the money, services, or in-kind materials to be transferred and (2) guidelines that spell out how they are to be used (Fowler, 2014). They are a form of procurement and are considered an exchange of money for value. For instance, inducements are meant to initiate and sustain concrete educational programs and services to ensure accessibility and equity.

Inducements can also take the form of policy incentives, including non-monetary rewards, for example, public recognition for desired performance and the threat of sanctions for low performance (Anderson & Togneri, 2005). The expected effect of inducements might be a program addressed to a particular clientele e.g., compensatory education for disadvantaged students and work incentives for caregivers. Because inducements are conditional grants of money, they are frequently accompanied by rules designed to assure that money is used consistently with the policymakers' intent. These rules create oversight costs to implementing agencies and avoidance costs to mitigate the effect of undesirable conditions on the transfer of money or authority (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). The benefits of inducements accrue both to implementing agencies, in the form of increased budget and authority, and to individual beneficiaries who get opportunities such as certification, increased salary, employment and requisite competencies.

Capacity building, according to McDonnell and Elmore (1987) and Fowler (2014), is the transfer of money for purposes of investment in material, intellectual, or human resources to produce some expected benefit in the future. It is about focusing attention on developing the human and material resources and working conditions needed to achieve policy goals (Anderson & Togneri, 2005). It entails, for example, strengthening a country's teacher training institutions to produce high-quality teachers. Capacity building carries with it the expectation of future returns, which can be uncertain, intangible, immeasurable, and distant (Fowler, 2014). It often involves intermediate products or services such as a government's investment in science and mathematics curriculum development to produce materials and future capacity to teach in schools.

McDonnell and Elmore (1987) note that the costs of capacity building accrue to the government and society. In the short-term, the benefits of capacity building accrue to the specific individuals and institutions, but the ultimate beneficiaries are future members of society. Capacity building aims at investing in the short-term improvement of human and material resources such as leadership development and teacher quality which has expectation for long-term gains in educational performance (Anderson & Togneri, 2005). Capacity building may thus be instrumental to mandates and inducements in certain government context with respect to the transfer of funds.

System-changing, another key condition, refers to the transfer of official authority among individuals and agencies to alter the system by which public goods and services are delivered (Fowler, 2014; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). It involves easing certification requirements to encourage lateral entry. System-changing entails transfers of authority, rather than money, aimed at altering institutional structures by which policies are implemented. System-changing instruments owe their theoretical underpinnings to the critique of public bureaucracy growing out of political economy (Tullock, 1985, cited in Fowler, 2014). The expected effect of system broadening or narrowing is a change in institutional structures by which public goods and services are delivered, and often a change in the incentives that determine the nature and effects of those goods and services (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). System-broadening is best exemplified by the situation in which a constant budget is allocated for a given public service e.g., education, and a dramatic change is made in the policy governing the provision of that service allowing private schools to receive public aid or nationalising the provision of health care. In the case of schools, the shift would be from a public quasi-monopoly to a public/private competitive market (system broadening). In health care, the shift would be from a predominantly private market in which in-kind transfers to individuals serve public purposes to a public monopoly (system-narrowing).

System-changing policies may be based on the expectation that transferring authority will increase efficiency, alter the distribution of political power and public funds to providers or consumers of public goods and services (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Anderson and Togneri (2005) articulate succinctly that system-changing policies assume that the quality of

education can be enhanced by redistributing authority among existing or new institutions such as school-based management and councils. As Fowler (2014) explains, as a central component, system change is an administrative rule, or broad policy that weakens or eliminates the authority of an official or agency over a specific decision-making area while simultaneously shifting that authority to different individuals or agencies. System-changing policies fundamentally distribute authority which may result in creating whole new set of agencies or in dissolving significant parts of public systems. These changes can dramatically alter the distribution of money among agencies and individuals without necessarily altering the total amount spent in each sector or the mandates and inducements under which agencies and individuals operate (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987).

