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# Context Matters

## — RESEARCH GRANTS —

2022-2024 Context Matters Awarded Grants (Round 4)

**Research title:** Literacy Cooperatives: Sharing Culturally-Relevant Literacy Materials and Best Practices amongst Early Childhood Educators in Nigeria

**Principle Investigator:** Prof. Katrina Korb, University of Jos, Nigeria

**Co-researcher:** Janet Eseyin, University of Jos, Nigeria

**Research dates:** February 2022 – January 2024

**Summary:**

The International Literacy Association (2018) states that reading aloud is one of the most important teaching methods for helping children learn the skills and knowledge needed to become fluent readers. However, reading aloud is rarely used as an instructional strategy in Nigerian early childhood classrooms (Korb, 2010), primarily due to lack of available reading materials (Oyetunde, Ojo, Korb, & Babudoh, 2016). In fact, the dearth of storybooks in most African classrooms has led to calls for urgently increasing the supply of reading materials that are relevant for African children (RTI International, 2015). However, simply providing storybooks is not enough to improve literacy outcomes; supplementing supply with contextually-relevant teacher training is essential for teachers to effectively use the storybooks in a way that enhances children's reading skills (Stranger-Johannessen, 2017). This research project will pilot an initiative that integrates a supply of storybooks with teacher training to enhance reading outcomes through a contextually-relevant practice of cooperatives.

In Nigeria, a common approach for overcoming the challenge of scarce resources is cooperatives. Cooperatives are democratically controlled organizations where members voluntarily contribute assets to meet specific needs (Okonkwo, Onyeze, & Ochiaka, 2019). Typically, members of cooperatives also meet regularly to learn about and discuss topics of shared interest. This study will create and evaluate Literacy Cooperatives in the region of Jos, Nigeria. The cooperatives will be associations of early childhood educators who will pool resources to buy culturally relevant reading materials that will be mutually owned and shared. Guided by Literacy Coaches, the cooperatives will also host in-service teacher training focused specifically on the best practices in oral literacy instruction for emergent and early readers (early primary) using the Repeated Interactive Read Aloud method.

This study will provide insight into an innovative strategy for overcoming the challenge of scarce reading materials needed for early literacy instruction. It will also examine how early childhood educators' participation in a Literacy Cooperative with peer-supported, contextually-relevant in-service professional development contributes to literacy outcomes for teachers' instructional strategies and young children's motivation to read.

**Prof. Katrina A. Korb** holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Iowa, USA as well as an M.Ed, in Early Childhood Education and a B.S., in Elementary Education. She has taught in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Jos (Nigeria) since 2007. Her specialty is nurturing culturally- and developmentally-appropriate holistic development in the early years with special emphasis on literacy. Korb is the founder and Chairperson of Early Years Nigeria Initiative, an NGO that seeks to improve the quality of education and care of young Nigerian children from birth through 8 years of age. Through Early Years Nigeria, Korb leads professional development for early childhood educators as well as implementing quality learning experiences for young children. She has also developed and implemented a one-year Professional Credential in Early Childhood Education program using a hybrid approach for Nigerian educators through the Association of Christian Schools International. She has authored seven books and many academic articles about effective early childhood education in Nigeria.

**Janet Eseyin** holds a M.Ed in Educational Psychology (Child Development) and BEd in Language Arts Education from the University of Jos. As the co-researcher, she brings 25 years of teaching experience from nursery levels through Primary 3 along with her knowledge and experience teaching several early education courses at the University of Jos, including Creative Arts and Activities in Early Childhood Education. She is currently working on her doctoral dissertation that examines the role of outdoor play on cognitive skills of nursery children, including language development.