

Students' Assessment Administration among Preschool Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to explore governance assessment in preschools based on management aspects of teaching in the classroom. This study is a case study, of qualitative nature. Data collection was run against four preschool teachers serving in Negeri Sembilan under the Ministry of Education. Data were collected through interview protocol, the protocol of observation and analysis of the contents of documents in the duration of four months. Data were analyzed by triangulation. The results showed that pre-school teachers master of governance assessments knowledge but do not have the skills to assess according National Pre-school Curriculum Standard (KSPK). Impact studies show the need short course governance assessment among pupils in pre-school teachers in Malaysia.

Keywords: Governance, Assessment, Preschool Teachers, Preschool, KSPK

Introduction

Assessment is the process of collecting information about the development and the progress of the student using various methods. Assessment is also a process of teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus, the preschool teachers' skills in conducting the assessment really help in identifying students' level of intelligence and progress. The preschool assessment now uses portfolio and descriptive reports. According to KPM in 2003, the assessment in preschool teaching needs to take place every day after the teaching session ends.

The purpose of the assessment is the process to get an overview of the performance of pupils in learning. Assessment can be done towards the activities carried out during the teaching and learning. It also aims to get continuous information about teaching and learning and improve teaching. Besides that, planning teaching and learning activities and systematically in line with the level of ability of pupils also is the purpose of the assessment in the pre-school. Indirectly, teachers can plan and carry out follow-up activities effectively in order to improve their weaknesses in teaching.

Preschool assessment implemented by teachers on an ongoing basis during the process of teaching and learning. It is also a holistic assessment that evaluates cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional and spiritual) and aspects of psychomotor (physical) in line with the National Education Philosophy and the National Pre-School Curriculum Standard. However, as it is, teachers have to confront various current issues and challenges. These include the transparency and the validity of the information of the assessment carried out. This is

consistent with the second principle stated by James H. McMillan (2000) whereby an assessment must be clear and trustworthy. The following assessment and evaluation must be ongoing and appropriate to facilitate students' growth and mastery (Siti Saleha, 2003).

Problem Statement

Preschool teachers have to be given early exposure about the use of KSPK (KPM, 2010). This exposure has been widespread by the Preschool Officer at the State Education Department (JPN) and at the District Education Department (PPD) also the Preschool Officer at the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM). They are also exposed to the pattern of assessment considered as appropriate for preschool children.

However, to be skilled at carrying out the assessment, preschool teachers need to master the content of the curriculum so that the assessment given will be balanced with students' ability. After the teachers have mastered the curriculum and assessed justifiably, students can also master the development intended by the KSPK. However the Board of Nazir and Quality Assurance (JNJK) finds that preschool teachers do not perform assessment everyday and the assessment records are not updated (JNJK 2013). In this vein, researcher studies how preschool students' assessment is administered by the teachers.

Research Objective

This study aims to explore into the administrative work of student assessment in two preschools in Negeri Sembilan. This study identifies the issues of assessment administration faced by preschool teachers when managing classroom teaching and learning.

Literature Review

Preschool assessment is done by teachers continuously during the teaching and learning process. It is also a holistic assessment which evaluates the cognitive (intellect), affective (emotions and spiritual) and psychomotor (physical) aspects in line with the intention of the National Education Philosophy (FPK) and the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK). There are six standards predetermined in preschool assessment (KPM, 2012). However, teachers should plan before the assessment is done, so that the assessment would be more transparent.

The assessment outcome can help teachers plan an effective follow-up action to broaden students' potential to a more optimal level in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Indirectly, this will also promote student learning and teachers can also improve their teaching. Among the preschool assessment methods are continuous observation and work outcome evaluation.

The process of conducting assessments in preschools is not really complicated. Systematic recording is done with regard to students' development, ability, progress and achievement. Among the records used in preschool assessments are the checklist, anecdotal records, continuous records and portfolio. However, one popular method of assessment among preschool children would be the portfolio (Rohaty, 2013).

At preschool children's age, their ability and progress are very much influenced by the growth rate. The label attached to the students at this age will leave a negative impact and simultaneously, contribute to an unhealthy development. Thus, the results of the assessment cannot be disclosed to anyone else except for parents and certain parties.

Methodology

The study is qualitative and four participants are involved in this study. The design of the study is qualitative and it is appropriate for exploratory studies (Creswell, 2012). Thus, this study adopts case study as the study method and interview protocol, observation and document analysis as the study techniques (Othman Lebar, 2009; Creswell, 2012; Robson et. al, 2011).

The issue studied is the administration of students in the classroom employs the assessments from various methods by pre-school teachers in the District of Jempol, Negeri Sembilan. Consistent with this study, the approach, method, issue and the field of study by previous scholars are still relevant and can serve as guidance and reference to researchers.