The fifth condition of the policy instrument is persuasion (McDonnell, 1994). Persuasion or hortatory policies "send a signal that particular goals and actions are considered a high priority by government" (McDonnell, 1994, p. 398). Fowler (2014) explains that because such policies are intended to persuade, hortatory policies are primarily discursive, using symbolism and imagery to appeal to values to encourage citizens to act on them. These policies are usually communicated through written, spoken, or graphic texts. In school settings, campaigns to promote societal values or good citizenship education are regarded as hortatory. Environmental campaigns such as "when the last tree dies the last man dies", that encourage afforestation are examples of hortatory policies.

Hortatory policies are appropriate when the desired change can be linked readily with symbols and information and when people are likely to act on new information (Fowler, 2014). They are especially suitable as the first step in a long sequence of policies designed to change behaviour gradually. Often, when political support is weak, a hortatory policy is the only one with a chance of being adopted. The major cost of a hortatory policy is the dissemination of information as it usually involves public relations techniques such as posters, radio and television commercials, and printed flyers, which may be expensive. The ideal result of a hortatory policy is successfully persuading the targeted population to act differently, and its major drawback is the ease with which persuasion can slip into propaganda and other forms of manipulation (Fowler, 2014).

The five elemental conditions in McDonnell and Elmore's framework are further examined to identify the success or challenging factors of ECE policy implementation in Ghana.

McDonnell and Elmore's Framework and Analysis of Ghana's ECE Policy

The success or failure of a policy can be assessed based on the expected effects, costs, and benefits of implementation (Anderson & Togneri, 2005; Fowler, 2014; McDonnell, 1994; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). From McDonnell and Elmore's policy framework, the expected effects of the ECE policy are mandates (compliance), inducements (production of short-term value), capacity building (enhancement of skill and competence; long-term returns), system-changing (composition of public education system or incentive) and hortatory/persuasion (persuade; appeal to value). The expected benefits of the ECE policy are further discussed in terms of mandates (specific benefits to individuals and society), inducements (increased budget allocation and value received), capacity building (short- and long-term specific benefits to receiving agency and society), system-changing (gain in authority by new deliverers), and hortatory/persuasion (change in behaviour). Table 1 summarises the areas of success or challenge regarding implementation of ECE policy in Ghana.

Table 1.
McDonnell and Elmore's framework and ECE policy success or inhibiting factors

Policy instrument	Success/Facilitators	Failure/Inhibitors
Mandates	Full responsibility of government for ECE. Enactment of laws, regulations, and policies e.g., ECE policy, street children and disability policies.	Monitoring and evaluation
Inducements	Enhancement of teacher salaries e.g., Single spine salary pay structure. Opportunities for study leave with pay.	Regularisation of study leave with pay

Table 1.
McDonnell and Elmore's framework and ECE policy success or inhibiting factors (continuation)

Capacity building	Introduction of undergraduate & graduate early childhood programs at Universities & Colleges of Education. Upgrading of Teacher Training Colleges to Colleges of Education. Increased opportunities for in-service training for teachers through the Department of Social Welfare.	Accreditation & Quality Assurance. Financing of in-service education.
Persuasion	Early childhood focal persons at National/Regional and district levels of education. Creation of Early Childhood Unit within the Ministry of Education.	Low publicity and packaging of ECE programs
System changing	Experts/professionals for ECE programs. Decentralization of early childhood policy & programs for private/public or NGO participation.	Inadequate personnel. Limited commitment of personnel.

Mandates and ECE Policy

Before the enactment of the ECE policy in Ghana, parents were traditionally responsible for ECE and they chose which child to enrol in school depending on their economic strength and perception of education, with little interference from government. With the implementation of the ECE policy, the government assumed full responsibility for 'formal' ECE, but partners with relevant stakeholders, especially parents. Several policies, laws, and regulations have thus been formulated to guide the effective provision of quality ECE services and programs, including street children policy; gender and children policy; disability policy; Ghana poverty reduction strategy framework; policy and strategies for improving the health of children under 5 years and promotion and extension of pre-school education (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). In furtherance of ECE, Chapters 28, 34 (2) and 35 (3) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana mandate the realisation of basic human rights, healthy economy, the right to work, the right to good health

care and the right to education as well as reasonable access by all citizens to public facilities and services in accordance with the laws of Ghana. The Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) also enjoins District Assemblies and other Decentralised Departments to facilitate the establishment of Day Care Centres and other ECCD institutions (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004).

