Determinants of Assessment Method used by Teachers in Assessing Learners in Public Early Childhood Development and Education Centers in Kenya

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Abstract: *The absence of credible assessment approaches of learning outcomes in public early childhood education is one of the major problems affecting the performance of children at early stages of education. The objective of the study was to establish the assessment of children in public early childhood education centers in Kenya, with a particular focus on teachers' utilization of the various assessment methods during assessment of the learners and the frequency of assessment. The study was guided by Brookhart (1997) theory of classroom assessment. The study targeted 2330 ECDE teachers in the 775 public ECDE centers in Uasin-Gishu County. Based on data collected using self administered questionnaires from 341 Early Child Development Education (ECDE) teachers, it was found that majority of the teachers did the assessment of learners on daily and weekly basis. Further the study indicated that the common assessment methods used were: learning stories, annotated and unannotated copies, observations, checklist, anecdotal records, early childhood examples, screening, work samples and individualized educational plans. In addition the teachers conduct these assessments with little focus on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the learners which could be some of the reasons for poor performance of most of the learners. Therefore the study concludes that an effective classroom assessment and evaluation calls on teachers to become agents of change in their classrooms actively using the results of assessment to modify and improve the learning environments they create.*

Keywords: *Assessment, Assessment methods, Assessment approaches, Determinants, Public Early Childhood education centers and Assessment environments*

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1. Introduction

Assessment is one crucial component of in early childhood development education. The term 'assessment' refers to all the activities undertaken by teachers, and their students in assessing themselves to avail information for them to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black & William,

1998).The assessment of young children is always different from those of older students. Hence, the assessment of children's development in ECE centers needs to be reflective of holistic philosophy to allow all domains of learning to be encompassed. In addition, classroom assessment and evaluation under teacher's active management serves as an important professional development purposes.

In addition the assessment of young children needs to include developmental appropriate activities and not a multiple-choice test, or other formal assessments. According to Wortham and Hardin (2015) a child should be assessed in natural settings of their day-to-day activities. Therefore all the teachers taking part in classroom educational system should actively and continuously be involved in assessment and evaluation process. According to Taylor and Francis (2006), there is tendency for teachers to place greater emphasis on examinations which not only undermines effective assessments but are also cognitively skewed and have ignored other domains of learning. Hence, students who learning using formative always achieve better than a matched control groups that are receiving normal teaching (Black & William, 1998). However, when young children are learning how to communicate they always demonstrate what they have learned by doing it, rather than putting it down on pencil-and-paper. The National Association of young children (NAYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialist in State Department (NAECS/SDE) developed a guideline for early childhood curriculum and assessment (Morrison, 2013; Wortham and Hardin, 2015). They further stated that early childhood programs, assessment should provide basis for: 1) planning instruction and communicating with parents; 2) identifying children with special needs; and 3) evaluating programs and demonstrating accountability.

Following the promulgation of the constitution in 2010, the ECDE in Kenya was devolved to the County level to enhance service delivery (Cheserek & Mugalavai, 2012). The Kenyan government hasembraced the NAEYC and NAECS guidelines formulated an assessment tool called Kenya School Readiness Assessment Tool (KSRAT) (Mochama, 2015). However, this assessment tool was never rolled out and assessment in the public ECDE centers still makes use of traditional methods. From the literature, research pertaining to instructional strategies and assessment approaches in ECDE centers in Kenya and other developing countries is minimal and nearly non-existent. The ECE teacher spend considerable time planning and organizing instructional materials and equipment in the centers to ensure that the environment is not only interesting and safe but also suitable for the holistic development of the children. To bring about educational improvement, reform in curriculum must be complemented with appropriate assessment reform. Therefore, there is an urgent need for this study to be conducted especially in developing countries to ascertain whether ECE centers have fully adopted the instructional strategies aimed at holistic development of the children. Instructional planning is one essential constituent of effective teaching assessment. However many ECDE

centers in Kenya are still focused on assessment of learning using summative rather than assessment for learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Assessment in Early Childhood Education

The varying developmental changes have contributed to the needs for assessment of young children. The Assessment methods used should support children's developmental changes along a continuum to gather reliable data (Zaslow, Calkins, & Halle, 2000; Neisworth & Bagnato, 2004).

