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# KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT: A STRATEGY FOR REVOLUTIONALISING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Early childhood education had been perceived as the building blocks for the education concern of any nation, Nigeria inclusive. Efforts had been put in place by successive government in Nigeria to ensure that cradle education is not only enhanced but sustained to the foundation of education is not compromised. It is against this background, this paper examine knowledge management for sustainable Early Childhood Education Development in Nigeria. The paper discusses the concept and elements of knowledge management for sustainable early childhood education fingering knowledge creation, sharing and distribution, knowledge combination, consolidation and application, as indices for sound knowledge transfer and knowledge appreciation. It however accuses teachers and school administrators of failing to upgrade their knowledge but rather dwelling in the utmost foregone past thereby transferring obsolete and archaic and outdated state and “not-useful” knowledge to the Nigerian child. The paper examines the role of knowledge management in revolution of early childhood education in Nigeria and peeped at the futurology of knowledge management in Early Childhood education in Nigeria. The paper suggests among others the setting up of a knowledge inspectorate unit*

*in the Education Ministry to monitor knowledge management in the early childhood education centres. It also called upon the Nigeria government to demonstrate true political will towards the foundation education requirement of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge Management, Early Childhood Education, Knowledge Economy, Sustainable Education, Revolutionizing Education.

Education appears to be the most reliable and most benefiting investment any individual, organization or nation can embark on. Literature abounds in early childhood education in Nigeria. In the last few years combined effects of oil glut resulting in the cost in global oil prices has challenged our over dependence on oil as reasonable for over 70% of our resources. The need to “think outside the box”, the new global trend away from oil and the concerted efforts worldwide towards renewal energy has necessitated the quest for a knowledge-driven economy. Agazie (2017) opined that education is not a luxury but a necessity. Nigerian system of education starts from the pre-primary, primary, secondary culminating into the tertiary level.

Studies have shown that in the pyramid of Nigeria educational system, the early childhood education has suffered untold and disproportionate negligence. This is notwithstanding that this level is the most critical area that needs interventions as Igbafe, 2011 correctly suggests.

However, the onerous notion and perceptions of scholars have not helped this level of education. Most scholars have not really embraced early childhood education. Robinson and Robinson (1968) are of the view that young children are not matured enough to learn complex task or skills that are required of them in the pre-school programme, rather, they are of the opinion that the love and warmth of a mother is more important than any educational programme. Government on its part has not helped matters, the financial base of this level of education is shaking because government has been negligent about it. Maduwesi (1999) rightly observed that this level of education is recognized by government in the National Policy on Education which endorses financing of education as the collective responsibility of all tiers of government, but there is no financial provision for education before the primary school. He reiterated that the only time government was visibly involved in the financing of education at this level was through the Early Childcare (ECC) project of the NERDC, which was a product of the collaborative agreement between the UNICEF, the Bernard Van Lee Foundation (BVLFF) and the federal government of Nigeria.

Meanwhile, this level of education is supposed to be given enough attention since it sets the stage for other levels of education. Igbafe (2011) exhibits worry as to why Nigeria as a nation can salvage itself when its very educational foundation is shredded in culture of silence, and ask the question; how can we ensure the highest

possible education as a changing society like Nigeria, without focusing attention on infant/toddler. Presently, it appears there are proliferation of early childhood education which are all ill-equipped, substandard and lack the ‘quintessential’ to be a learning centre. This negligent on the part of government has stripped this level of education of its essence and has left it at the mercy of private entrepreneurs.

Irrespective of the nuances and insinuations surrounding early childhood education, the FGN (2014) states that it should be included in mainstream education. In corroboration, Obiweluzor and Owie (2016) asserts that Early Childhood Education is the key foundation of the Nigerian educational system, and recognized by the Nigeria National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014). This recognition paved way for its objectives, and government has streamlined guidelines to achieve early childhood education goals. The policy also endorses private participation in the provision of early childhood education.

