

ICT At An Early Age (A New Challenge For Nigeria)

Providing E-learning Capacity Training Courses to Teachers Working in Early Child Care Centres (A Case Study)

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Abstract

A primary focus of this paper is to highlight why the problem of Teacher's ICT skills needs to be addressed and what experiences exist in using ICT for this purpose and the impact on children.

ICT can be effectively used in the area of Early Child Care Education in Nigeria.

The paper concludes by identifying strategies and planning elements that need to be taken into consideration when ICT are used for Teachers Literacy programmes.

Purpose

No real attention is given to Early Childcare Education (ECE)

Nigeria's Universal Basic Education (UBE) targets, 2004, stipulate that 50% of the teachers should be trained in computer skills. The national government regards ECE more as a primary responsibility of parents and other care givers. Its responsibilities are limited, rare in practice and often non-existence. Moreover, the skills and experiences of many teachers are in doubt as many of them are not professionally qualified.

By the end of the project 160 ECCC teachers will be trained, it is expected that about 2400 children will directly benefit from an improved learning environment within 20 ECCC. The final outcome of this first year is to set up an E-Learning Child Care Network

in Lagos (ECCNL) which will allow the SPED to keep track and monitor the evolution of the trained teachers and provide them with refreshing training to enhance their performance in class rooms online.

Actions

1. A Baseline Survey
2. Community Sensitization
3. Selection of qualified ECCC
4. Running e-learning training workshops

Objectives

1. Promote a healthy hygienic working environment
2. Provide new pedagogical approach
3. Facilitate interactive and participatory communication
4. Introduce time and activity management methodology

Goal

The training will enable the participants apply and evaluate their attitudes and skills in relation to the professional requirements of an early Childhood educator

Executive Summary

The project contributes to improve the teaching knowledge and skills of teaching staff in order to help them develop appropriate educational tools and methodologies to deliver better quality education to children aged between 2 and 6 years in the targeted communities.

Today due to fast moving technology there is need to measure up with the current trends in Information Communication and Technology (ICT). The advantage of E-Learning is that the trainees can access as much information as possible according to their own needs at their own pace. It also offers them a large range of opportunities to access other source of information as well as invites them to network with different kind of professional sectors all over the world who have the same aspiration. They will be able to share experiences and expertise to improve their professional skills.

The project will work towards improving the learning environment of the two communities of Surulere and Amuwo-Odofin making it more child-friendly. 10 Early Child Care Centres (ECCC) will be selected in each community benefitting in total 20 ECCC. Two teachers will be trained per ECCC, one senior and one junior teacher, who in a second stage will have to train each 3 new teachers in the same ECCC. The teachers will be inclined in using more developmental and interactional teaching methodologies such as participatory approach to children, adjusting to the individual need of the child according to his / her personality and developmental stage and needs.

By the end of the project 160 ECCC teachers will be trained, it is expected that about 2400 children will directly benefit from an improved learning environment within 20 ECCC. The final outcome of this first year is to set up an E-Learning Child Care Network in Lagos (ECCNL) which will allow the consortium to keep track and monitor the evolution of the trained teachers and provide them with refreshing training to enhance their performance in class rooms online.

Background

The **Universal Basic Education (UBE)** Commission was established in Nigeria in 2004 by an Act of the National Assembly, known as the Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act, 2004. *“The government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels and confers powers on the National Assembly to make laws with respect to setting minimum standards of education at all levels”*. The Federal Government’s shall only be assistance to the States and Local Governments for the purpose of uniforms and qualitative basic education throughout Nigeria this covers Early Childhood Care Development Education (ECCDE). Among the UBE targets it is stipulated that 50% of Basic Education teachers are trained in computer skills. As well as 5% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund is made available at State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) for Pre-Primary Education.

In Nigeria, ECCC is served by three years of pre-school at the day-care and pre-primary centres mostly located within the vicinity of the primary schools and mostly run by the private sector. Crèche, day care centre for children aged 0-3 years and nursery, pre-primary schools for children aged 3-5 years.

Problem Statement

SPED is fully aware that no real attention is given to ECE by the national government in Nigeria. The national policy on education in implementing the Universal Basic Education programme of the United Nations focus its attention mainly on primary and secondary levels of education. ECE is more regarded as a primary responsibility of parents and other care givers and therefore the government is not providing adequate funding allocation to strengthen this sector.

The increase in number of working class mothers have led to a high demand for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria. At the same time, parents recognize the need for quality pre-primary education to prepare their children for school. This justifies the recent upsurge of two types of pre-primary facilities: private run ECCC mostly found in the urban areas and are characterised by the charging of high fees, which are unaffordable to the majority of Nigerians with little or no income, and few public run ECCC very poorly managed and with no adequate resources.

Today the government responsibilities are limited to the provision and distribution of guidelines for the establishment and management of pre-primary institutions, inspection, production and development of appropriate curricular and teaching materials. Unfortunately, the monitoring of ECCC to ensure compliance with established regulations and quality control, which is a statutory function of the federal and state

government is rare in practice and in many parts of the country non-existence. Copies of the curriculum and guidelines provided by the National Council on Education were not available for application in most centres. Moreover, the skills and experiences of many teachers in this sector are in doubt as many of them are not professionally qualified. Ironically, learning materials or teaching aids are very expensive and unaffordable

A spark of hope however came to light when UNICEF in conjunction with the Federal government and some State Governments and Local communities with Bernard Van Leer Foundation entered into a partnership and established about 7300 Early Child Care facilities 'between' 1996-2000. This intervention benefited over 400,000 children, in twelve States. Also investments were made in the training of personnel, as well as parents and other care givers, and in the development of Curriculum for early child care and development.

