

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Dr. Radhika Kapur

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research paper is to acquire an efficient understanding in terms of the assessment strategies in early childhood education. In early childhood education, when the teachers have completed the lesson plans, they put into operation various types of assessment strategies with the main objective of assessing the academic performance of the students. In other words, the main objective of assessment strategies is to identify the limitations in the performance of students. When the limitations are identified, the teachers put into operation, the measures and approaches that are necessary in bringing about improvements. The teachers and the students are able to identify the weaknesses and formulate measures for leading to curbing them and bringing about improvements. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper are, meaning and significance of early childhood assessment, role of assessment strategies in determining the level of functioning of students, types of assessment strategies, benefits of assessment strategies and making assessment strategies productive. Therefore, it can be stated that generating information in terms of these areas have enabled the individuals to understand that assessment strategies have proven to be meaningful and favourable in enhancing student learning, enabling the teachers to carry out their job duties appropriately and up-grading the overall system of education.

Keywords: Assessment Strategies, Early Childhood Education, Learning, Nursery Schools, Students, Teachers

In the field of early childhood education, the implementation of assessment strategies have acquired significance. The private and government organizations are developing programs, which are necessary in enhancing the school readiness of students, particularly belonging to deprived, marginalised and socio-economically backward sections of the society and the children with special needs. These programs are designed to enhance the social, language, and academic skills through responsive early care and education. The purposeful and systematic assessment strategies require the decisions to be made in terms of what to assess (Snow & Hemel, 2008). In nursery schools, after the teachers have imparted knowledge to the students in terms of lesson plans and academic concepts, it is apparent that they will have to see how much the students have learned and whether their teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies have proved to be worthwhile or there is a need to make changes. Therefore, through the effective implementation of assessment strategies, they are able to carry out their jobs satisfactorily.

The nursery school students need to be assessed in terms of comprehensive range of purposes across a wide array of spheres and in multiple service settings. The increase in the amount of assessment gives rise to concerns that are understandable in terms of whether assessment strategies are selected, implemented and interpreted in a well-organized manner. Assessment strategies in the field of early childhood education are put into operation for various purposes as diverse in determining the levels of understanding of students, guiding instruction, directing learning and

measuring the functioning of the program. The educators need to be well-equipped in terms of assessment strategies, so they are able to carry out their job duties appropriately and achieve the desired goals. The primary objective of the assessment strategies is to monitor student progress. Furthermore, it is essential to make use of the resources in training the assessors, the analysis and reporting of the results and the interpretation of those results (Snow & Hemel, 2008).

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT

Early childhood assessment is regarded as the process of gathering information regarding the students. After the information is collected, it is reviewed and then utilised to plan the educational activities. Assessment is regarded as the critical part of high-quality early childhood program. When the assessment strategies are put into practice by the educators, they observe the performance and conduct of the students. In this manner, they are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses. When strengths are identified, it is vital for the educators to formulate measures to reinforce strengths. On the other hand, when limitations are identified, it is necessary to curb them. Observing and documenting the tasks and activities of the students are regarded as one of the vital ways in which assessment strategies are put into operation. When the educators collect information in terms of performance of the students, they are able to plan individualized instruction and appropriate curriculum for all students (Early Childhood Assessment, 2014).

The assessment strategies that are put into practice by the teachers are also regarded as a great tool to be shared with parents. In this manner, the parents are able to generate awareness in terms of how their children are performing in school. In addition, the parents are able to generate awareness in terms of strengths and weaknesses of their children. The parents are the ones, who need to implement methods and approaches to reinforce the strengths of the children and alleviate their limitations. When the children experience limitations, the parents need to make provision of support, so they are able to overcome them and do well in school. In the discussion meetings, the parents and teachers exchange ideas and viewpoints in terms of measures and approaches that are necessary in promoting student learning and leading to their progression (Early Childhood Assessment, 2014). Therefore, the meaning and significance of early childhood assessment is recognized by the educators and parents, who are responsible for the effective growth and development of students.

ROLE OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES IN DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING OF STUDENTS

When the assessment strategies are designed to focus upon the students on an individual basis, it is termed as individual-focused screening. It is important to ensure that individual students, who are not successful are allowed further assessment, both to confirm the identification and in many cases to specify the sources of problems and difficulties. Most of the assessment strategies are designed to determine the level of functioning of students during the stage of infancy and toddlerhood. At this stage, the main objective of assessment strategies is to determine the level of functioning of students through medical tests. It is ensured that they are medically fit and would not experience any types of health problems and illnesses. When the students will be medically fit, then

their enrolment is encouraged and they are able to participate in learning activities (Snow & Hemel, 2008).