Moreover, the ruckus in the educational system of Nigeria is such that needs urgent attention. A cursory look at the products of the system, one would, in no less measure, conclude that stakeholders and planners need to go back to the basics. Different strategies have been adopted at different times to come up with a lasting solution as regards revolutionizing education in Nigeria. Literatures abound in the efforts to genuinely salvage Nigeria educational system. As a developing nation, Nigeria needs total re-engineering in its educational system in order to be at par with other developing nations, else, Nigeria will continue to grovel at the feet of bigger nations, and continue to act as minions to them.

It seems is high time early childhood education is revived else Nigeria runs the risk of forever struggling with her educational system. Agazie (2017) noted that a nation like Nigeria needs to revolutionize its education in order to remain viable and survive as a nation in the next century. In the light of the above, it is pertinent to state that Nigeria educational system needs to be revolutionized by going back to the drawing board, strategizing and re-strategizing so as to come up with lasting solutions. This can be effectively achieved by going back to the root, which is early childhood education, which is the ‘foetal’ stage of Nigeria educational system, this can be achieved through knowledge management. For clarity and brevity, the components of knowledge management such as; knowledge combination, knowledge distribution (transfer), knowledge consolidation and knowledge application, shall be critically looked at.

### **Concept of Knowledge Management**

Knowledge and education are inextricably tied together. In a bid to correct some of the anomalies in the country’s education system, knowledge is taking centre stage. This right have been propelled by the realization that knowledge is the ‘condiment’ required in stabilizing a nation’s education. educational administrators and planners are in a frenzy state regarding the future of education in Nigeria, especially, in

this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps, this unwanted concern is necessitated by the upsurge in the awareness of the place of education in a knowledge-driven economy.

Olufuje (2009) opines that it is people who are knowledgeable, hence a knowledge economy is much less reliant on the physical infrastructures, instead, it needs a knowledge infrastructure as its foundation. The Wikipedia (2016) sees knowledge management as the process of creating, sharing, and managing the knowledge and information of an organization. Karman in Babalola (2011) sees knowledge management as all that exist in an educational institution in relation to how the knowledge to be learned is pre-arranged before the teacher even begins teaching a particular subject in the classroom. Accordingly, Babalola (2011) views knowledge management as an official and directed process of identifying what information and institution (primary, secondary, tertiary) has that could benefit others, inside and outside the institution, their planning ways of capturing the knowledge used in the work-place.

Denham (2001) had earlier stated that knowledge management is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprises information asserts. In concordance, GiraldandGirald (2015) held that knowledge management is the process of creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information of an organization. Ozigbo (2015) refers to its as practices, implicit or explicit, used by a firm to acquire new knowledge and to re-arrange and diffuse existing knowledge within the firm

The definition of knowledge management is in-exhaustible. It is important to state that knowledge management is not just about gathering knowledge for knowledge sake. The underlying motive is to use that knowledge to positively impact on the overall organizational goals. Having the knack to manage knowledge is crucial in any setting since the objective of knowledge management is to achieve organizational goals. Knowledge management therefore, entails a systematic and conscious process of harnessing the intellectual property/resources of employees in an organization into judicious use to achieve organizational goals

### **Elements of Knowledge Management for Sustainable Early Childhood Education**

Knowledge has been recognized as a new paradigm and strategy in revolutionizing childhood education in particular and education in Nigeria in general. There are numerous elements of knowledge management, but for the benefit of this exercise, it will be discussed under knowledge creation, knowledge sharing/distribution, knowledge combination, knowledge application and knowledge destruction.