The governance, management, and provision of ECE essentially is institutionalized but decentralized from the national, regional, district, and to the local/community level. Institutions, individuals, and organizations are tasked to perform certain activities and roles regarding ECE implementation. Rules or operational guidelines relating ECE are carefully spelt out to avoid duplication of functions at all the levels. In effect, ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and other institutions have specific objectives and targets to achieve. For example, the Ministry of Education regulates the establishment of ECE centres and gives standards for service providers to ensure quality services. The Department of Social Welfare is mandated to train day care teachers, while the Ghana National Commission on Children takes charge of the welfare of all children (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). In 2001, for example, the government established the then Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to empower women and address children's needs. Currently, the mandate of this ministry has been extended, making it relevant to all stakeholders, and renamed in 2013 as Ministry of Children, Women and Social Protection. Generally, at the institutional level, specific institutions /ministries have been strengthened to enforce existing laws to reduce all forms of child abuse and other socio-cultural practices found to be detrimental to children's wellbeing. The government has restrained parents from engaging their children in all of forms of child labour activities, and instead encourages parents to send their children to nurseries and kindergartens, while government bears the cost of tuition, provision of food and textbooks and others. In addition, there is a Language Policy that enjoins ECE teachers to use the Ghanaian Language (L1) or mother tongue to teach other subjects. Pre-service teachers are being equipped with skills to use Ghanaian language as the basis for improving literacy in English (L2), especially the ability to teach reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This obligation that government puts on stakeholders e.g., parents and teachers,

aligns with regulatory policies or techniques of control (Fowler, 2014; Lowi & Ginsberg, 1994).

Inducements and ECE Policy

ECE policy is hugely funded by the central government, and through funds from international donor agencies and other NGOs. Such funds are used for major educational projects including the provision of infrastructure and teaching and learning materials, which are distributed through the national level, ministry, or agency to the regional, district or local level. To foster compliance, funds are distributed with strict adherence to all the financial protocols or procedures to ensure that monies are appropriately used and not misappropriated. The ECE policy implementation guidelines mandate the Ministry of Finance to release funds or grants deemed appropriate to the national, regional, district or community levels and supervise same through its representatives at these levels. The policy also gives opportunities to regional coordinating councils or metropolitan assemblies or local assemblies to raise internally generated funds to use for projects which they deem a priority (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). However, they are to operate within certain financial ceiling or threshold beyond which they must account or seek clearance from the national level. The financial regulations and protocols have worked over the years to ensure smooth implementation of the policy at various levels in the country. However, challenges exist since some districts are unable to source funding from the national level while others lack the necessary expertise to raise internally generated funds for ECE projects.

From 2012 to 2016, Ghana received education funding from international partners such as the World Bank and the OECD-funded Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to finance several education projects and programs, including ECE (Oxford Business Group, 2019). Through this partnership, a $75.5m grant was dedicated to the planning, delivery, and monitoring of pre-primary and primary education at district and local government levels. The grant comprised three components: the provision of grants to targeted districts to support key objectives and teacher development; the provision of grants to support schools in providing opportunities for girls; and project management and institutional strengthening through monitoring and

evaluation (Oxford Business Group, 2019). The resultant effect of past and present government financial investments includes fee-free ECE, free uniform and textbooks for all children, culminating in high enrolment in public schools. ECE teachers have not been left out of these financial investment as there has been incentives and other forms of motivation provided for them.