Hence, early childhood assessment should never be high-stakes. However, no single type of assessment method adopted by teachers in ECDE can serve all of the purposes of assessment. In addition, the intended purpose will determine what sort of assessment method is the most appropriate. Therefore when developing a curriculum and instructional strategies it is important to identify the goals one has for children during learning. The goals should always be aligned with the expectations for what students should know and be able to do according to the set standards. Therefore goals that are aligned with standards will lead to a set of activities and experiences that form the building blocks of learning. However, learners assessments is considered as a method of determining if the goals identified for children are linked to activities and needs of children who participate in education programs. Learner's assessment is the starting point of curriculum development. Therefore, the use of ongoing assessment method will provide a tool to re-align the curriculum and keep the children moving along the continuum of learning (NAEYC & NAECSSDE, 2003). In addition, the teachers should be knowledgeable about the assessments methods they administer and able to connect the assessment results with classroom practices of the learners (NAEYC, 2005).

Assessment and instruction are inseparable processes. The idea behind the blending of assessment and instruction rests on three fundamental assumptions (Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 2000). The essential aspect of assessment is to provide information concerning children's ability to profit from teaching. However, the goal is to understand a child's zone of proximal development and area where learning is within reach but taking into account the child existing ability. Further, the teachers and parents are uniquely positioned to obtain information about how children function within different

natural (e.g., classroom, community) environments or settings. One of the ways that teachers can understand children's development, interests, and needs is within the context of the pre-kindergarten or child care classroom is through observation and documentation (Bordignon & Lam, 2004). Hence the teachers are expected to use assessment results to develop a curricula and teaching approaches and to communicate with the caregivers regarding learner's ability. Even though the assessment practices encompass a range of instruments and techniques that include structured one-on-one child assessments, standardized assessments, portfolios, rating scales, and observation.

2.2 Screening

Screening is an assessment method that plays an important role in the assessment process. Screening is normally used to determine whether a child need further assessment and in what domains of development and learning (Meisels and Atkins-Burnett, 2000). It is recommended that teachers in early childhood use both formal and informal screening assessment approaches to systematically evaluate children's growth across all the domains of development and learning within a natural context that include the early childhood classroom (Appl, 2000). Hence the developmental screening is extremely valuable source of information to the teachers. Developmental screening should be considered as the first step in an evaluation and intervention process that can help prevent the emergence of more serious problems in children before having an opportunity to affect the course of development (Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 1994).

Hence, the results of assessment should be incorporated into the curriculum and used to individualize instruction. When instruments and procedures designed for screening are used for diagnostic purposes, or when tests are administered by individuals who have a limited perspective on the variations of normal development, or when staff with little formal training in test administration perform the screening, children can be wrongly identified and their education jeopardized.

2.3 Anecdotal Records

An anecdote is an account of an event in a child's day. The record of the event can be detailed or brief (Wortham and Hardin, 2015). The anecdote is a short report that describe an incident in a factual context of what was said or done by the participant(s). In most cases, anecdotes focus on very simple, everyday interactions among children, children and adults as well

as children and materials in the environment (Harrison, 2004). Ideally, the anecdotal record should be recorded as it unfolds or immediately after. Hence, anecdotal records usually have to be written later at the end of the day. Keeping brief notes on index cards or sticky notes carried in your pockets can be helpful. Characteristics of anecdotal records simple reports of behavior', result of direct observation, accurate and specific, gives context of child's behavior and records typical or unusual behaviors. Anecdotes capture the richness and complexity of the moment as children interact with one another and with materials. Anecdotes records are useful in recording unexpected events which would not be documented otherwise. Anecdotal records can be made systematically after each lesson, at the end of the day, or less frequently such as at the end of a unit. Of course, these observations should be dated, identified, and organized around previously identified focuses of instruction.

