



**Knowledge hub**  
-  
**Collection of best practices**

**Summary of the best practice**

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) \*

Fast-track Transformational Teacher Training Programme

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented \*

Ghana

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to \*

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

#### 4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) \*

Sabre Education

#### 5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. \*

Teacher training  
 Learning through play  
 Early years  
 Kindergarten  
 In-service teachers  
 Pre-service teachers  
 SDG4.2  
 Government partnership

#### 6. What makes it a best practice? \*

Sabre's Transformational Teacher Training fulfils many of the criteria of a 'best practice' intervention: • Our training is centred around play-based learning for the early years, which is globally recognised as being most effective for children's brain development and learning outcomes. Impact evaluations of our teacher training have demonstrated that teacher training improved the quality of kindergarten teaching, and hence child learning outcomes. • We work in direct partnership with the government. We have played an active role in developing key Ghanaian Early Childhood Education policies, and we ensure that our work is aligned to government priorities for the sector. • Gender responsive considerations are built into our work, and disability and inclusion training is also delivered to ensure equitable access to a quality kindergarten education for all children. • We are increasing using technology and introducing hybrid training, allowing us to widen the reach of our work, increase flexibility of the training whilst introducing cost efficiencies. • Community involvement is key to our success. The beneficiaries that we work with shape our work by contributing their feedback to project design and implementation. • Our work is evidenced based. Monitoring is woven into all levels of our work. We pilot, test and iterate our teacher training to ensure that we deliver high quality programmes. • We are focussed on creating systemic change. We are working towards scaling our teacher training work in order to create national impact, sustained behaviour change and improved systems and infrastructure. Creating partnerships and working in collaboration is key to achieving this.

## Description of the best practice

### 7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? \*

Whilst the introduction of two years of compulsory, free kindergarten education for four and five year olds in 2007 improved access to kindergarten in Ghana, there was a significant lack of quality in teaching. As a result, in 2012, the Ministry of Education developed the Operational Plan to Scale Up Quality Kindergarten Education Nationwide (KG Ops Plan), in order to address key weaknesses in the kindergarten sector:

- Teachers in Ghana lack training, resources, and skills to deliver curricula (UNESCO, 2021). Whilst 85% of kindergarten teachers have received some formal training (EMIS 2018/19), very few have been trained to teach using a play-based approach. This is despite the fact that play-based kindergarten learning is seen as the most effective for a child's brain development.
- Many teachers therefore resort to teaching how they were taught, using rote based methods, which encourages children to memorise words and letters without being able to recognise them or read for meaning, and using the threat of a cane to control their young pupils. As a result, after four years of education only 2% of pupils are attaining the desired standards for literacy (GES, 2015).

Following the launch of the KG Ops Plan, Sabre entered into an MoU with the Ghana Education Service (GES) and OLA College of Education to trial the plan's innovative new approach to training kindergarten teachers, the Fast-track Transformational Teacher Training (FTTT) programme.

The FTTT combines in-service and pre-service training. The in-service training delivers face-to-face training workshops combined with in-classroom support to practicing teachers, supporting them to deliver play-based teaching. We also train GES officers and head teachers, ensuring that they are able to maintain quality teaching in the classrooms in the long-term. As a result, classrooms are transformed in Model Practice Classrooms (MPCs), showcasing best practice in early years education.

The pre-service training improves the quality of practical teaching placements for Early Childhood Education student teachers. Through the creation of networks of MPCs, students are placed in classrooms and mentored by trained practicing teachers. These student teachers are then better prepared to deliver play-based teaching as Newly Qualified Teachers upon graduation.

The results speak for themselves. On average, after receiving Sabre's training, teachers score over 80% in their competency of delivering play-based teaching. In 2019, an assessment of 3,222 children post Sabre's teacher training showed 72% had a sufficient or strong mastery of pre-reading, pre-writing, mathematical, psychosocial and communication skills.

## 8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? \*

The in-service teachers receive two-years of training, combining training workshops with classroom observation and in class coaching. The teachers also receive training in coaching and mentoring so they can provide quality practical placements for student teachers.

Student teachers receive one-year of training workshops, with much of their learning taking place in their placement classrooms, under the guidance of the mentor teachers.

Monitoring activities are a key part of the FTTT. Two kindergarten specific assessment tools have been developed and embedded as part of the FTTT:

1. The Teacher Monitoring Tool identifies all of the target skills and characteristics that kindergarten teachers should display.
2. The Pupil Achievement Record (PAR) provides teachers with a check-list to track pupil development. Recently we have supported Government to develop the national standard 'learner assessment', which will now be used in replacement of the PAR.

Sabre has two key delivery partners. Firstly, the GES. The FTTT has been designed for ease of integration into existing GES activities, as their understanding, buy in and participation in the programme is key. GES officers attend all training workshops so that they gain an understanding of the play-based approach. We also train them to deliver the teacher training themselves. The GES has responsibility for the continued monitoring of classroom practice once the training from Sabre is complete, as well as on-going training capability, for example the delivery of refresher trainings to teachers.

Secondly, Colleges of Education in implementation districts. Tutors from the Colleges of Education receive Trainer Training workshops so that they are able to support and train future cohorts of student teachers.