Capacity Building and ECE Policy

Capacity building efforts in terms of quality human resource development have been undertaken to foster ECE policy implementation. The proportion of trained teachers has increased over time at the KG level, although it just reached 65% in 2016/17 (ESP 2018-2030). Research indicates there are increased efforts at enhancing effective teacher training and professional development to equip teachers with pedagogical skills and knowledge for ECE (Ackah-Jnr, 2020; Agbenyega, 2018; Wolf, 2020; Wolf et al., 2019). Ackah-Jnr (2020) recently re-echoed the need for ongoing professional development and learning for early childhood teachers. Although some teachers engaged in agentic activities, more workshops and training opportunities are being provided nationally to improve teacher quality. Wolf (2020) reports that the Quality Preschool for Ghana (QP4G) project that aims to build capacity and support for implementation of the 2014 KG curriculum, enhances the quality of KG education. Presently, teacher education programs are ongoing to develop teacher knowledge and skills or competencies in ECE. Many public and private universities and colleges of education and other higher education institutions, including the University of Cape Coast and University of Education, have taken on a greater role to support the training and professional development of teachers for ECE. There are now certificate, diploma, degree, masters, and doctorate programs in ECE. Specifically, seven Colleges of Education in Ghana run ECE programs. Many private tertiary institutions are accredited to support government efforts in training early childhood teachers. Such government-private sector collaboration to invest in training and developing the requisite human resource for ECE is a great move for effective practice.

To broaden capacity building, there is recognition and increased efforts towards enhancing parent involvement and commitment to ECE (Ackah-Jnr,

2021; Ackah-Jnr & Fluckiger, 2021; Agbenyega, 2018; Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004; Wolf, 2020; Wolf et al., 2019; Yaro, 2015). Parents and families are encouraged to provide supportive environment for improving children's learning and attainment of family, school, or national goals of ECE. Parents are making contributions and playing relevant roles as mandated by the policy, although some studies found that the level of parent involvement is somewhat inadequate (Ackah-Jnr, 2021; Wolf, 2020; Yaro, 2015). Through parent empowerment and education programs, many parents have provided supportive environment or climate to give children a head start for effective learning and socialisation. To complement the efforts of parents in a collectivistic society such as Ghana, other significant adults within the community support the upbringing of children (Yaro, 2015).

System-changing and ECE Policy

ECE policy implementation has led to modest systemic changes in education and ECE delivery. Research indicates education decentralization structures, including Parent Teacher Associations and School Management Committees are in place to devolve power to local levels, ensuring decision making in ECE becomes more efficient and responsive to local needs (Nudzor, 2014). But it appears however that the government's interest is on centralisation, so a step toward democratising or decentralising ECE implementation is required to empower the local policy actors. Structural changes in Ghana's Basic Education in 2004 led to the inclusion of a 'formal' ECE component in the education system. The government's effort to enforce and strengthen ECE policy implementation made two years of kindergarten education, free and compulsory for all children in public schools. This move by government has largely shifted the education of children (4-5-year-old) from the monopoly of private institutions to public basic schools. Again, parents are obligated to send their children of school entering age to school since education at early childhood level is virtually free including free meals for children on daily basis. However, there were initial challenges with this system change due to limited infrastructure and certified ECE teachers to fill the resulting numerous teaching vacancies. Most government public schools had no classrooms to accommodate children and a few schools which had classrooms were overwhelmed with the number of children that enrolled to

begin their KG education. Consequently, some schools are organized in open school compound or environment popularly termed as "schools under trees" (Graphic Online, 2018). To enhance quality education and access, however, the government has made strides in eradicating schools under trees. As at the close of 2017, the government of Ghana had eliminated 2,031 out of the total number of 2,936 identified schools under trees (Graphic Online, 2018). Some private organisations are putting up classrooms and other infrastructure to support the elimination of schools under trees.

From 2017, Ghana witnessed the introduction of teacher licensing, where teachers are expected to write and pass a licensing exam before they are given the opportunity or posted to teach in government schools. This is seen to enhance the quality of manpower for ECE and regulate the activities of teachers. Hitherto, many early childhood teachers were untrained and those that were trained did not write such exam before teaching at that level. Currently, there is also the 2017 National Teachers' Standards that seek among others to ensure teachers demonstrate familiarity with the education system and key policies guiding it and most especially that teachers have a good knowledge of how to teach beginning reading and numeracy (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Significantly, the implementation ECCD policy has increased access to quality care and education services for many young children in Ghana (Agbenyega, 2018; Wolf et al., 2019). Enrolment rates in ECE are on the up. For example, Ghana had one of the highest pre-primary enrolment rates in Africa at 75% net enrolment in 2015–2016 (Ministry of Education , 2016). Appreciable increase in enrolment has been also recorded, regarding children with disabilities, which ranges from 0.2% to 0.4% of the total enrolment in KG settings (Ministry of Education , 2018).