#### **1) Knowledge creation for sustainable early childhood education**

In any organization, the human components are the repositories of knowledge. Creation of knowledge takes place at different levels, from individual level, group level and organizational level. As organizations continually evolve, and respond to the rapid

changes in the external environment, it is expected that ‘knowledge’ must be in line with the changes in order to sustain the competitiveness. World Bank in (Babalola, 2011) had it that the vast stock of global knowledge is yet to be tapped and applied. While Babalola (2011) admitted that this particularly is true of Nigeria where high level of ignorance is still staying side-by-side with immense global knowledge in the midst of several public institutions of learning. He further posited that as important as knowledge is in transforming a society, Nigeria and her institutions of learning are still paying little attention to it.

Going back to the basics, the rudimentary stage of learning is of great importance. Knowledge creation can easily draw on the creativity of carriers of knowledge, that is teachers, to come out with initiatives for better teaching and learning. Here, the stakeholders must come together, collaboration is pivotal in knowledge creation. This paves the way to know possible solutions in tackling challenging issues. The beneficiaries of early childhood education are still vulnerable, and can easily absorb and adapt to changes. Educational administrators and planners need to go back, rob minds together, create new knowledge, best policies and new teaching methods. Babalola (2011) cautions that in knowledge creation, knowledge created outside the country often requires adaptation to suite the context. And regret that apart from the general complain that intellectuals in developing countries are not adequately equipped to create new credible knowledge, it is a common knowledge that people in developing countries lack necessary skills required for adaption of existing knowledge.

However, it should be borne in mind, that all creative exercise come from feedback. The importance of this creative endeavour is the ability to offer suitable feedback to appropriate authorities. This can be achieved by;

- being open with information instead of hoarding it.
- sharing new information
- integrating employees in decision making

## **2) Knowledge sharing/Distribution for sustainable early childhood education**

With the increasing awareness in globalization, new technology, internationalization and population explosion, there is urgent need to revolutionize the country’s education from the basics, so that it can fit in, in a seemingly competitive atmosphere. Education creates new opportunities, new innovations and inventions. Ultimately, when knowledge is being acquired, that knowledge should not be ‘boxed’, rather it should be distributed. As it stands, early childhood education is the foundational stage of learning, that has the tendency of absorbing what it ought to absorb. In effect, it is at this stage that all the ‘padding’ and ‘mending’ becomes effective. What is produced in the education industry is ‘knowledge’, and the students/pupils are the consumers of this knowledge. Apparently, the sharing of this knowledge starts from the foundational stage. In doing this, Cogburn (2016) envisions that education, knowledge and learning

should apply a wide range of synchronous and asynchronous activities that aid the teacher and pupil in breaking the boundaries of space and time.

Nigeria's government is burdened with revolutionizing its education system. Knowledge management is an organizational property. There are some members of the organization who do not have this knowledge, they simply float, but when knowledge is shared and members are in the 'know', they will now be able to effectively work toward achieving organizational goals. In essence, it is when teachers have learnt what they should learn, that they will now be well equipped to handle the school programme. Hinds, Patterson and Olphart, (2001) are of the view that organizations must consider how to transfer knowledge from experts who have it to novices who need to know. It is during the process of sharing, that knowledge is absorbed and enriched. Teichler (2004) asserted that knowledge transactions differ from goods and services transactions. Principally, those who give knowledge to others do not lose what they give. Academic knowledge transfer/sharing takes the specific element of knowledge transaction into account.

In the school system, knowledge can be shared or distributed through;

- Memos
- Group platforms
- Seminars, workshops, conferences.

Consequently, this could bring about collaboration and effective decision making. Teachers in early childhood centres are required to collaborate, share ideas, be technology compliant and interact freely, so that the new knowledge can be infused in this level of education.

### **3) Knowledge combination for sustainable early childhood education**

Knowledge combination is a process of merging newly created knowledge with existing knowledge to create something concrete. When these newly created knowledge are combined with existing knowledge, the result is an innovative, transformative and inventive approach. Agazie (2017) remarked that what the Nigerian child needs is pragmatism which include practicality, expediency, matter-of-factness, uncomplicatedness, or simplicity, to help the Nigerian school child move in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the rest of the children of the world.