Research Findings

The learning-through-playing approach stressed in pre-school can help teachers evaluate students through planned activities as playing is children's natural instinct and automatically with teachers' creativity, evaluation can be done without the students acknowledging it. Pre-school assessment can offer useful insights to teachers. The information is able to support students' learning and development. The assessment will also take place continuously.

Assessment does not take place every day at pre-school. Participants only mark and perform assessment when it is time to have a session with the parents. The report only gives an overall picture about a student, as in the response given by P1: "I perform assessment twice a year, which is in May and October...I should have been doing it everyday, but I have no time"(P1/tb-u2: 27-31). When asked about her understanding about the pre-school assessment she responded: "...assessment can be done anytime at all...meaning that it does not happen only in the teaching and learning process" (P1/tb-u1: 44-46).

The order on implementing assessment at pre-school has been issued by the KPM since 2003. However the duration of the assessment is not under their control. This is evident from the following interview: "...I perform this assessment twice a year which is in May and October...because I need to inform the parents in June and November...this assessment cannot be done in a day for all the students but we can do so for 3 to 4 students...it would be impossible to evaluate all in one day" (P1/tb-u2: 32-37).

The study finds that the participants had made a descriptive report every semester. The report is then given to the parents in a meeting at the end of every semester, as stated by P2: "...I make an overall report of assessment in May because the meeting with parents for semester 1 is in June"(PK2/tb-u2: 42-44). Also stated by P3: "...In May, I will make the overall report and update the assessment file before bringing them along in the meeting with parents" (PK3/tb-u2: 32-34).

“...An assessment is done within four months every semester...the first assessment is in February..the update is in May...the meeting with parents in June...it is at this time that I will explain to the parents about their children’s strengths and weaknesses” (PK4/tb-u2: 35-39)

The study participants had given comprehensive responses in relation to the knowledge of doing assessment at preschool. All participants had started the assessment at preschool in February and updated the assessment files in May. When asked how did they conduct the assessment, PK1 responded: “...I follow the guideline given by the JPN..BPK also provides it but I prefer to use the guideline given by the JPN...it is easier” (PK1/tdk-3: 20-23). He added”...if we were to follow the one by JPN, I only need to mark in the column provided and only one report elaboration every semester” (PK1/tdk-3: 42-44)

PK2 then gave her response: “...I decided upon the teaching objectives in my daily teaching plans..I also planned on what do I need to evaluate on students pertinent to that objective.. After that I will arrange the students’ names who would be evaluated first...normally I will evaluate bright students first” (PK2/tb-u2: 52-56). PK2 added: “...I use the assessment provided by the JPN..although the BPK does give an example of the assessment record to all preschools, in Negeri Sembilan, we have to follow the one given by the JPN...the JPN has improvised the assessment sample by BPK..it is easier to understand and easy to complete” (PK2/tdk-3:32-35)

Meanwhile, PK3 responded: “...I perform assessment based on what I teach in that week....I cannot follow what is being taught every day, because every student undergoes a different assessment time..if we follow what is being taught, the assessment would be wider and easier” (PK3/tb-u2: 48-51). She then added: “...this assessment cannot finish in a day...I have to plan which student has to be evaluated.....so that it is to be recorded” (PK3/tdk-3: 42-44). PK4 responded: “... only do the assessment when necessary...we cannot do it every day...because to evaluate, I also have to consider their readiness...sometimes the emotions are unstable...when this happens, of course it will distract his or her acceptance of the knowledge on that day” (PK4/tb-u2: 60-65)

However, when asked about the recording of the assessment, these are the responses of the participants:“...I used short notes in evaluating the core mastery..for example, spirituality, attitude and values...I have recorded that students have mastered the way they take the ablution..and I also used the checklist”(PK1/tb-u3: 23-26). When asked about the recording and the reporting the assessment outcome, the response was:

“...after the assessment, ppm will include it in the assessment file... together with the student’s work and the report will only be done once for every student...after all the assessment is done, only then I prepare the report...normally in May”(PK1/tb-u3: 33-39)

Preschool assessment can employ various types of assessment documents among which are anecdotal records, the running records, *rating scale* and so on. The following is the response of the participants about recording and preparing participants’ assessment reports:

“...I only use the check list in the assessment...I do not have time to use other methods...even if I had the time, it wouldn’t be for all students...for late students I only use brief notes...not very many...just one or two students...for all students’ work like the worksheet, I will ask the ppm to include it in the assessment file ...while I will do the reporting at the end of every month”(PK2/tb-u3: 32-40)