Expansion of ECE infrastructural facilities has occurred, resulting from the attachment of at least KG 1 and 2 classes to every public Basic School. The government of Ghana embarked on massive infrastructural projects in education to expand access to quality ECE for all young children. It is now common to see ECE centres in various urban and rural towns that have enhanced infrastructural facilities that contribute to improve the key dimensions of classroom quality of ECE (Wolf et al., 2019). While the government of Ghana has expended much effort in expanding infrastructure,

the quality and standard of programs remain a challenge for some ECE settings. Relatedly, curriculum materials and resources are being provided for ECE teaching and learning. There has been an increase in the availability and appropriateness of curricula materials e.g., syllabus, textbooks, and other resources to support how teachers lead pedagogically in ECE (Agbenyega, 2018; Wolf et al., 2019). The ECE curriculum is being reviewed to make it contextually relevant and appropriate.

Persuasion and ECE Policy

Implementation of Ghana's ECE policy aligns with a hortatory or persuasive policy (Fowler, 2014; McDonnell, 1994). The Government of Ghana prioritized ECE as a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), a poverty-reducing mechanism and an investment for developing quality human resource of the nation (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). Through education seminars, workshops, or conferences, the objectives and goals of the policy have been communicated to relevant educational stakeholders. Again, the government via radio and television advertisements communicated the importance, objectives, and goals of the policy to parents and other community members to win their support for the smooth implementation of the policy. Importantly, research has showed that many stakeholders, including government and parents in Ghana recognize the relevance of ECE policy (Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). Early childhood is seen as a critical stage for all children's growth, development, and education (Bredekamp, 2020; Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy], 2004). Agbenyega (2018) argues that there is compelling evidence that suggests a lot has changed positively for children in Ghana since the enactment of the ECE policy, although some current teaching practices limit the development of children's cognitive capital and habitus needed for effective functioning in present and future social, economic, and political fields.

Further co-optation and partnering of the government of Ghana with private institutions and non-governmental agencies for implementing ECE exist. International organizations such as UNICEF, DANIDA, SABRE TRUST, and PLAN International have played diverse roles in terms of infrastructure development, teachers' professional training, and community

engagements and partnerships. Government's intentional efforts at prioritizing ECE through policy initiative and implementation by involving all stakeholders has been a success. Parental involvement and support of children's education is increasing as institutional and private support for ECE.

The enactment of the ECE policy significantly has brought in its wake auxiliary programs, which has increased access, enrolment, and retention of children in schools. These complementary programs have strengthened the quality delivery of ECE. Key among these programs are the school feeding programs, free education and free school uniforms and textbooks, and capitation grants for public ECE settings. Through the school feeding policy, children in public schools qualify for free meals at the expense of the government, which signifies a distributive policy.

Conclusion and Implications: Towards Effective and Successful ECE policy

We focus here on what can be done to make ECE policy implementation more effective. We identified that the implementation of ECE in Ghana seeks to address issues of quality, equitability and accessibility of services and programs for children. This goal is also mirrored in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.2: Ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood education so that they are ready for primary education (UN, 2016). Overall, Ghana's ECE policy implementation is somewhat succeeding according to the lens of McDonnell and Elmore's (1987) and McDonnell's (1994) framework of policy analysis and research evidence utilised in this paper. The framework's five policy instruments identify salient and necessary conditions for promoting successful implementation.

In terms of mandates, national laws, regulations and constitutional provisions regarding institutional arrangements and responsibilities, local government bye-laws and commitment to international laws, statements, and declarations are enacted to guide effective provision of ECE services. Inducements in the form of financial injections or budgetary support for ECE programs have increased over the years. These financial investments have opened up ECE services, making them attractive to participating

stakeholders. Effort at building capacity to provide quality ECE continues in diverse ways via training and professional development opportunities for teachers and higher education programs in ECE and certification of teachers. Opportunities to enhance the capacity of parents and caregivers to assume full responsibility and involvement in ECE are increasing. Significantly, Basic Education has been extended to include a 2-year free ECE for all young children, and there is increased public-private sector participation for ECE. Due to system changing, some ECE centres now have separate headteachers who manage the day-to-day activities of the setting. There is heightened awareness among stakeholder interests about the value and relevance of ECE. As a persuasive policy, ECE is considered a public good, which is receiving priority and attention from society.

