

Career Opportunities in Early Childhood Development in Botswana: A Desk Top Review

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ABSTRACT---- *Botswana is a signatory to the UN Declaration on Education for all (EFA). In 1994 the Early Childhood Care & Education programme was introduced in the main stream of education policy through the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994. Currently, important steps are being taken to promote Early Childhood Development (ECD). One of the major steps is to train professionals in early childhood through training. The challenge is limited knowledge of the general public about the career opportunities in early childhood. Many people think that obtaining a degree in early childhood education is solely to prepare you for a career in teaching in pre-schools. A need was realized to inform public on the career in early childhood so that they can make informed decision. Thus, the main objective of the study was to present information on the career in early childhood development using available literature. Online literature was reviewed to update the career opportunities in ECD.*

Keyword--- career, opportunity, early childhood, skills

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a crucial time in the lives of children and can provide a rewarding opportunity for those who choose to work on that period of child development. It is the time when children's brains and bodies are developing. The formative years of a child's life (birth – 8 yrs.) set the stage for all further learning and development. Children need to learn and grow in a safe and caring environment, where their basic requirements could be fulfilled.

Many people think that obtaining a degree in early childhood education is solely to prepare you for a career in teaching in pre-schools. In fact it is far from the care, as there are a number of different job opportunities for someone versed in the understanding of children's minds. A number of people who pursue these degrees end up in entrepreneur positions involving children that may not be directly related to teaching such as operating a daycare. Other opportunities in the field include research and educational consulting options.

2. BOTSWANA STAND FOR ECE

Botswana is a nation in transition. Over the years, the relevance on investing in the youngest member of society has gained increased attention among governments and agencies around the world. Botswana like other countries is signatory to the UN Declaration on Education for all and regards children at its most valued resource. Some deliberate steps are taken to ensure that relevant policies and programme are in place for their protection and nurturing. In 1994 the Early Childhood Care & Education (ECC&E) programme was recognized as essential in the preparation of children for basic education. Hence, it is introduced in the main stream of education policy through the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994. The RNPE goal is complimented by Botswana Vision 2016, which states that:-

Botswana in 2016 should be educated and informed nation. All citizens should have the choice of continued education, whether in academic fields or in vocational and technical subjects through conventional or distance mode.

Despite some pro-active policy review, Botswana has provided little access to early childhood services for its young citizens to date. With a renewed focus on the importance and benefits of a strong pre-school education, the field of early childhood education is actually growing at a relatively stable rate for the first time in several decades. Currently, Early Childhood services are at the core of the social policy agenda due to its significant influence on human capital and national development. Hence, important steps are being taken to promote Early Childhood Development. The services will be a joint responsibility of Government, different groups and individuals in the country. Therefore the voluntary

organizations, private firms, individuals etc. will continue to play a leading role in providing ECC&E services thus as an encouragement to NGO, community groups etc.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A pilot study (Trivedi, 2012), was conducted in Gaborone to find out students' awareness about the importance of training and career opportunity in ECD in Botswana. Result showed that 90% of the students stated pre- school/day care center teacher as a career, 4% informed child counselor besides pre-school teacher and remaining 6% informed that one can open a pre-school on their own, as career information. This simply reflected that students had very limited awareness about the careers in ECD.

Almost every respondent agreed that there is a need to get training in Early Childhood as these years are crucial years in child's life, but they were concerned about the job availability after such training. Hence, the researcher felt that there is a dire need to provide information to private and public sector about the training and potential careers in ECE.

4. RATIONALE

Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs as stated by Kohen, Lipps, and Hertzman (2006) provide more than just a place for children to be cared for while their parents are at work or studying.

Early Childhood Education promotes the value of the literacy skills, and reduces stress and anxiety among working parents who will become reassured and more productive when they know that their children are being cared for in a safe learning environment (Seefeldt and Galper, 1998).

