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## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION COURSES FOR THE CHILDDEVELOPMENT WORKERS: A FAR-REACHING BEGINNING**

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### **Abstract**

One of the main thrusts of Southern Luzon State University (SLSU) as an educational institution is delivering extension services to the community so all colleges in the university are involved in this noble endeavor. One of its colleges, the College of Teacher Education (CTE), desires to initiate a far-reaching support to the child development workers (CDWs) towards their professional growth, which will give impact to the successful learning of the children. The Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) in Quezon Province expressed its need to assist the CDWs by the CTE. Hence, the purpose for the present study is to determine the early childhood education courses on the core knowledge area of teaching and learning that can be offered to the CDWs, with an end view of proposing a meaningful extension project. It utilized descriptive method, a quantitative approach in research, and a questionnaire, using a 4-point Likert Scale which was developed, validated and finalized to survey the ninety-seven (97) child development workers from Banahaw View Area, Quezon, Philippines. Weighted mean was utilized in computing the results. Based on the findings, the early childhood education courses that may be offered to the target respondents encompass the four components on the core knowledge area of teaching and learning. These are curriculum, assessment, interaction and learning environment. Thus, the researcher proposed an extension project, which is a practical school on early childhood education. This may be offered to the CDWs in modular mode of instructional delivery.

**Keywords:** Child Development Workers, Early Childhood Education Courses, Far-Reaching-Beginning.

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### **1. Introduction**

In the Philippines, every town has Child Development Workers (CDWs), who are teaching young children to socialize with other children in every village. Most of them had not finished a bachelor's degree, but they are still willing to learn in order to improve in their vocation, as well as the day care children's performance. In fact, Gable and Hansen (2009) emphasized that a numbers of studies have been conducted to better understand childcare providers' perspectives on education and training. Besides, Howes and Brown (2013) stated that in several previous research reviews, having a BA- level teachers with a specialized training leads to better outcomes for young children; thus Bell et al. (2010) mentioned that there is an increase of the national trend to raise teacher qualifications, particularly either in finishing a college degree in child development, taking a professional Bachelor Degree or having a Certificate.

Based on the results of the study by Baliwas and Elarco (2017), in the Banahaw View Area of Quezon Province, there are ninety-eight (98) interested CDWs on taking Early Childhood Education (ECE) program, even a modular one, just to go an extra mile in their career. Since

most of the CDWs are willing to take a program, it may be better to determine the early childhood education courses that may be offered to them. Hence, the researcher is eager to pursue the study so that the College of Teacher Education can initiate a Practical School on Early Childhood Education, which will start at Quezon Province. It will improve the knowledge and skills of the child development workers through giving a modular ECE course.

## **2. Research Problems**

This study determined to answer the following research problems:

1. What early childhood development courses will enhance the teaching proficiency of the child development workers in terms of:

- 1.1 Curriculum
- 1.2 Interaction
- 1.3 Learning environment
- 1.4 Assessment

2. What innovation on extension project can be offered to help the child development workers?

## **3. Review of the Relevant Literature**

### **Early childhood development courses for child development workers**

According to Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Centers (2013), one of the core knowledge areas for early childhood professionals is teaching and learning which is divided into four subheadings; interaction, learning environment, curriculum and assessment. Besides, the early childhood professionals should understand that teaching and learning is a combination of interaction, routines, and experiences in children's daily lives. All of the professional courses included in this study came from De Anza College (2014, 2016).

Howes et al. (2013) added that several previous research reviews that having a BA- level teachers with a specialized training leads to better outcomes for young children. Furthermore, Bell et al. (2010) stated that there is an increase of the national trend to raise teacher qualifications, particularly in finishing a college degree in child development or taking a professional or having a Bachelor Degree or Certificate. Gable and Hansen (2009) also emphasized that numbers of studies have been conducted to better understand providers' perspectives on education and training.

### **Curriculum**

According to UNESCO PROAP (2004), the curriculum of the public school kindergarten and the day-care center is designed to have a play- based and activity- oriented that allows the children to explore a variety of topic through in the nature fashion. The learning experiences are designed to support the holistic development: physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development, more student-centered and emphasizes student's active participation.

More so, the K to 12 Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (2015) focuses on the 5 learning domains; MySelf, My Family, My School, My Community and More Things Around Me; with learning areas in Social Studies, Values Education, Physical Education and Health, Music and Arts, Mathematics, Science and Language.

### **Interaction**

Interaction is one important feature of having harmonious relationship between teacher and learner. Research evidences from a variety of sources now show overwhelmingly that high-quality and targeted professional development programs can help teachers improve the quality of their interactions with children. These enhanced interactions nurture better development in

social and academic aspects (Raver et al., 2008; Pianta, et al., 2008; Hamre et al., 2012; Bierman et al., 2008; Domitrovich et al., 2009;). Burnard et al. (2010) observed that enabling environment has to be fostered with teachers in their responses to learners' creative activity.