Notwithstanding efforts at ensuring effective policy implementation, contextual challenges exist, hindering successful ECE services and programs for all children. Challenges in the form of shortages of trained teachers, classroom facilities, and learning materials, particularly prevalent in the rural areas. As noted earlier, some Ghanaian studies show that teacher training and professional development for ECE is inadequate. The ESP 2018-2030, for example, further confirms that shortage of classrooms significantly affects enrolment of children in ECE. The national pupil-classroom ratio of 55:1 for KG is a challenge. Parent involvement in ECE programs is still limited in many rural and other parts of Ghana, especially for parents of children with disability (Ackah-Jnr, 2021).

Where to From Here? How Do We Go Further From Here?

Because ECE is a powerful lever for enabling young children to realise their potential (Schleicher, 2019), it is important that it succeeds, and that settings' care and education programs and services are accessible, equitable and inclusive for all. To attract increased and collaborative stakeholder support in the form of human, material, finance, and other resources for implementing ECE policies and programs, the need and relevance of ECE is not only recognised but becomes a shared vision and aspiration for all, including government, parents, teachers, and other significant individuals. With shared recognition, more sustained effort from these stakeholders within the leadership ecosystem can coordinate capacities and collaborations

to provide effective ECE services (Ackah-Jnr, 2022). As Ackah-Jnr & Fluckiger (2021) argue, how the government or a country values ECE to a large extent determines the resource availability and commitment to practice. It is therefore important all stakeholders share the goals of the ECE policy, especially as a vehicle to promoting the growth, development, survival, and education of all children and a lever for enhancing current and future quality human resource development for Ghana.

Second, to ensure sustained implementation of the ECE policy, that is accessible, equitable and inclusive of all young children, the Ghana government needs to reconsider or subsidize the payment of fees for ECE services in private schools, especially in poor communities. Doing so will ensure that all children can access services based on choice rather than affordance. Government and local assemblies must also consider subsidising the salaries and allowances of private early childhood teachers in remote communities as the conditions under which they provide care and education services for young children are usually challenging and because they are far underpaid compared to their counterparts in public schools.

It is also important to enhance teachers' skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Early childhood teachers play important roles in supporting and enhancing equitable learning and development outcomes for all children. To provide effective ECE services, teachers need to identify and respond to children's individual strengths, abilities, and interests to ensure that all children have the support they need to reach their full potential. Teachers need to have the requisite knowledge and skills, so teacher education programs must develop the capacity of teachers (Wolf et al., 2019) and enhance their motivation to teach all children. This calls for enhanced teacher preparation for leading ECE, premised on teachers' identified needs. Effective ECE programs at the Universities and Colleges of Education and other accredited training institutions in Ghana for both pre- and in-service teachers to enable them to develop requisite competencies to teach at the early childhood level are required. While the need and efficacy of planned training and professional development programs have been recognised in research and policy, other opportunistic and supportive learning environment must be afforded teachers so that they can learn with others or engage in agentic actions to enhance ECE teaching and professional practice (Ackah-Jnr, 2020). Because

disinterested and demotivated teachers counter quality education, we propose teachers are motivated with enhanced salary, compensation, and incentives (Ackah-Jnr, 2022). This is also a way to retain them in schools.

Parents are important teachers, advocates, and contributors in the enactment of curricula activities and programs for their children (Epstein, 2018). They provide supportive climates at home and school that serve as the basis for effective ECE. For these reasons, increasing parental contributions, responsibility and support could enhance their children ECE and upbringing (Ackah-Jnr, 2021; Epstein, 2018; Yaro, 2015). Effective parental involvement in ECE can ensure additional resources are mobilised from the home and community to support and enhance children's education. Parents' capacity needs to be strengthened through parent education and training programs to ensure they make ongoing and improved contributions to the provision of quality care and education services (Ackah-Jnr, 2021). It is also important to examine policies that influence school and teachers' ability to collaborate with parents, families, and community in promoting effective ECE or enact new ones or change existing ones when necessary.