2.4 Checklists

Check lists are assessment tools designed to determine a child growth and development (Garrity, Longstreth, *et al.,* 2015). A checklist clearly state the unit objectives and students set of the objectives that are required to be met. In addition a checklist provides many benefits for recording teacher observations, they are also valuable tools to guide students in self and peer assessment. According to Morrison (2013) every child is unique in his/her own ways. The checklists enhance the process of observation, and help ensure consistency by providing a rationale and illustrations for each performance indicator (Meisels & Jablon, 1995). In addition the Checklists and Guidelines create a profile of children's individualized progress. Therefore when designing an observation checklist, the teacher must determine the kind of behavior(s) or skills he/she is hoping to observe. Some observation checklists may be devoted primarily to the application of the writing process while others may focus on higher order thinking skills or on the use of spoken and/or written language within the classroom. The assessment checklist covers seven domains: (1) Personal and social development; (2) Language and literacy; (3) Mathematical thinking; (4) Scientific thinking; (5) Social studies; (6) The Arts; and (7) Physical development. Each domain is divided into functional components, each of which contains performance indicators that represent important skills, knowledge, behaviors, and accomplishments.

2.5 Work Sampling System

Work Sampling System is an authentic performance assessment method, is based on teachers' observations of

children at work in the classroom learning, solving problems, interacting, and creating products (Morrow, 2001). The work sampling system is designed for students in preschool. It includes three interrelated elements: developmental guidelines and checklists, portfolios and summary reports. These elements focus on the classroom and reflect national, state, and local standards, as well as the teacher's objectives. Instead of providing a mere snapshot of narrow academic skills at a single point in time, Work Sampling is an ongoing documentation and evaluation process designed to improve the teacher's instructional practices and student learning. According to Meisels and Jablon (1995) Work Sampling System offers an exemplar of how performance assessment works in Head Start, early childhood, and the primary years (ages 3 to 11). Therefore the work sampling, a low stake, non-stigmatizing system, relies on extensive sampling of children's academic, personal, and social progress over the school year. It provides a rich source of information about student strengths and weaknesses (Bagnato, 2007). The Work Sampling System is a relatively structured approach to Portfolio collection that relies on the identification and collection of two types of work: Core Items (representations of a particular area of learning within a domain that are selected three times a year); and Individualized Items (unique examples of a child's work that capture the child's interests and experiences and reflect integrated learning across domains).

2.6 Progress Monitoring Practices

Progress monitoring is used to describe a number of activities or approaches to data collection that focus on a child's learning over time and help to document and provide meaningful feedback on learning outcomes (Good, Kaminski, *et al.,* 2003). Currently, the majority of progresses monitoring tools have target language and early literacy skills rather than all the domains of development and learning. There are two types of progress monitoring practices used in assessment. The first type of progress monitoring process is Critical Skills Mastery or Mastery Monitoring, which is used to describe the Curriculum-based Assessments (CBAs) which inform adults as to the child's progress in a specific curricular scope and sequence (McConnell, Priest, *et al.,* 2002). The second type of progress monitoring process looks at the child's performance on General Outcomes Measurement (GOMs). Therefore the GOM system looks to measure the child's progress on an "indicator" that reflects a socially valid, general outcome (Curriculum-based Measurement) (Deno, 2003).

2.7 Observation as a Primary Tool in Assessment

Observations allow teachers, parents, and other adults to capture and record meaningful details while children are engaged in a variety of activities and consider children's development, interests, and needs across domains of development and learning (Bagnato, 2007). Hence, when conducting observations, the teachers must take particular care to avoid allowing any preconceptions or biases color their impressions.

However, the teachers will never know the complexity of the student but will have pieces of the puzzle hopefully enough pieces so that a picture of the student emerges. When conducting systematic observations, teachers should use a red flag that indicate a child might be struggling with learning. In addition the use of guided observations helps to ensure that observations conducted by teachers and parents are carried out in a systematic and objective manner. however systematic observation occur multiple times over a period of time collecting information from multiple sources (e.g., teachers, parents), and; Collect information from multiple contexts (e.g., classroom, playground, home) (Appl, 2000). According to Benjamin (1993) there are many practical hints on how the teacher can effectively observe and record by planning what and when you observe, providing activities that don't directly involve the teacher, and having spots in the room that let teachers see and hear what is happening. Therefore teachers observing children often come very easily. Teachers watch and remember what children are doing and how they accomplish the task. But observing without recording is only half of the picture. Teachers must find ways to keep all the information that they traditionally store in their heads. Teachers have always watched and observed students in the classroom and they have made instructional decisions based on these observations.

