

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) WORKFORCE IN PLAY-BASED PEDAGOGIES: A CASE OF THE GAMBIA

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Outline

- Introduction
- Motivation
- The objective of the Study
- Materials & Methods
- Results
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Introduction 1/3

- The educational system In the Gambia consists of four levels: ECD (ages 3-6), basic education (ages 7-15), secondary education (ages 16-18) and higher and tertiary education (age 18 and above).
- The ECD consists of three levels (level 1-3).
- Basic education consists lower basic, upper basic and secondary.

Introduction 2/3

- The lower basic consists of six levels (Grade 1-6) and the upper basic consists of three levels (grade 7-9). Secondary education consists of three levels (grade 10-12).
- Schools are usually categorized as follows: Lower Basic Schools, LBS) (provides lower basic education); Upper Basic Schools, UBS) (provide upper basic education); Senior Secondary Schools, SSS, (provide secondary education).

Introduction 3/3

- While the government is the largest provider of educational services in the Gambia, there is significant private sector participation as well.
- In particular, the ECE level is dominated by the private sector.
- The 2016-2030 policy agenda is also focused on achieving quality education at the ECE level.
- This is captured by SDG 4 which aimed to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

Motivation 1/2

- Because they often offer a better structured ECD curriculum than public ECDs, private ECD centers are more desirable than public ones.
- Also, private ECD facilities offer their teachers more attractive salaries because of the higher fees they demand.
- As a result, as opposed to those working in public ECDs, they draw the top ECD instructors.
- Public ECD facilities frequently lack employees, both in the context of the Gambian nation and in various other African nations (Atmore Eric et al., 2012).

Motivation 2/2

- Although governments in Africa have pledged to incorporate learning through play into national policies and ECE standards, it is unclear how teachers and other stakeholders may be better supported to promote learning through play.
- This study aims to fill this information gap because efficient play facilitation is essential to high-quality ECE.

Objective

- The overarching goal of this study is to develop a play-based learning approach for the ECD and build the capacity of teachers and other members of the ECE workforce on the new approach through stakeholder engagement and knowledge gathering and exchange.

Methodology (Materials and Methods) 1/6

❖ Sampling/sample size

- A descriptive survey approach was employed where data was collected through questionnaires and Key Informants Interviews (KII).
- The target population was 176 teachers drawn from 100 schools and 3500 children.

Methodology (Materials and Methods) 2/6

❖ Data sources/data collection procedures/instruments used

- Randomisation of schools into treatment and control groups was done using Stata using data on a total number of structured public ECDs and student enrolment from MoBSE.
- This data was used to select centres for the evaluation and randomly assign them to control and experimental groups.
- In each centre, 35 children were randomly selected for evaluation. The children were assigned to the 2nd and 3rd level classes of the centres.
- Where the 2nd and 3rd-level class size in a centre was more than 35, random assignment of the students to the 2nd and 3rd-level classes was done using probability proportionate to size randomization.

Methodology (Materials and Methods) 3/6

❖ Curriculum development

- A review of the existing curriculum was done through which it was revealed that the curriculum lacked clarity on its delivery.
- Furthermore, there were lesson planning difficulties for facilitators related to instructional activities being perceived as too academic.
- The curriculum also had a little guide on the delivery of play-based lessons.



Figure 1: Curriculum refinement meeting

Methodology (Materials and Methods) 4/6

❖ Baseline Survey

- A baseline evaluation was carried out upon the receipt of the play-based curriculum's draft.
- This evaluation was based in part on the Gambia team's decision to evaluate the new curriculum in an experimental manner.
- This slightly deviates from the consortium's study protocols, yet this was brought on by the study team's decision to keep working with the government of The Gambia.
- Hence, the government have a strong intention to scale up this curriculum if its success is supported by rigorous research evidence.

4/5/2023



Figure 2: Training of data collectors

Methodology (Materials and Methods) 5/6

❖ Curriculum Validation

- A two-day validation workshop in collaboration with the Curriculum Research Evaluation Development Directorate (CREDD) of MoBSE.
- Reviewers were divided into three groups with each team given one of the three levels of the curriculum to review.
- They focused on the appropriateness of approaches and suggested content for the LfP methods as well as whether the content is appropriate for a particular level or north.
- Other areas of focus included language appropriations and clarity of objectives and learning outcomes as well as key competencies that the children are expected to develop from each module.
- Second, a presentation of the observation and suggested changes were made by the groups and consensus was developed on the issues identified.



Methodology (Materials and Methods) 6/6

❖ Play base interventions

- The intervention includes the piloting of a new play-based curriculum in selected structured public ECDs of The Gambia.
- The new play-based approach was modelled on the Tayari ECE Model successfully tried in Kenya.
- The Tayari (which is a Swahili word meaning “ready,”) Early Childhood Development Programme in Kenya is a four-year ECD and Education (ECDE) intervention funded by the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and implemented in four counties in Kenya (Nairobi, Laikipia, Siaya, and Uasin Gishu).