High-quality preschool practices include a well-organized and managed classroom, social and emotional support, and instructional interactions and materials that stimulate children's thinking and skills. Children gain from good instruction and classroom interactions, regardless of race/ethnicity, language status or special needs (August and Shanahan, 2011; Bowman, Donovan and Burns, 2008).

### **Learning environment**

According to Roth (2008), learning environment involves pedagogical and psychosocial features of environments. For Dude (2008), it is not only a physical architecture of the space where learning occurs. It needs creativity in problem-solving (Williamson 2011), creative learning, creative thinking, (Jeffrey 2011) and possibility thinking (Craft 2010). While such creative behaviors and dispositions may be associated with certain types of learning environment, there may be other benefits for learners - cognitive and social - gained through participation in an environment which promotes creativity.

Thomason and La Paro (2009) stated that a calm quiet environment is essential in maintaining a low stress environment; correlated to healthy brain environment. Thelin (2009) emphasizes that outdoor learning for young learners helps them with sensory development because when they are playing outdoors, they are using all of their physical senses. Carlson (2006) points out that intense physical exertion of rough and tumble play supports cardiovascular health and meets vital touch needs of children.

### **Assessment**

According to Wade et al (2010), good assessment is a key to effective intervention and to improving outcomes for children. Significant decisions are created based on social work and other professional assessments affecting short and long-term outcomes for children. Good assessment provides opportunities of success for children.

Cleaver et al (2008) mentioned that good practice with children and young people includes taking time to build relationships, giving information, listening to and respecting them, offering real choices and providing support to understand assessment reports. However, research continues to indicate that there are difficulties for many workers in making and sustaining relationships with children and with representing the child's voice in assessments.

## **3. Methods**

The study was conducted in Banahaw View Area of Quezon Province – Lucban, Tayabas, Sampaloc and Sariaya, Quezon. The respondents were ninety-seven (97) child development workers under the administration of The Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO). The respondents were chosen purposively.

It utilized the descriptive method, a quantitative approach in research, to gather necessary data since questionnaires were distributed among the respondents with an intention to determine the early childhood education courses needed by the child development workers for their professional growth. The questionnaire was based on the identified subheadings on the core knowledge area of teaching and learning for early childhood professionals by the Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center (2013), such as interaction, learning environment, curriculum and assessment. The ECE courses under each subheading were derived from De Anza College (2014, 2016) and Child Development Higher Education Center at San Ysidro (2017). The items were measured using the 4-point Likert Scale. The researcher computed the data by using weighted mean.

#### 4. Data analysis

Table 1: Professional Development Courses in Curriculum

Courses	WM	QD
1. Concept of Curriculum	3.80	SN
2. Early Childhood Program Development	3.85	SN
3. Sensational Science	3.30	SN
4. Mathematical Talk and Play	3.43	SN
5. Math and Science Activities for the Young Learners	3.44	SN
6. Music for Young Learners	3.68	SN
7. Developmental Foundation of Music and Movement	3.61	SN
8. Enhancing Art in the Preschool Classroom	3.53	SN
9. Creative Art for the Young Learners	3.67	SN
10. Storytelling, Early Literacy, and Fun	3.68	SN
11. Building the Components of Literacy	3.50	SN
12. Language and Literacy Development and Activities for the Young Learners	3.48	SN
13. Play in Early Childhood	3.72	SN
14. Expressive Play and Artistic Development	3.66	SN
15. Basic Health and Hygiene Practices for the Early Childhood Setting	3.64	SN
16. Social Studies	3.05	SN
17. Values Education	3.62	SN
Average weighted mean	3.57	SN

Table 1 reveals the professional development courses in curriculum that the respondents need. Among the given courses, the Early Childhood Program Development received the highest weighted mean of 3.85 described as strongly needed.

In contrast, the respondents rated the sixteenth course, Social Studies, as the lowest with 3.05 weighted mean and described as strongly needed. The first five courses that receive the highest weighted mean are courses 1, 2, 6, 10 and 15, with weighted mean of 3.80, 3.85, 3.68, 3.67 and 3.64 respectively and all are described as strongly needed. The average weighted mean is 3.57, described as strongly needed.

The results reveal that the respondents strongly need to learn professional development courses on curriculum. They believe that learning those courses will give much benefit to their professional development. According to Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences (2015), the knowledge of child development is the first type of knowledge that child care providers need in their work with children.