### **4) Knowledge consolidation for sustainable early childhood education**

Knowledge consolidation can be enhanced if early childhood learning shift from a teacher-centred model to a new model of child-centred for a lifelong development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In early childhood education, the methodology of teaching young ones is of importance. Children should be encouraged to participate actively in class, allowed to solve problems by themselves, think out solutions and in so doing, they are consolidating knowledge. And because the child participated, that kind of knowledge sticks better. Rote memorization or recitation has not helped in this level of education.

Educators need to re-strategize new methods so that knowledge can be retained. In confirmation, Petrides and Nodine (2003) had insisted that knowledge management be integrated in the school curriculum for the purpose of efficient and effective transfer and effective retention to enable it to be transferred during future learning. This helps to consolidate learning in the child, which can be retrieved for future learning.

New knowledge should be managed in such a way that it does not impede previous knowledge. It should be harnessed in such a way that both new and old knowledge will be consolidated in the child. This tends to stabilize memory trace after its initial acquisition. When knowledge is consolidated, the learner is motivated to proceed and learn more. Consolidation normally occurs at the end of the lesson. It is an opportunity to re-visit, re-address, expatiate and clarify any doubts. Comenius in Tim (2013) believed that educational reform should involve revolutionizing the methods of teaching in order to make learning rapid, pleasant and thorough. He advocated that teachers should pay attention to the way a child naturally learns.

#### **5) Knowledge application for sustainable early childhood education**

Knowledge application is when available knowledge is used to make the right decisions and perform tasks through direction and routines. (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal, 2010). Knowledge application is simply the process of integrating knowledge into an organization. Knowledge and experience interact to emerge and flow to the right people at the right time, so that they can act more effectively and efficiently. It has been established that the quest for revolutionizing education in Nigeria kick starts from the foundational level. It then suggests that if school administrators and planners are willing to apply this knowledge believed to have been acquired, they can effectively reposition early childhood education. Also, students must be encouraged to apply the knowledge for creativity since knowledge management efforts typically focus on organization objectives, such as improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation, integration and continuous improvement of the organization (Wikipedia, 2016). Knowledge management has a strong tie to organization goals and strategy, and also involves the management of knowledge that is useful which creates value for the organization.

In revolutionizing early childhood education, school administrators must take the bull by the horns, this implies that the arrays of knowledge acquired need to be applied in the most efficient manner. This will go a long way in salvaging this level of education from the firm grip of private entrepreneurs, who have jealously possessed this level of education and have turned it into their money making machine (mmm).

#### **6) Knowledge distraction for sustainable early childhood education**

This may sound absurd but the truth remains that when knowledge acquired is not legitimately applied, it can be stagnated. Agazie (2017) muses that all that the Nigerian educational system does is prepare the citizenry for a life of the past century, a life of

abject poverty and dependency. Education for a lifelong learning considers situations in which a learner faces a series of different tasks and develops method of retaining and using task knowledge to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of learning (Petrides and Nodine, 2003). In a knowledge economy, knowledge is supposed to meet up with the dynamics of the time. When teachers fail to upgrade their knowledge, when they fail to align with the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when they still cleave unto obsolete, archaic and outdated knowledge, such category of people are bound to be left behind. In early childhood education, most of the caregivers are not trained in child psychology and the philosophy surrounding that level of education. With globalization and new technology, they are expected to drop the old knowledge, or better still, improve on it because the influx of new knowledge will surely invalidate that old knowledge. Educational administrators and planners should periodically revise the curriculum in early childhood education. Teachers should adopt current, innovative, creative and flexible knowledge. School administrators should drop the traditional method of teaching and upgrade themselves with the new technology.