Results 1/8

Table 1: Balance Test on Primary Outcomes

		(1)		(2)		(3)		(2)-(3)
		All		Control		Treatment		Pairwise t-test
Variable	N Clusters	Mean (SE)	N Clusters	Mean (SE)	N Clusters	Mean (SE)	N Clusters	Mean difference
Age	3500	5.103	1750	5.140	1750	5.065	3500	0.075
	100	(0.035)	50	(0.052)	50	(0.047)	100	
Female	3500	0.519	1750	0.522	1750	0.516	3500	0.006
	100	(0.010)	50	(0.013)	50	(0.016)	100	
Emergent math score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.513	1750	0.519	1750	0.506	3500	0.012
	100	(0.010)	50	(0.015)	50	(0.013)	100	
Emergent literacy score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.354	1750	0.352	1750	0.357	3500	-0.005
	100	(0.008)	50	(0.013)	50	(0.011)	100	
Executive function score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.545	1750	0.539	1750	0.551	3500	-0.012
	100	(0.015)	50	(0.021)	50	(0.022)	100	
Fine motor score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.464	1750	0.461	1750	0.467	3500	-0.005
	100	(0.014)	50	(0.022)	50	(0.019)	100	
Emotional awareness score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.473	1750	0.469	1750	0.478	3500	-0.009
	100	(0.007)	50	(0.011)	50	(0.010)	100	

Results 2/8

Table 2: Balance Test on Sub-Indicators of the Primary Outcomes

Variable	(1) Total		(2) Control		(3) Treatment		(2)-(3) Pairwise t-test	
	N Clusters	Mean (SE)	N Clusters	Mean (SE)	N Clusters	Mean (SE)	N Clusters	Mean difference
Spatial ability score (percent)	3500	0.571	1750	0.568	1750	0.573	3500	-0.006
	100	(0.009)	50	(0.014)	50	(0.012)	100	
numerical vocabulary score (percent)	3500	0.299	1750	0.325	1750	0.273	3500	0.052***
	100	(0.013)	50	(0.018)	50	(0.017)	100	
Arithmetic score (percent)	3500	0.557	1750	0.555	1750	0.560	3500	-0.006
	100	(0.015)	50	(0.021)	50	(0.021)	100	
Expressive vocabulary score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.408	1750	0.396	1750	0.420	3500	-0.024
	100	(0.010)	50	(0.015)	50	(0.014)	100	
Print awareness score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.361	1750	0.371	1750	0.352	3500	0.020
	100	(0.015)	50	(0.022)	50	(0.021)	100	
Letter identification score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.134	1750	0.153	1750	0.115	3500	0.039**
	100	(0.012)	50	(0.017)	50	(0.017)	100	
First letter sounds score (percent) (0-1)	3500	0.153	1750	0.163	1750	0.144	3500	0.019
	100	(0.011)	50	(0.017)	50	(0.015)	100	
Emergent writing score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.161	1750	0.175	1750	0.148	3500	0.027*
	100	(0.010)	50	(0.015)	50	(0.015)	100	
Oral comprehension score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.497	1750	0.497	1750	0.497	3500	-0.000
	100	(0.013)	50	(0.021)	50	(0.016)	100	
Short term memory score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.553	1750	0.558	1750	0.549	3500	0.009
	100	(0.019)	50	(0.027)	50	(0.028)	100	
Inhibitory control score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.543	1750	0.535	1750	0.551	3500	-0.017
	100	(0.018)	50	(0.025)	50	(0.026)	100	
Copying a shape score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.445	1750	0.441	1750	0.450	3500	-0.009
	100	(0.018)	50	(0.026)	50	(0.025)	100	
Drawing a person score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.430	1750	0.432	1750	0.428	3500	0.004
	100	(0.017)	50	(0.026)	50	(0.023)	100	
Folding a paper score (percent) [0-1]	3500	0.543	1750	0.534	1750	0.553	3500	-0.019
	100	(0.012)	50	(0.020)	50	(0.015)	100	

Results 3/8

❖ Key Outcomes of the Training

- The capacity of six (6) regional ECE trainers and six (6) regional ECE Focal Persons enhances the effective and efficient utilization of the new play-based curriculum.
- Eighty-nine (89) ECD Facilitators were trained on how to plan and deliver effective and efficient early childhood education activities using the thematic approach;
- Eighty-nine (89) ECD Facilitators trained on how to use and can create their own play-based learning content using the new play-based curriculum as a guide on play-based learning in consideration of their context.
- The capacity of eighty-nine (89) ECD Facilitators enhanced the development of competency-based learning experiences anchored on LtP within their classroom context and practices.
- Eighty-nine (89) ECD Facilitators trained on how to identify and create an all-inclusive teaching and learning environment thereby ensuring an inclusive, participatory and non-discriminatory learning process.
- The capacity of Eighty-nine (89) Facilitators enhanced in utilizing child-centred teaching strategies/methods in delivering appropriate and effective lessons.

Results 4/8

❖ Project outputs

- Among the key milestones achieved in this phase of the project included the successful delivery of the play-based curriculum and conduct curriculum and the data analyst consultants respectively.
- This was subsequently followed by the training of the national trainers leading to the step-down training of the ECD Facilitators at the regional level, this was conducted in three training sessions.
- However, one major successful activity narrative worth mentioning in this phase is the ability of the Country Team to successfully bring together key stakeholders of the MoBSE, UNICEF and others to a two-day validation meeting of the play-based curriculum.