The FTTT has been delivered in two districts of Ghana's Central Region and three districts of the Western Region between 2012-2021. Due to the success of this work, we have been able to scale to delivering 6 district-wide in-service teacher trainings at once. The learning and evidence from this medium scale delivery is now feeding into our support to Government to achieve their vision of national scaling of play-based teacher training. Since the inception of our Transformational Teacher Training, 8,562 teachers, head teachers and student teachers have been trained, providing over 122,992 children with a quality start to their education.

The FTTT projects have been funded through grants from international Trusts and Foundations, Comic Relief and FCDO. The approximate budget of our past FTTT projects was between £400,00-£500,000, reaching 5,500-7,500 beneficiaries.

## 9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? \*

The key outcomes monitored as part of the project were:

Outcome 1: A network of Model Practice Classrooms is established, demonstrating high quality play-based teaching

Outcome 2: Early Childhood Diploma Student Teachers are better equipped for posting as Newly Qualified Teachers

Outcome 3: Improved child learning outcomes for kindergarten pupils as a result of the new pedagogy

Results in 2017, the year that we applied for the UNESCO-Hamdan Award, were:

Outcome 1: 95% of teachers scored the required 112/140 on the Teacher Monitoring Tool, demonstrating mastery of play-based teaching.

Outcome 2: 89% of student teachers rated themselves as 'confident' or 'very confident' to implement the new methodology at the end of their placement year.

Outcome 3: Children's median Pupil Achievement Record scores were KG1 79% (target of 64%) and KG2 87% (target of 65%).

The success of the FTTT programme solidified Sabre's position as a trusted delivery partner of Government. As a result, we were privileged to contribute to key education reforms in Ghana. In 2018 and 2019, Sabre sat on the writing board for two major curriculum reviews. We contributed to the development of the new Bachelor of Education qualification for Early Years Education. We also worked on the review of the national kindergarten curriculum, adopted nationally in 2018/19. Sabre worked to ensure the curriculum placed emphasis on play-based learning.

As a result, Sabre's play-based learning methodology now features strongly both in the kindergarten classroom nationally and in the content and training for student teachers attaining their teaching degree at training colleges. This policy work has established us as a key partner to Government in planning the national scaling of play-based kindergarten teacher training.

An IPA longitudinal study on our teacher training model found that the training was successful in improving children's pre-literacy, pre-numeracy and social-emotional skills. It was also found to have sustained impact after a year and then after two years once pupils had transitioned from kindergarten to primary. This evidence of sustained pupil outcomes from a pre-primary education intervention was ground-breaking in an African context, and has largely shaped our on-going national scaling efforts.

## 10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? \*

Key triggers for long-term transformation included:

- Partnerships: it was crucial to mobilise key early years education partners to support our work to transform teacher training in Ghana. Partnering with Government and Colleges of Education ensured that we were not setting up parallel systems, but instead enhancing those already in place in Ghana.
- Policy: it was important to ensure that the policy framework in Ghana supported our teacher training approach. Our long-term partnership with Government has ensured that strong early childhood education (ECE) policies are in place, including a play-based kindergarten curriculum and a supportive ECE policy, demonstrating Government's commitment to early years education.

The interactive, hands-on nature of the teacher training workshops, combined with in-classroom support, was key to teachers being able to successfully deliver play-based teaching in their classrooms. The training moved away from traditional theoretical teacher training. Sabre's training included role-play scenarios and plenty of opportunities for teachers to try out examples of play-based activities to take back to their classrooms.

Gaining the support of school leadership, through the head teachers, made the training that much more transformative. This ensured that teachers received the support they needed to transform their classroom practice and introduce play-based teaching.

An evaluation of the original FTTT programme by IPA showed that whilst the FTTT student teachers had greater knowledge of play-based teaching, once posted as Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) they were unable to fully implement the play-based pedagogy. Several factors contributed to this, including a lack of teaching materials and lack of support from school leadership for the play-based approach. The UNESCO-Hamdan Prize allowed us to add a NQT support year to the programme, which provided classroom resource packs and refresher training to NQTs, as well as training and sensitisation for their head teachers and district Ghana Education Service officers.

## 11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”.  
What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? \*

We have worked to prove our teacher training model, demonstrating impact through rigorous testing. As a result, since winning the UNESCO-Hamdan Prize, we have started scaling the model to larger populations in Ghana.

Most excitingly, we are now supporting the Government to plan for scaling of quality play-based teacher training to every kindergarten teacher in Ghana. In partnership with key early years education sector stakeholders, we have developed a scalable play-based teacher training model, secured government buy-in, and are now supporting government to scale.

A key recommendation for others would be to work in conjunction with Government. ‘Best practice’ must be absorbed into the education system in order to create long lasting, sustainable change. Through building the capacity of Government to deliver the programme with us we have ensured that we leave behind the capability, know-how and monitoring tools for the government to sustain play-based kindergarten teaching.

Collaboration and learning from others is another key recommendation. If we want to achieve equitable learning outcomes for children at scale we need to move away from delivering interventions in a piecemeal fashion. Sabre’s work, in partnership with the Government, sets Ghana in a unique position with a strong vision, history and framework for early years education to showcase on the global stage as an example for other countries to learn from to achieve equivalent gains in the quality of kindergarten education.

## 12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. \*

<https://www.poverty-action.org/study/improving-kindergarten-quality-ghana>

<https://www.poverty-action.org/impact/evidence-informed-early-childhood-teacher-training-ghana>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK6PtNpTYVs>