Table 2: Professional Development Courses in Interaction

Courses	WM	QD
1. Roles and Responsibilities for Teachers	3.58	SN
2. Team Environment Building	3.32	SN
3. Positive Guidance: Its Importance	3.54	SN
4. Constructive Guidance and Positive Discipline For Young Learners	3.47	SN
5. Understanding Aggressive Behaviors	3.44	SN
6. Managing Stress in the Classroom	3.40	SN
7. Positive Guidance : Working with Parents	3.46	SN
8. Leadership in Early Care and Education	3.45	SN
9. Signs of Abuse and Reporting Requirements for Early Childhood Professionals	3.48	SN
10. Partnerships with Families in Early Childhood Education	3.52	SN
Average Weighted Mean	3.47	SN

Table 2 reveals the professional development courses in interaction that the respondents need. The courses 1, 3, 10, 9 and 4 have weighted mean of 3.58, 3.54, 3.52, 3.48 and 3.47 respectively; and the average weighted mean is 3.47, described as strongly needed.

This only proves that all professional courses in interaction domain are strongly needed by all child development workers. According to Roisman et al. (2009), the relationship with caregivers plays critical a role in regulating stress hormone production during the early years of life. Furthermore, Goecker (2009) stated that early childhood setting should be placed where children experience sensitive responsive caregiving attuned to their subtle cues. It enables emotion regulation and wires up learning.

Courses	WM	QD
1. Concept of Curriculum	3.80	SN
2. Early Childhood Program Development	3.85	SN
3. Sensational Science	3.30	SN
4. Mathematical Talk and Play	3.43	SN
5. Math and Science Activities for the Young Learners	3.44	SN
6. Music for Young Learners	3.68	SN
7. Developmental Foundation of Music and Movement	3.61	SN
8. Enhancing Art in the Preschool Classroom	3.53	SN
9. Creative Art for the Young Learners	3.67	SN
10. Storytelling, Early Literacy, and Fun	3.68	SN
11. Building the Components of Literacy	3.50	SN
12. Language and Literacy Development and Activities for the Young Learners	3.48	SN
13. Play in Early Childhood	3.72	SN
14. Expressive Play and Artistic Development	3.66	SN
15. Basic Health and Hygiene Practices for the Early Childhood Setting	3.64	SN
16. Social Studies	3.05	SN
17. Values Education	3.62	SN
Average weighted mean	3.57	SN

Table 3 displays the professional development courses in learning environment that the respondents need. They find all courses as strongly needed. The first five courses they need to learn are promoting learning centers in classroom (3.65); promoting classroom management (3.55); safety in the infant/toddler classroom (3.54); outdoor safety in the early childhood setting (3.54); and outdoor leaning (3.53). Holistically, the computed average weighted mean is 3.43, described as strongly needed.

It may be surmised that the respondents are aware that in early childhood environment, the teacher and caregiver are the facilitators in the student's learning. Besides, promoting classroom management, outdoor and Indoor learning are the subjects are truly important in improving a learning environment.

Thomason and La Paro (2009) stated that a calm quite environment is essential in maintaining a low stress environment; correlated to healthy brain environment. Thelin (2009) emphasizes that outdoor learning for young learners helps them with sensory development because when they are playing outdoors, they are using all of their physical senses. Outdoor environments that provide opportunities for children's physical development also allow them opportunities to engage in pretend play.

Table 4: Professional Development Courses in Assessment

Courses	WM	QD
1. Methods of Assessment	3.52	SN
2. Interpreting Data and Improving Practices	3.46	SN
3. Assessing Young Learners' Behavior	3.56	SN
4. Facilitating learning	3.53	SN
5. The Role of Risk in Early Childhood	3.53	SN
6. Individualized Guidance, Instruction, and Support in Early Childhood Care and Education	3.51	SN
7. Bright Beginnings: Age Appropriate Activities for Infants and Toddlers	3.39	SN
8. Making Sense of Sensory Processing	3.44	SN
9. Introduction to Assessment	3.41	SN
10. Assessing Young Learners Behavior	3.45	SN
11. Observation and Assessment of Young Learners	3.46	SN
Average Weighted Mean	3.48	SN

Table 4 displays the professional development courses in assessment that the respondents need. Among the courses, the third received the weighted mean of 3.56, described as strongly needed. In contrast, the respondents rate statement number seventh 7<sup>th</sup> course as the lowest, with 3.39 weighted mean; though it is also described as strongly needed. All are described as strongly needed. The average weighted mean is 3.48, described as strongly needed.

It may be concluded that assessing young learner's behavior is the most preferred professional course in terms of assessment because assessing young learners is very much different in assessing grade students. The basis of assessment is focused in learner's behavior; thus, the child caregivers can create a proper activity to minimize or reinforce the behavior. Observation is the commonly used tool in assessing young learners' behavior. According to Kevin et al. (2010), assessment is not teacher centered. It is a part of learning and a part of ongoing part of everyday life. For teacher, assessment is a process of gathering information about student learning. For students, assessment is the process that informs them about their learning.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, there is a need to create a teaching competency course for the child development workers encompassing the following components: curriculum, assessment, interaction and learning environment. Thus, a modular course on improving the teaching competency of the child development workers is to be proposed. After knowing the results, the researcher may submit the action research to CTE Office and Planning, Research, Extension, Production and Development (PREPD) Office for the review of the extension project proposal.

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