“...to do the assessment, I use the checklist given by the JPN... I haven’t done any notes but I make a report for every skill evaluated....I completed the report in May after all assessment has been completed” (PK3/t-u2: 34-40)

“...I use the assessment record prepared by the JPN..I made a tick and made a short note in the column provided and I asked the ppm to include it in the assessment file for students’ work...but only evaluated and quality work...after all the assessment, I then prepared the reporting. I then include the report for all core aspects and I will report the areas mastered and not yet mastered by the students” (PK4/tb-u3:70-80)

Based on the response given by the participants, it is found that all participants have the knowledge about the method of recording and reporting the assessment. Through the document analysis, it is evident that all participants have prepared assessment files for all students. Every file is labeled with student’s file and picture. However, from the analysis, it is found that 3 out of 4 participants did not complete the students’ assessment files. One of the four participants had prepared perfect files. A space for comment for parents is also provided. The files are also signed by the teachers and the administrators.

The finding of the document analysis contradicts with the interview findings. This demonstrates that every preschool teacher has an understanding of how one should conduct the assessment but he or she does not do it. There is only one report in a file that is full of student’s worksheet and there are some who have not been assessed although they are long overdue. Therefore, this study finds that the participants do not have good administrative skills.

Table 1: Comparison Participants Response with Assessment

Participants	Assessments
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have knowledge of governance assessments - Have knowledge assessment purposes - Lack of understanding of the process of assessing - Have knowledge about time to assess - Using the records provided by the JPN assessment - Conducting assessments twice a year - Records assessment signed by the administrator - Negative assess duties
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have knowledge of governance assessments - Have knowledge assessment purposes - Have knowledge and understanding of the process of assessing - Have knowledge about time to assess

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using the records provided by the JPN assessment - Conducting assessments once a month - Using checklists and worksheets as assessment tools - Records assessment signed by the administrator
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have knowledge of governance Assessments - Have knowledge assessment Purposes - Lack of understanding of the process of assessing - Have knowledge about time to assess - Using the records provided by the JPN assessment - Using the checklist as an assessment tool - Evaluating by the willingness of students - Carry out assessments in the last three months for each semester - Records assessment signed by the administrator - Require consistency in assessment - Negative on the assessment of preschool
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have knowledge of governance assessments - Have knowledge assessment purposes - Do not know much of assessing - Have knowledge about time to assess - Using the records provided by the JPN assessment - Carry out assessment within four months for each semester - Using the checklist as an assessment tool - Records assessment signed by the administrator - Evaluating the manner and time of their own

Discussion

In general, the study outcome finds that preschool teachers have the knowledge of administering students' assessment. They prepare assessment files for every student equipped with some personal information about themselves. However, there are a number of preschool teachers who are not skillful enough in performing assessment as they do not master the curriculum content. They also admitted that they did not have time to carry out the assessment. This indicates that time management in teachers' teaching has not been well planned. The finding of this study is at par with the finding of the PPDJJ monitoring that preschool teachers do not update their students' assessment.

This study also supports the study done by Sylvia Chong et. al, (2009) which finds out that the majority of teachers admitted that they do not really have the skills in the curriculum content and this indirectly affects the assessment implementation. The finding also supports Susi Ivangella@Doivit (2012) who finds that the problem emerges when there is an emergence of unskilled teachers theoretically and practically- some are even non-optional teachers. Therefore the KPM is suggested to formulate an appropriate assessment for 6-year old students and below. The assessment has to be standardised for all preschools in Malaysia.

Implication of Research

Based on the discussion, it shows that preschool teachers need to master the knowledge of assessment especially the assessment deemed right for preschool children. An assessment is a tool to assess the students' performance level through the tasks assigned. The preschool assessment in Malaysia currently adopts anecdotal records, a checklist and a portfolio.

However, the right kind of assessment for preschool children would be the authentic one. Teachers are encouraged to make an improvement especially the quality of teacher assessment practice so that it is more explicit and it has a rubric scoring standard or documentation standard. To build a better assessment standard, an empirical study has to be carried out. For example, the exploratory tasks are one of the measurement tools. Through this, preschool teachers can evaluate students' talents and reasoning. Therefore, it is proposed that KPM has planned on a standard assessment for all preschool students and it can be applied to all government-owned or privately-owned preschools.

Conclusions

It is hoped that teachers can apply the assessment system administration in carrying out the teaching and learning. Thus, the student-centered assessment system must be practiced and instilled so that students get to be evaluated throughout the learning process. The main goal of this change is to relay the right, comprehensive and justified information, making pre-school education something meaningful and fun. The descriptive report prepared also has high validity and reliability to prove that the assessment is valid and precise.

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