The research will empower school administrators and faculty with the knowledge and skills to improve the quality of information provided on ECE programs to the students in order for them to make informed career choices.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was:

- To collect and present information on the career in early childhood development using available literature.
- Emphasize the skills developed during ECD programme.

6. METHODOLOGY

The information on the skills and careers in early childhood was gathered through literature review.

It is very important to know the various skills gained through early childhood development courses for the better understanding of the career choices in the area of early childhood. As a student of Early Childhood Development, you will learn how children develop and what their educational needs are at each stage of their lives and be able to recognize the unique challenges of this profession. Most importantly, you will study children; how they operate, what they think and how you can ensure that they reach their full potential.

Skills required

1. Early Childhood Education Is Perfect For Those Who Love Being Around Children
2. You Find It Easy To Communicate Your Thoughts
3. You Have a Strong Urge to Teach Your Knowledge to Others
4. You Understand the Importance of Helping Young Minds Develop. It's been said a million times before that children are the future. When you're working in the early childhood education field, you need to have a strong belief in that statement. You must not only have the strong drive to teach and impart knowledge upon the children, but you must also understand the importance of developing their minds and preparing them for the future.

Skills gained through ECE courses:

- An understanding of the different domains of child development

- Observation and teaching skills
- Create developmentally appropriate learning environments and for young children
- Ability to promote the healthy development of children
- Interacting (Speaking and presentation) and public relation skills to collaborate with parents, families and community
- Positive listener with patience and empathy
- Understanding of cultural differences and plan classroom activities accordingly
- Identification of special needs
- Teamwork, management and leadership skills
- Improvisation of locally available materials for teaching aids

7. EARLY CHILDHOOD CAREER OPPORTUNITY

If you're looking for a career that is in-demand and will likely have no shortage of job opportunities in the future, early childhood education may be a good choice. All around the world, the population is increasing at a significant rate. As we proceed into the future, the number of children with the need to learn will also continue to increase, potentially at an even higher rate than we are seeing today. What this means is that there will be a continued need for researchers, advisors and teachers with expertise in early childhood education in the years to come.

With a certificate/diploma or degree in ECE, one can work in a variety of settings, such as child care programs, public schools, churches, government agencies, non-profit organizations, medical and health related services and social service agencies. Careers may include direct work with children, supervision and staff training, support and training to parents and other caregivers or community outreach and education about the needs of children. Today's aspiring early childhood educators have a robust career field ahead of them.

1. Preschool Teacher:

The job of teaching preschool children in a center-based program can be both extremely rewarding and challenging. Remarkable developmental changes takes place between birth and the time a child is ready to go to kindergarten. Teachers may work with typically and atypically developing children. Yet all teachers need certain skills and knowledge to perform their jobs well.

Within any center-based setting, teachers may be found in a following position:

a) An Assistant Teacher or Teacher's Aide: Any individual with a certificate in ECE will be employed as a teacher's Aide. He/ She works with and under the supervision of a more educated, experienced teacher.

b) Lead/ Mentor Teacher: In larger programs a teacher who has degree in ECE and experience is given the title of Lead or Mentor Teacher. This position may entail more planning and supervision of other teachers, as well as center administrative responsibility.

2. Home based services providers/ Nanny:

Home-based services may work with young children in a child's home. Their main job will be to look after the well-being of a child and provide him opportunity that will develop him holistically. Minimum qualification required is a certificate/ diploma in early childhood.

3. Child Care Centre Administrator/ Director:

The job a Child care center administrators/directors is to ensure that programs offered in the centre is developmentally appropriate experiences for the children and are supportive of the needs of families. Administrators/directors must be able to lead the staff professionally and must have the combined skills of a mentor, early childhood educator, nutritionist, accountant, human resources manager, secretary, and program administrator to operate a dynamic human service such as child care.

If the center is very large, the administrator may have an assistant director to help meet some of the responsibilities and minimum qualification requirement is degree in early childhood.