### **The Role of Knowledge Management in the Revolutionization of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria**

Since Nigeria became a democratic nation, she has her political will towards revolutionizing the state of education. Over the years, a good number of palliative measures have been taken as steps and strategies to rebuild the education sector. Knowledge management is an emergent field in the education sector. The birth of technology and tools are the bye product of knowledge management. School administrators need avail themselves of this golden opportunity so as to be relevant in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Surprisingly, children of these days are very apt with this modern technology. Interestingly, early introduction to new technology will definitely take care of the deficiency in digital device in later learning.

Knowledge management has played a vital role in ensuring quality. It has the ability to source-out new information where they are available so that they can integrate what other people know into their own knowledge bank. In so doing, efficiency is achieved. It has improved the quality of managing the educational institution. Knowledge management has helped tremendously in the areas of teaching and learning. It has helped school administrators understand when teaching strategies are most successful. Okumamiri (2002) states that education administrators should address themselves to those management activities with a view to remedying the situation and improve the system for excellence.

In addition, knowledge management has led to continuous improvement of school administrators. In this case, administrators work collaboratively with their teachers with the sole aim of creating enabling learning environment for the learner. Through this, the spirit of team work is inculcated early in life which will be beneficial in later learning years. Olagboye (2004) argues that educational administrators create

enabling environment for school teachers to establish the context in which the learner will effectively achieve their potential through continuous improvement resulted from the teamwork.

### **Knowledge Management in Early Childhood in the Future for Sustainable Early Childhood Education**

The workability of knowledge management in the field of early childhood is feasible. Living in the age of technology, early childhood education will be more interesting. In this digital world, young children can learn through experience, application and conversation with peers, parents, teachers and adults, beyond the classroom. When knowledge management and e-learning is combined with early childhood education, the future of the child is guaranteed.

Further, knowledge management embraces the perspective that knowledge is dynamic. This dynamism must be neglected in both teacher and learning. School administrators are at liberty now to plan early childhood curriculum contextually. In the past, much attention has not been given to what children do in their daily life. However, school administrators have a broader horizon now to bring together a variety of perspectives on the ways in which children and their teachers use, live with, react to, learn from, and learn about issues relating to contemporary life. Knowledge management could be used to reconceptualize early childhood curriculum as a collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge for varying young children in postmodern era.

Again, school administration and teachers can form a networking team, a kind of collaborative effort to help one another, improve on their career, and come out with better performance. Zhou in Free Books online (n.d) suggested a teacher planning system to support teacher's knowledge exchange; children's learning system, and family support system to involve parents in their children's learning and development. Children can acquire the key knowledge and skills that are essential for active participation in the future. With knowledge management, children can develop their creative and critical thinking skill and apply what they have learned in future. Children also acquire some soft skills early in life, soft skills such as communicating and working with others, creative skills, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills and so on. When they acquire all these skills early in life, they enter the future with ease.

### **Suggestions**

- 1) Educational administration and policy makers should come together and tap from the gains of creative and innovative ideas and what this implies in the education arena.
- 2) Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century places the child at the centre of learning. Therefore, school administrators and policy planners should strive to gather evidence

on how the nature of childhood has been transformed over the years and to link that evidence to current educational policy.

3) No nation can rise above the level and quality of education given to her citizen. this means that teachers, who are the 'kingpin' in the classroom, should be transformed in order to transform the children for a better tomorrow. Career development is of essence here.

4) Government should be fully involved in early childhood education. In revolutionizing education in Nigeria, early childhood education should be seen as the starting point.

5) With the current stage on knowledge management, it would be wise to set up a knowledge inspectorate unit in early childhood education.

### **Conclusion**

Education in Nigeria has actually suffered some setbacks, especially in early childhood education. However, the emergence of knowledge management has shown that early childhood education can be revolutionized. The above explication suggest that when knowledge is acquired, it has to be shared. In so doing, that knowledge can be combined with other knowledge so as to consolidate it in the learner. Also, knowledge must be applied, this can lead to creative and innovative ideas. Then, any obsolete knowledge must give way for new knowledge.

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