

Parental Education on Early Childhood Development Using Mobile App and Website in China

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Abstract : Early childhood development, or ECD, is about the 'whole child' - the physical, social and emotional, cognitive thinking and language progression of each young individual. Overwhelming evidence is now available to support investment in Early Childhood Development internationally, attendance at ECD leads to: improved learning outcomes; improved completion and reduced less dropout rates; and most notably, Professor Heckman, Nobel Laureate's, findings that for every dollar invested, there is an economic return of up to 17%. Notably, ECD has been included in the 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Government of China (GOC) has embraced this research and in 2010, State Council, announced focus on ECD setting a target to provide access to ECD for 85% of 3-6 year olds by 2020; to date, the target has surpassed expectations and reached 70.4%. GoC is also increasingly focusing on the even more critical 0-3 age group, when the plasticity of the brain is at its peak and neurons form connections as fast as 1,000 per second. Key to ECD are parents and caregivers of young children, with parental education critical to fully exploiting the significant potential of the early years of children. In China, with such vast numbers, one in seven pre-school age children in the world live in China, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the National Centre for Education Technology, explored how to best provide parental education and provide key child developmental related knowledge to parents and caregivers. In response, MoE and UNICEF created a resource for parenting information that began with a computer website in 2012, followed by piloting a kiosk service in 2013 for parents in remote areas without access to the internet, and then a mobile phone application in 2014. The resource includes 269 ECD messages and 200 micro-videos covering critical issues of early childhood development from birth to age 6 years: daily care, nutrition and feeding, disease prevention, immunization, development and education, and safety and protection. To date, there have been 397,599 unique views on the website, and data for the mobile app currently being analysed (Links: <http://yuer.cbern.gov.cn/>; App: <https://appsto.re/cn/OiKPZ.i>). This paper will explore the development of this resource, its use by parents and the public, efforts to assess the effectiveness in improving parenting and child development, and future plans to roll an updated version in 2016 to all parents.

Keywords : early childhood development, mobile apps for education, parental education, China

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