While the launch and implementation of the ECE policy has attracted participation and contribution from international and local NGOs and private individuals, it is critical their responsibilities and activities are carefully monitored in accordance with the laws, regulations, and directives on ECE (Government of Ghana ECCD Policy, 2004). Legal provisions should foster effective coordination of ECE services or programs to avoid duplication. Worth considering is the continuous synchronization of ECE programs, payment of fees, and salaries of teachers that align with government policy direction to promote equity and fairness in the chain of distribution in all public and private schools. Overall, government needs to create the legislative environment to ensure local and international partners contribute effectively to realizing the goal of ECE.

There should be continuous and multifaceted engagement and collaboration with parents, private individuals, NGOs, and other stakeholders for resource mobilisation to provide quality ECE. According to Schleicher (2019), high-quality ECE can have a significant impact on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development and their subsequent school performance. More private and community members and religious groups

must be motivated to actively participate in ECE programs and services. As Akyeampong (2009) maintains, the growing private-sector participation in Basic Education service delivery in many developing countries has led to calls for greater partnership arrangements with the public sector to improve access for poor and disadvantaged groups. It is crucial to forge closer public–private partnerships for improving access and quality of ECE. Public–private partnerships can serve the needs of disadvantaged groups, so it is important that these are considered in enhancing quality ECE. The diverse stakeholders in the school-community constitute a critical part of the leadership ecosystem that support ECE (Ackah-Jnr, 2022). Lastly, we recommend the need for periodic evaluation of the ECE policy, programs and services. It is through this process that areas of success and challenges can be identified and be seamlessly addressed. Doing so could also enable us to ascertain the direct and indirect beneficiaries and the success stories of ECE policy and practice for different stakeholders in the early childhood enterprise.

Referencias

Ackah-Jnr, F. R. (2022). Enabling inclusive education: the leadership ecosystem in an early childhood-school-community context. *International Journal of Leadership in Education.* https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2022.2108508

Ackah-Jnr, F. R. (2021). *Parental involvement in early childhood education in Ghana*. In S. Garvis, S. Phillipson, H. Harju Luukkainen, & A. R. Sadownik (Eds.), *Parental engagement and early childhood education around the world* (pp. 109 -121). Routledge.

Ackah-Jnr, F. R. (2020). The teacher should be learning: In-service professional development and learning of teachers implementingn inclusive education in early childhood education settings. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 16*(2), 93-121.

Ackah-Jnr, F. R., Appiah, J., Abedi, E., Opoku-Nkoom, I., & Salaam,M. A. (2022). Quality education: Critical policy considerations that impact teacher retention in schools. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy, 3* (3), 26-32.

Ackah-Jnr, F. R., & Fluckiger, B. (2021). Leading inclusive early childhood education: The architecture of resources necessary to support

implementation and change practice. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*. http://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2021.1885013

Agbenyega, J. S. (2018). Examining early childhood education system in Ghana: How can Bourdieuian theorisation support a transformational approach to pedagogy? In M. Fleer & B. van Oers (Eds.), *International Handbook of Early Childhood Education* (pp. 673-690). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-0927-7_32

Akyeampong, K. (2009). Public–private partnership in the provision of basic education in Ghana: Challenges and choices. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 39*(2), 135-149. https://doi.10.1080/03057920902750368

Anderson, S. E., & Togneri, W. (2005). School district-wide reform policies in education. In N. Bascia, A. Cumming, A. Datnow, K. Leithwood, & D. Livingstone (Eds.), *International Handbook of Educational Policy* (pp. 173-194). Springer.

Bertram, T., & Pascal, C. (2016). *Early childhood policies and systems in eight countries: Findings from IEA's early childhood education study* (p. 194). Springer Nature.

Bredekamp, S. (2020). *Effective practices in early childhood education: Building a foundation*. (4th ed.). Pearson Education Inc.