2.8 Individualizing Instruction in Preschool Classrooms

Individualized instruction means meeting the needs of individual learners as they move along their learning journey. These services are provided by early childhood special educators. However, these special education professionals usually spend just a few hours each week with the children. The process of individualizing instruction consists of four primary steps (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004). The components are interrelated and form the framework for decision making around individualization. The ability to generate and

sustain children's interest in learning is a critical skill for effective early childhood teachers. However, teachers who can pique children's curiosity and then use appropriate Assessment strategies to convey information and skills provide children with rich learning environments (Sandall & Schwartz, 2008). Therefore early childhood teachers use a variety of strategies to facilitate learning opportunities for children. In addition individualizing instruction enables skilled teachers to provide meaningful learning experiences to all young children, including those with special needs (McWilliam, Wolery, & Odom, 2001). In order to provide effective instruction, teachers must be knowledgeable about the learners, including their abilities, interests and needs. Create learning opportunities that are embedded in daily routines, activities, or experiences that capture children's interest and draw them into an instructional interaction. Implement a planned and structured approach for curriculum content.

2.9 Learning Stories

Learning Stories are a widely used technique to assess children's learning in early childhood centres. The technique requires teachers to observe children and write narrative 'stories' to interpret the learning that is occurring in particular situations. The Learning Stories approach was developed by Margaret Carr and is outlined in a number of her publications (Carr, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2004). Learning Stories is link with the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Therefore Learning Stories is by emphasizing particular learning 'dispositions' as outcomes. According to Carr (2001) described learning dispositions as situated learning strategies plus motivation-participation repertoires from which a learner recognizes, selects, edits, responds to, resists, searches for and constructs learning opportunities. There are five dispositions form the basis of assessment in Learning Stories. Every disposition is linked with a particular strand of the curriculum and is assessed by focusing on a particular behavior (Carr, 1998b). However, learning stories are said to be suitable for children of all ages. Some Learning Stories may describe situations where a group of children are involved in the same experience. In addition learning stories also record the teacher's involvement in situations. The Learning Stories approach to assessment has been praised by a number of writers. According to Smith (2003) Learning Stories have extraordinary power to excite and energize teachers, parents and children. Parents have become much more interested in and convinced of the extraordinary learning achievements of children in their early childhood

centres." Some early childhood teachers have described the value of Learning Stories for facilitating understandings of literacy (Hatherly, 2006) and for promoting communication between teachers, children, and families (Ramsey, Sturm, Breen, Lee & Carr, 2007). However the potential problem with Learning Stories is that objectivity is not sought when first describing and documenting a child's learning experience. According to Hatherly and Sands (2002) stated that, in comparison to running records, Learning Stories are "a different genre or style of writing: one that is less clinical and less concerned with keeping interpretation out of recording".

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Brookhart (1997) theory of classroom assessment. The theory presupposes that in any particular class, the classroom assessment environment is played out in repeated classroom assessment events, activity segments with associated expectations and assessments. Brookhart (1997) made explicit connections between the role of classroom assessment practices in motivating student effort and achievement while integrating the literatures from classroom assessment environments and social-cognitive theories of learning and motivation. Therefore the study is based on theoretical framework for the role of classroom assessment in motivating student effort and achievement (Brookhart, 1999).

The classroom assessment consists of instruction given based on learning and assessment tasks and feedback provided to students (learners) on students' perceived task and their own perceived self-efficacy in relation to the students' effort, and achievement. Therefore perceived self-efficacy includes "the student's belief or conviction that he or she can master the material, accomplish the task, or perform the skill that the assignment requires" (Brookhart, 1997). However, to understand assessment is by breaking down the false link between assessment and evaluation, it is necessary to contrast the two terms. Assessment is the collection of information about something to be used for a particular purpose (Brookhart, 2005). While evaluation is using assessment information to make judgments about the worth of something being assessed (Brookhart, 2005).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The methodology of this research shares its philosophical foundation with the positivist philosophical paradigm.