4. Instructor/trainer:

Instructor teaches the personnel working in settings with young children. Whether working as a faculty member in a college, as a trainer in an agency, or as an independent training consultant, these educators must have an understanding of adult learning and effective teaching strategies, as well as special knowledge about the child related subjects. They can also provide important information to parents and the public on a variety of topics such as parenting, child safety and nutrition, child development, child's rights, facility regulatory requirements, local, state and national early childhood policy issues and current research.

5. Technical Assistance specialist:

Technical assistance (TA) is defined as consultation provided either on the phone, by email, or on-site that occurs in response to a staff question, an observation occurring during an on-site visit, or as part of a quality-improvement activity. Specialists of TA work with programs for varying lengths of time to share and support the implementation of research-based and developmentally appropriate teaching strategies and practices. Specialists may also work to Strengthen business knowledge and skills and work with community stakeholders to reach common goals.

6. Professional development coordinator:

Professional development coordinators help teachers and programs assessor, to plan and achieve personal professional development goals. They serve as liaisons between early childhood and school-age educators and existing educational systems. Professional development coordinators use research-derived data to regularly assess the professional needs of the early childhood workforce in the community.

7. Family Counselor:

Family counselor helps families access the resources they need to care for their children. Families may require the help of community agencies, help finding a child care placement, may need some support services economically, health& developmental or emotional crises that require special intervention services. A family counselor may provide information and education, refer families to services, and assess eligibility for funds to pay for services, or deliver direct counseling and support services.

8. Topic Specialist:

Topic specialists are the specialized people who provide resources, training, and technical assistance to teachers and programs to support the use of best practices in a particular area. Examples of specialty areas include early intervention, child behavior, curriculum and infant/ toddler care. Specialists provide on-site technical assistance and mentor and train teachers to increase awareness of available resources and effective strategies. The work of a specialist may be very narrowly defined (i.e. to support the needs of a particular child, direct intervention or planning small group activities) or it may be broader such as classroom quality or the availability of particular services or program.

9. Consultant:

Consultants provide information and assistance to child care programs, business and industry, communities, elected public policy officials, and state and federal agencies to help them develop programs, regulations and public policies that will enhance or improve the quality of child care. Consultants may also work with employers who may be interested in providing family friendly policies or programs like on-site child care, flex benefits including child care resource and referral services.

10. Toy consultant:

As an Early Childhood specialist one can attach himself/herself to toy industries to assist the company to manufacture toys as per child's safety specifications.

11. Child Right Consultant in Courts:

One can be appointed as Child Right consultant at different levels of courts such that whenever in any case child is involved, his/her right can be protected.

12. Child Supervisor in hospitals and referral services:

In every big hospitals and referral services, there is a pediatric ward and as an Early Childhood Educator, one can look after the developmental and emotional need of the children.

13. Community Care Licensing Analyst/Regulator:

Regulators have the job of ensuring that early childhood programs of all kinds comply with the appropriate state or local requirements. The job of a regulator involves visiting programs to assess their compliance with applicable standards. Often regulators provide technical assistance and training to program staff to help them meet the necessary requirements. In some cases, regulators must also investigate early childhood programs that have been reported for noncompliance.

14. Researchers:

Researchers specializing in the area of early childhood conduct studies and evaluate services and practices that impact the outcomes of young children and early childhood programs that serve them and their families. In this role, an early childhood researcher may develop data collection tools, manage data collection activities, collect qualitative data, conduct quantitative analysis, and write reports and grant proposals for outside funding.

15. Drop-in Centre owner:

Drop-in center is a place where parents/ guardians can leave their children for a specific period of time. This place is run by an early childhood specialist and is fully equipped like a day care center; only time of operation is not fixed. It can operate from 6 am to 10 pm.

16. Child Care Centre Owner: One can run Child Care Centre successfully with the profound knowledge of ECE.

8. CONCLUSION

There are many opportunities available in various fields of education,(Example of ECE) and if students are provided with adequate training, developed proper skills and enriched with quality knowledge, there is no doubt that a student will make an informed decision about his/her career and will be successful in the job market.

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