Given the above backdrop, this is but a tip of the Iceberg considering today's needs of more than 20 million Pre-School-Aged children in Nigeria.

Project Vision

To develop the capacity of ECE teachers in Nigeria and to deliver a culturally sensitive, cost effective and sustainable ECE program. SPED hopes to attract the support of experts across the globe through this initiative, Locally, SPED and the Nigerian NGO consortium envisions to tap from these intending partners and improve the capacity of the teaching staff of the ECCC to become effective vehicle for driving, initiating and implementing programmes and actions for the development of the ECE sector in Nigeria.

Project Goal

The training will enable the participants apply and evaluate their attitudes and skills in relation to the professional requirements of an early Childhood educator.

Project Objectives

At the end of this program the participants will be able to:

1. Analyse the factors that promote the optimum and unique development of each child, while respecting his/her family and cultural environment
2. Apply the principles of the holistic approach in daily work with children
3. Offer children a safe, hygienic, healthy environment where children can learn positive practices and attitudes that meet their physiological and psychological need
4. Help children learn through play by providing appropriate play materials and appropriate adult involvement
5. Interact effectively with children, both individually and in groups, in a nurturing, caring, and loving environment that fosters a positive self-image

6. Apply appropriate child guidance techniques that demonstrate an understanding of the factors that affect children's behaviour and enable them to acquire positive behaviours
7. Use effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to establish interpersonal relationships with others
8. Develop mechanisms for cooperation among the child care centres, the family, and the community, with a view to optimizing each child's development in the child care environment
9. Prepare appropriate developmental activities/program for infants, toddlers, preschooler, and school-age children
10. Organise space and time effectively by planning an environment and a schedule appropriate for the curriculum
11. Ensure the continuation of his/her unique professional development use simple techniques to gather and exchange information with colleagues, parents, committees, the administrator, and the board of directors

These objectives can be group together into similar four aims as stated below

5. Promote a healthy hygienic working environment
6. Provide new pedagogical approach
7. Facilitate interactive and participatory communication
8. Introduce time and activity management methodology

Final Objectives to be reached in Nigeria

1. Provide and secure a venue to operate the E-learning training
2. Complete 11 interactive participatory e-learning training sessions
3. Train 40 teachers from 20 ECCC
4. Secure 2 Step Down Session reaching 120 more ECCC teachers
5. Improve the learning environment of 2400 children from ECCC
6. Set up an E-Learning Child Care Network in Lagos (ECCNL)

Target Groups and Their Role

The ECCC teaching staff is usually composed of one qualified head teacher which has a bachelor degree in education and a team of around 8 to 10 senior teachers mainly women with a national certificate in education (secondary + 4 years academia) as well as 4 junior teachers with senior secondary school certificate.

The teachers have three main roles:

1. Cognitive- Help the children to recognise numbers and alphabet
2. Psycho-motor -Teach children to move their body through physical education, music and arts
3. Affective- Teach them moral values, eating habits and healthy living

The direct beneficiaries of the project will be composed of a team of one senior and one junior teacher which must have basic computer knowledge (i.e: Microsoft and internet browsing).

Conclusion

The Dakar World Education Forum in April 2000 made a declaration committing world leaders to the attainment of the following among others; “Expanding and improving comprehensive Early Childhood Care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”.

No matter how many promises the Nigerian government has put forwards through its National Policy on Education, 2004, we are fully aware it is not ready to fulfil all these promises and make it today’s reality. The community has taken action by putting forwards private ECCC to make up for the government’s weaknesses / gaps. Information Communication and Technology (ICT) is part of today’s reality and should be accessible to all levels of the community in the private as well as the public sector. Schools should be one of the first educational institution to facilitate the access to new technologies to the larger public. Teachers should master these new technologies and introduce them in their daily teaching to improve their work performance.

The first few years of a child’s life, sound nutrition, and health care, along with adequate affection, social training, and mental stimulation are all crucial elements in laying the foundations for the child’s future development. New technologies should be introduced to the child at an early stage to prepare him/her to the new world. Early Child care teachers should be the first ambassadors for ICT and therefore need to be trained and get used to work with ICT from the beginning.

We believe that this one year training courses thanks to the enthusiasm and willingness of SPED will contribute in strengthening the capacities and sustainability of early childhood interventions in Nigeria. We strongly invite and encourage new stakeholders to this partnership and challenge the Nigerian government for a future and long lasting collaboration for promoting E-learning as an innovative and essential skill in the training of early childhood and pre-primary teachers in Africa.

Making Nigeria the leading African country promoting ICT for young children ensuring the future

Annexure

Nigeria National Policy on Education - 4th Edition (2004)

Section 2

Early Childhood / Pre-primary Education

Early childhood/Pre-primary education as referred to in this document is the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten.

The responsibilities of the government for pre-primary education shall be to promote the training of qualified pre-primary school teachers in adequate number, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum, supervise and control the quality of such institutions, and establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools.

The **purpose** of the pre-primary education shall be to: -

- (a) Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school;
- (b) Prepare the child for the primary level of education;
- (c) Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the market, offices, etc);
- (d) Inculcate social norms;
- (e) Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc;
- (f) Develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit;
- (g) Learn good habits, especially good health habits; and
- (h) Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc, through play.

Government shall:

- (a) Establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools and encourage both community/private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education.
- (b) Make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood education;

- (c) Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and this end will:
 - (i) Develop the orthography of more Nigerian languages, and
 - (ii) Produce textbooks in Nigerian languages;
- (d) Ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this; regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education. To this end the teacher-pupil ration shall be 1:25;
- (e) Set and monitor standards for the early childcare centres in the country; and
- (f) Ensure full participation of government, communities and teachers associations in the running and maintenance of Early childhood education facilities