The positivist paradigm arose from the philosophy identified as logical positivism and is based on rigid rules of logic and measurement, truth, absolute principles and prediction (Ponterotto, 2005). In addition the study adopted a descriptive research design. The study adopted a descriptive research design since the researcher seeks to determine the status of assessment of pupils in public early childhood development education centers in Uasin-Gishu County.

3.2 Target Population and Sampling

The target population for the study was 2330 head teachers and teachers in all the public ECDE centers in Uasin-Gishu County. The study utilized a sample size of 341 for analysis. The study adopted a stratified sampling technique to select the 20 public ECDE centers from each of the six administrative divisions in Uasin-Gishu County. In addition systematic random sampling technique was used to select 341 ECDE teachers while the ECDE centers were purposively selected.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher used a mixed method approach to collect data from the respondents. Data collection was done using a combination of questionnaires, interviews and checklists. Two set of questionnaires were designed; a questionnaire for the ECDE teachers and a questionnaire for the ECDE center head-teachers. The study used a structured checklist to record data on the availability of teaching and learning resources in the centers. The checklist amassed information on the status of the outdoor play environment. The questionnaires were pre-tested by administering it to 20 ECDE teachers in the neighboring Nandi County. The researcher pre-visited

the 120 early childhood education centers to seek permission for data collection. The researcher gave the respondents sufficient time to accurately fill in the copies of the questionnaire the required information after which the documents were collected for data extraction and analysis. Principal's interviews were also conducted after they fill the questionnaire.

4. Results and Discussion

In this case, frequency distribution and measures of central tendency including mean as well as measure of dispersion including percentages, range and standard deviation were used. Data was also presented using tables, pie charts and graphs. Qualitative data from the interviews were recorded and analyzed thematically through non-parametric analysis. The results were then be interpreted by attaching significance to the themes and the patterns observed. Alternative explanations were also considered by looking at the differences in responses recorded in data collection.

4.1 Frequency of Carrying Out Learner Assessment

First the ECDE teachers were asked to rate how frequent they carried out learner's assessment. The response variable of the study was the level of frequency the learners were assessed by ECDE teachers. The result is presented in Table 1 below. The result indicate that respondent assessed learners on a daily basis (n=218, 63.9%), while those who assessed learners on a weekly basis (n=82, 24%), followed by the teachers doing their assessment on monthly basis (n=35, 10.3%) and lastly those teachers who indicated to be carrying out the assessment of learners on a yearly basis (n=6, 1.8%).

Table 1: Frequency of Carrying Out Learners' Assessment by ECDE Teachers

Learner Assessment	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Daily	218(63.9)	63.9
Weekly	82(24.0)	88.0
Monthly	35(10.3)	98.2
Annually	6(1.8)	100.0
All frequency percentages are reported in parentheses, n= 341		

Source: *Research Data, (2018)*

The learner was assessed by ECDE teachers in Uasin-Gishu County on daily basis. This shows that learner's assessment was an important element for ECDE teachers. Therefore the result was in line with those of Wortham, (2013) that assessments provided valuable information

for planning whole-group and individualized instruction, for determining program quality, and for communicating with others.

4.2 Reasons for Utilizing Learner Assessment

During the study the respondents identified reasons for ECDE teachers utilizing the various learner assessment methods as summarized in Table 2 indicated that the reason for majority of the teachers for carrying out assessment was for teaching purposes (n=162, 47.5%), while the teachers who used the assessment method for learning purposes (n=145, 42.5%). Further, the result indicated that some of the teachers used the assessment method for planning for teaching (27, 7.9%). Lastly, the teachers who utilized the assessment methods for funding purposes (n=7, 2.1%). This implies that reasons for assessment was for teaching, learning purposes. However, planning and funding purposes were not considered.