Results 5/8

❖ Project outputs

- The participation of the Permanent Secretary's Representative, Director, including two other senior staff of the Curriculum Research Evaluation & Development Directorate, Director and two staff of the Inclusive & Early Childhood Development Directorate, UNICEF Country Education Specialist; three other ECD Private Practitioners; and a representative from The Gambia College School of Education on ECE was indeed critical and as well builds on cementing sustained collaboration, partnership and ownership of the play-based curriculum in the process.

Results 6/8

❖ Project outputs

- Aside from the development of the curriculum, the development of a teacher manual meant to facilitate the effective and efficient utilization of the curriculum was equally developed.
- The subjection of the play-based curriculum to a user-friendly context precipitated the development of the manual by the team of curriculum experts.
- Using the manual both as a guide and a reference material shall ensure effective monitoring of play-based teaching and learning as designed.

Results 7/8

❖ Project outputs

- Another important achievement of the Gambia team is that throughout the implementation of the project, the project team maintained a very close relationship with the partners, particularly the Ministry and UNICEF.
- Through continuous engagement with stakeholders, the team has kept their interest in the project always very high.
- The project coordinator constantly engages with the director of Special Needs and Early Childhood Education as well as the director of CREDD, who have so far provided a lot of support to the project.

Results 8/8

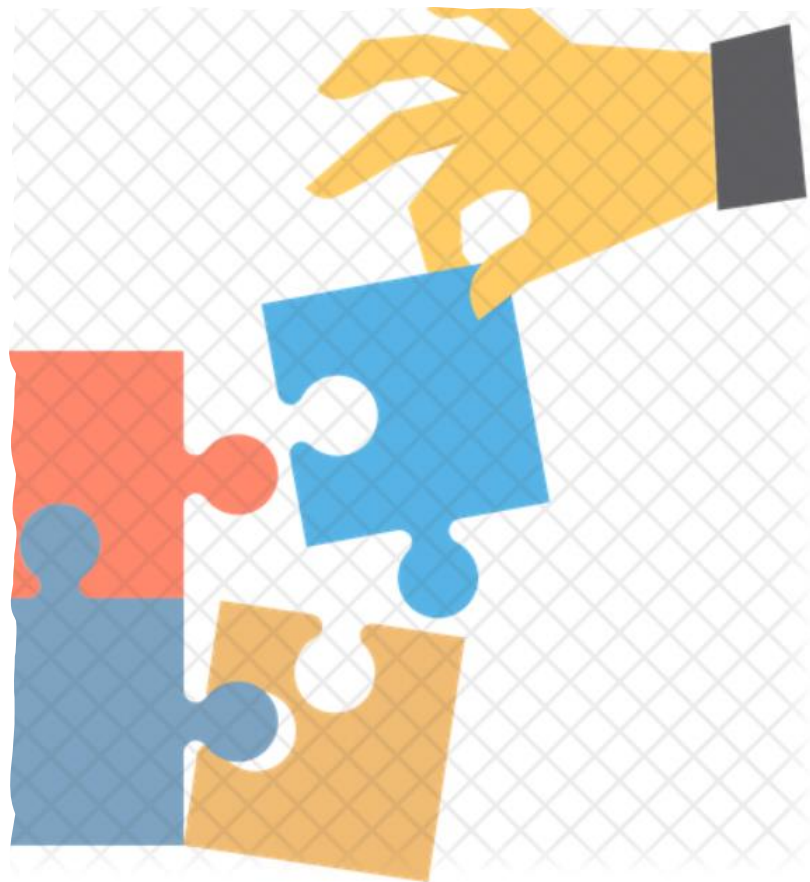
❖ Project outputs

- Other key achievements have been sharing knowledge and experience across the three countries through the regular reflexive meetings where feedback are received from other consortium members on the project activities.
- These exchanges have been very useful in guiding successful implementation of the project.
- The country coordinator has participated in a symposium organised by GPE and Kix in Ethiopia, which was attended by also a high-power delegation from the MoBSE including the Hon. Minister and her Directors in charge of knowledge exchange and management.

Challenges

- Effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In adequate funds.
- Reduction in Governments' budget and financial support even by philanthropies and communities in public education has declined teacher facilitators' performance and affected children's learning, hence reversing the hard-won gain for early childhood education, nutrition and health.
- Most schools in the pilot are faced with the lack of available basic play and appropriate teaching materials compounded by a lack of the creative inability to explore school-based training on material production

Recommendation



- It will be wise and very prudent for Governments allocations for ECD is increase and given better policy consideration both in strategy and finance
- Adequate professional development and training is provided to both ECD school managers and teacher/ facilitators this will greatly enhance the work force.
- Indeed, children enjoy living and learning through play but majority of schools in The Gambia lack basic play materials and play ground.
- Finally but not the least play-based learning or LtP should be in all schools since children learn better through structured play and play is central to how children learn.

End of Presentation

- **THANK YOU**

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