Dillard, C. (2009). I am because we are: Increasing educational opportunity for early childhood education in Ghana, West Africa. *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts, 2*(2), 243-257.

Duchesne, S., & McMaugh, A. (2019). *Educational psychology for teaching and learning* (6 Ed.). Cengage Learning Australia Pty Limited.

Elliott, A. (2006). *Early childhood education: Pathways to quality and equity for all children*. https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/

Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Routledge.

Essa, E. L., & Burnham, M. M. (2019). *Introduction to early childhood education* (8 ed.). SAGE Publications.

Fowler, F. C. (2014). *Policy studies for educational leaders: An introduction* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Government of Ghana [ECCD Policy]. (2004). *Early childhood care and development (ECCD) policy*. Government of Ghana.

Graphic Online. (2018). Schools under trees deserve national priority. *Graphic Online*. https://www.graphic.com.gh/daily-graphic-editorials/schools-under-trees-deserve-national-priority.html

Lowi, T. G., & Ginsberg, B. (1994). *American Government (Brief)*. Norton

McDonnell, L. M. (1994). Assessment policy as persuasion and regulation. *American Journal of Education, 102*, 391- 420.

McDonnell, L. M., & Elmore, R. F. (1987). Getting the job done: Alternative policy instruments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*(2), 133-152.

Ministry of Education [MOE]. (2016). *Education sector performance report, 2016*. Ministry of Education. https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Annual_Report_2017.pdf

Ministry of Education. (2017). *National teachers' standards for Ghana: Guidelines*. Government of Ghana

Ministry of Education (2018). *Education strategic plan (ESP) 2018 to 2030.* Ministry of Education https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/education-strategic-plan-2018-2030-ghana

Nudzor, H. P. (2014). An analytical review of education policy-making and implementation within the context of "decentralised system of administration" in Ghana. SAGE Open. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014530885

Oxford Business Group (2019). Covid-19 economic impact assessments: New education strategy helps Ghanaian graduates meet market needs. *The Report: Ghana 2019.* https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/course-improvement-while-enrolment-rates-rise-across-sector-new-education-strategy-seeks-help

Schleicher, A. (2019). *Policies for early learning: Providing equitable access*. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/ 1a8f6334en.pdf?expires=1624835893&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=C216AC39DDF04D6810AB11FC4F72165

UN. (2016). *The sustainable development goals report 2016*. UN http://www.un.org.lb/Library/Assets/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2016-Global.pdf.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2020). Early childhood care and education policies that make a difference. In R. Nieuwenhuis & W. Van Lancker (Eds.),

The Palgrave Handbook of Family Policy (pp. 169-191). Springer International Publishing.

Viennet, R. & Pont, B. (2017). Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework. OECD Education Working Paper No. 162. OECD. https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP(2017)11&docLanguage=En

Wolf, S. J. (2020). "Me I don't really discuss anything with them": Parent and teacher perceptions of early childhood education and parent-teacher relationships in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Research, 99*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2019.101525

Wolf, S. J., Aber, L. A., Behrman, J. R., & Tsinigo, E. (2019). Experimental impacts of the "quality preschool for Ghana" interventions on teacher professional well-being, classroom quality, and children's school readiness. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 12*(1), 10-37. https://doi.10.1080/19345747.2018.1517199

Yaro, K. (2015). *Parental involvement in children's mathematics learning: A case of a rural community, Ghana.* Masters Dissertation. University of British Columbia. https://hdl.handle.net/2429/52871

Francis R. Ackah-Jnr is Lecturer and researcher at Griffith University and Griffith College, Australia.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2261-4092

John Appiah is a PhD candidate at the Department of Educational Foundations Leadership and Technology, College of Education, Auburn University, USA
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7717-8614

Kwaku Addo-Kissiedu is a Lecturer in Education Studies at University of Development Studies, Ghana.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5919-6373

Alex Kwao is a Lecturer at the Department of Basic Education at University of Cape Coast, Ghana
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4285-4920

Contact Address: Griffith University. 170 Kessels Road Nathan Qld 4111 (Australia)

Email: fr.ackahjnr@yahoo.com