Table 2: Reasons for Utilizing Learner Assessment

Purpose of Assessment	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Seeking Funding Purposes	7(2.1)	2.1
Teaching Purposes	162(47.5)	49.6
Learning Purposes	145(42.5)	92.1
When Planning a programme for a child	27(7.9)	100.0
All frequency percentages are reported in parentheses, n= 341		

Source: *Research Data, (2018)*

In addition the teachers were asked to indicate why the different assessment approaches were used. The results are shown in Figure 1 below indicated that majority of the ECDE teachers assessed children in order to identify whether the students understood what they had learnt in class (n=174, 51%). This is followed closely by the need by the teachers to compile the performance reports of each student as a reason to which the different assessment approaches were stand (n=102, 30%). Lastly the teachers who used assessment to identify their strengths and weaknesses in different activities within the school curricula which is very important to be given much attention for every student to perform better in all aspects of learning (n=44, 12.9%).
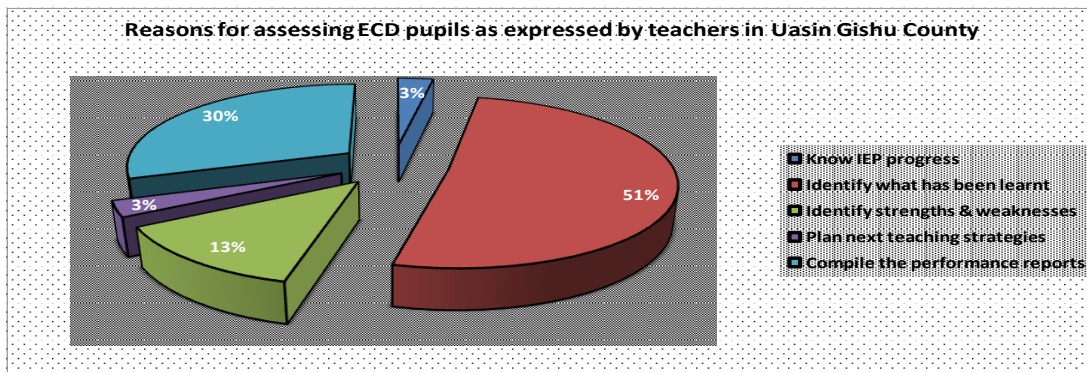

Figure 1: Key reasons for assessing the ECDE pupils

This finding was in line with those of Mindes and Jung, (2014), they concluded that assessment should be used for decision-making regarding teaching and learning, identifying children's needs, and improving education and intervention programs. In addition the findings concurred to those of Harms and Clifford (2014) that assessment provides information that is useful for intervention. Teachers are expected to use assessment results to adapt and individualize curricula and teaching approaches and to communicate with families and all stakeholders.

4.3 Determinant of Assessment Method Used by ECDE Teachers

The descriptive statistics for the determinants of assessment method used by ECDE Teachers in Uasin-Gishu County are presented in Table 3 below.

It is evidence from the results that using learning stories as assessment method was highly preferred by teachers (n=173, 50.8%), while using learning stories as a method to prepare report to parents and other agencies (n= 99, 29.03%). While those who used learning stories to plan the next teaching steps (n=11, 3.22%). In addition those who used it learning stories to identify learning strengths and difficulties of the preschoolers where (n=47, 13.78%). Therefore from the findings we conclude that majority of the teachers used learning stories to assess what the learner had learnt. This agree was in line with the findings of Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, (2007), Who emphasized that the teacher models how to read print from left to right, they discuss what is happening on each page, and problem solve how the story may or may not end and why. This is called small group instruction and it allows for open-ended learning opportunities that are relevant and meaningful to each group. Therefore assessments must be culturally, linguistically, and individually appropriate and should address all children's development, progress, strengths, and needs. However, majority of the teachers surveyed said they used annotated copies during assessment to prepare reports for parents and regulatory agencies (n=121, 35.5%), while those who used annotated copies to assess what learners have learnt (n=79, 23.2%). In addition ECDE teachers stated that the used annotated copies for assessment so as to allow them to assess IEP progress (n=60, 17.5%), while those who attributed the use of annotated copies to identify learns strengths and difficulties among children (n=44, 12.9%).

Table 3: Determinant of Assessment Method Used by ECDE Teachers

Assessment Method	A	B	C	D	E
Learning stories	173(50.7)	99(29.03)	11(3.22)	11(3.22)	47(13.7)
Annotated copies	79(23.2)	121(35.5)	60(17.5)	37(10.9)	44(12.9)
Unannotated copies	53(15.4)	136(40)	89(26.2)	26(7.6)	37(10.8)
Observations	128(37.5)	79(23.2)	39(11.4)	37(10.9)	58(17)
Checklists	84(24.6)	92(26.9)	76(22.3)	37(10.8)	52(15.4)
Anecdotal records	71(20.8)	100(29.2)	79(23.2)	36(10.6)	55(16.2)
Early childhood examples	76(22.3)	97(28.5)	73(21.5)	53(15.4)	42(12.3)
Screening	73(21.5)	58(16.9)	123(36.2)	29(8.5)	58(16.9)
Work samples	84(24.6)	87(25.4)	92(26.9)	31(9.2)	47(13.9)
Individualized educational plans	76(22.3)	37(10.8)	142(41.5)	39(11.5)	47(13.9)

A= To assess what learner have learnt, **B**= To report(e.g. parent, agencies)**, C=** To assess IEP progress, **D**= To plan next teaching steps, **E**= To identify learning strengths and difficulties**,** All frequency percentages are reported in parentheses, n= 341

Source: *Research Data, 2018*

Further the ECDE teachers who used annotated copies to plan the next teaching steps (n=37, 10.8%). This implies that majority of the teachers used annotated copies to prepare reports for parents and regulatory agencies and to assess what learners have learnt in the class rooms. This agrees with Harrison, (2004) that attributed that the anecdotes focus on very simple, everyday interactions among children, children and adults as well as children and materials in the environment.

Further the study considered the use of unannotated copies; the results are also presented in Table 3. It is evidence from the results that using unannotated copies was highly preferred by teachers to present reports to parents and other agencies (n=136, 40%), while those who used unannotated copies for assessing IEP progress (n=89, 26.2%). In addition some of the teachers said they used unannotated copies to assess what learner has learnt (n=53, 15.4%). While those who used unannotated copies to asses learners strength and difficulties (n=37, 10.8%) and finally those who used unannotated copies to assess the next teaching step (n=26, 7.6%). This provides evidence that unannotated copies were widely used to present reports to parents and other agencies. The results as displayed in table 3 revealed that majority of the teachers used observations to assess what the learner had learnt (n=128, 37.5%), while those who used it for reporting to parents and agencies (m=79, 23.2%) and those who attributed the use of observation for identifying learning strengths and difficulties (n=58, 17%). Last but not least some of the teachers used

observation to assess IEP progress (n=39, 11.4%). Lastly those surveyed used observations to plan their next teaching steps (n=37, 10.9%). This provides evidence that observation was widely used to assess what the learner had learnt. The results, further showed that majority of the ECDE teachers used checklists as an assessment method so as to report to the parents and agencies (n=92, 26.9%), while (n=84, 24.6%) used checklists as an assessment method to assess what the learner had learned and those who used checklists as an assessment method for assessing IEP progress (n=76, 22.3%).

In addition the ECDE teachers who used the checklists as an assessment method to identify learning strengths and difficulties (n=52, 15.4%). Lastly only (n=37, 10.8%) of ECDE teachers used checklists to plan their next teaching steps. The study findings were in line with those of Garrity and Longstreth, (2015). Therefore the check lists are assessment tools designed for determine your child's growth and development. Further the study results as displayed in table 4.10 revealed that majority of the teachers used anecdotal records as an assessment method to report to parents or agencies (n=92, 26.9%), while those teachers who utilize the records to assess IEP progress (n=72, 26.3%) and the teachers who used anecdotal records to assess what the learner has learned (n=71, 20.8%). Further, the results revealed teachers used anecdotal records as an assessment method to identify learner strengths and difficulties (n=55, 16.2%). Lastly those teachers who used anecdotal records to plan the next teaching steps (n=34, 10%). In addition Early childhood examples were mostly used during assessment for reporting to parents agencies (n=97, 28.5%), while those in support of the use early childhood examples in assessing what the learner have learned (n=76, 22.3%) and those who used early childhood examples to assess IEP progress (n=73, 21.5%). However some of the teachers used early childhood examples in assessment to planning next teaching steps (n=37, 10.8%). Lastly those surveyed used early childhood examples to identify learning strengths and difficulties (n=52, 15.4%). This provides evidence that early childhood an example was widely used in assessment for reporting to parents and agencies. The results, further showed that majority of the ECDE teachers used screening as an assessment method so as to get IEP progress (n=123, 36.25%), while on the other hand (n=73, 21.5%) used screening to determine what the learner had learned, and the ECDE teachers who used screening as an assessment method to report to parents and agencies (n=58, 16.9%).

Furthermore, those teachers who used screening to identify learning strengths and difficulties (n=58, 16.9%), lastly, those who used screening to plan their teaching steps (n=29, 8.5%). From the study teachers used screening to report to parents and agencies. This agrees with Gordon and Browne, (2013) that screening is assessment approach to systematically evaluate children's growth across all domains of development and learning within natural contexts, including the early childhood classroom. In addition it was further establish that majority of the teachers used work samples to assess IEP progress (n=92, 26.9%), while on the other hand the teachers who used work sample to report to parents and agencies (n=87, 25.4%). The result further showed that a significant number of teachers used work samples to assess what the learner have learned (n=84, 24.6%), while on the other hand (n=47, 13.9%) use work samples to identify learning strengths and difficulties. Lastly those who used work samples to plan their next teaching steps (n=31, 9.2%). The results indicated that the teachers used work samples to assess IEP progress, to assess what the learner has learned and identify learning strengths and difficulties. Finally the results from table 3 showed the use of individualized teaching plans were mostly used to assess IEP progress (n=142, 41.5%), while those teachers who used individualized teaching plans for assessing what the learner has learned (n=76, 22.3%). In addition the ECDE teachers who used individualized teaching plans to identify learning strengths and weakness of learners (n=47, 13.8%), and lastly the teachers who used individualized teaching plans to plan their teaching step (n=39, 11.5%).

This means that most of the respondent agreed that they used individualized teaching plans, work sample and screening to assess IEP progress. It was also established that most of the teachers used learning stories and observation to assess what learner have learnt. In addition early childhood examples, anecdotal records, unanecdotal records were used by the teachers as an assessment method so as to report to parents what the child had leant. The findings were in line with those of Wortham and Hardin, (2015) that assessment of young children needs to include developmentally appropriate activities. It should not include a multiple-choice test, or other formal assessments but an assessment of the child in natural settings doing the day-to-day activities they normally do.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

The assessment of learners was done on a daily and weekly basis by the ECDE teachers to assess what the

children had learned. The assessment methods used range from learning stories, use of annotated and unannotated copies, observations, checklist, anecdotal records, early childhood examples, screening, work samples, to individualized educational plans. The choice of assessment method was determined mostly by the use of the assessment report: for instant learning stories and observations were used primarily to assess what the learner had learned while annotated and unannotated copes were mostly used to report to parents and regulatory agencies. In addition screening and individualized education plans were mostly used to assess IEP progress.

However, higher percentage of teachers conducts these assessments with little focus on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil which could be some of the reasons for poor performance of most pupils. The reasons for not using any specific assessment varied from one study participant to another. Nonetheless, most teachers cited the level of assessment as not being age appropriate or that no training had been provided on how to use the method. The teachers were unaware of the assessment method. It is instructive to note however, that most teachers found checklists, observations, learning stories, individualized education plans and annotated copies of children's writing to be useful for instructional assessment.

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5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

i. Effective classroom assessment and evaluation requires an understanding of the role of evaluation in planning anddelivering instruction. It calls for the collection and interpretation of a wide range ofinformation, familiarity with a variety of different methods of assessment and for competencein using these methods creatively, careful and systematic record keeping and judgment.

ii. Finally, an effective classroom assessment and evaluation calls on teachers to become agents of change in their classrooms actively using the results of assessment to modify and improve the learning environments they create.

iii. This study recommends that intervention measures should be taken to provide a guideline of preschoolers assessment method based on curriculum. There should be a general guide formulated out of research to act as a reference point for the preschool teachers in their work.

iv. There is need for seminars and workshops for preschool teachers on the various assessment methods available to ensure they are informed and can make prudent decisions depending on the situation.

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