The other role that is carried out through the effective implementation of assessment strategies is community-focused screening. Although the community-focused screening may make use of the same tools and procedures as the individual-focused screening. Its purpose is not individual, but rather to give a picture of risk at the community level (Snow & Hemel, 2008). In simple words, the community-focused screening is put into operation to focus upon the entire community. For instance, when a community is taken into account, where children reside, belonging to deprived, marginalized and economically backward sections of the society, then the assessors will implement the methods and strategies, which would be dedicated towards leading to goodwill and well-being of these students.

In the field of early childhood education, the assessment strategies are put into operation to identify the academic performance of the students, observe how much they have learned and whether teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies are proving to be worthwhile and meaningful. When the students perform well, the educators form the viewpoint that the teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies have proven to be beneficial. On the other hand, when students experience setbacks in the academic performance and are unable to acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts, then it is vital for the teachers to bring about improvements. The various types of assessment strategies are, observations, portfolios, educator ratings, parent ratings, standardised tests, class assignments, homework assignments, competitions, activities, and instructions. It is essential for the educators to put into operation these assessment strategies in accordance to the grade levels of students, academic subjects and concepts and academic goals. Therefore, it can be stated that the role of assessment strategies is regarded as worthwhile in determining the functioning levels as well as the learning abilities of students.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

The various types of assessment strategies that are used in the field of early childhood education are stated as follows:

Observations – Observing the students in the framework of daily childcare centre activities and routines can make provision of valuable information in leading to effective growth and development of students. Through observations, the educators are able to notice the systems and determine how the tasks, activities and routines can be adapted to meet the needs and requirements of the students (Spreeuwenberg, 2015). Within the classroom settings, when teachers have given an assignment to the students to work on or when they are participating in any extra-curricular or creative activity, it is necessary for the teachers to observe the performance of the students. Therefore, it can be stated that observations will facilitate in assessing how the students are performing.

Portfolios – A portfolio assessment can be an examination of student-selected samples of work experiences and documents related to the outcomes being assessed. The portfolio assessment can address and support the progress of the students towards the achievement of academic goals. The

main objective of portfolio assessment is to document the learning of the students in terms of subjects and concepts. The portfolio must be designed to elicit the knowledge and competencies that have been specified in the outcomes. In nursery schools, a student portfolio is referred to the compilation of student work. With the help of portfolios, the teachers are able to evaluate the quality of the coursework, learning progress and academic achievement. Furthermore, portfolios help in determining, whether the students have met the learning standards and other academic requirements. Therefore, portfolios are also regarded as one of crucial assessment strategies.

Educator Ratings – The educator ratings is also termed as one of effective assessment strategies. The reason being, when the educators will be competent and capable, they will be able to augment student learning and carry out their job duties satisfactorily. In order to lead to effective growth and development of students and up-grade the overall system of education, the educators need to possess certain skills and abilities. These include, they need to be well-equipped with the academic concepts that are to be imparted to the students, need to possess an approachable nature and an amiable attitude, need to possess the abilities to work under stress, develop motivation and interest towards the performance of their job duties and possess a pleasant personality. When the educators are well-aware of these factors, they are able to promote student learning and carry out their job duties satisfactorily.

Parent Ratings – Parents are regarded as the first teachers of their children. They are well-aware of the fact that in order to lead to effective growth and development of children, what are the major approaches that need to be put into operation by them. In making provision of education to them, they send them to good and reputed schools and give them all support and assistance that are required in augmenting learning and understanding of academic subjects as well as extra-curricular and creative activities. It is vital for the parents to provide care to their children and make selection of best opportunities for them. This is regarded as a crucial aspect for the parents, irrespective of their categories and backgrounds. When the parents are well-aware in terms of needs and requirements of their children and give them wholehearted support and assistance, they will be able to render a significant contribution in making them good human beings. Therefore, it can be stated that parent ratings are regarded as one of most crucial assessment strategies for children.

Standardised Tests– Standardised tests are an early childhood assessment tool that can be used to compare a student to the average student at the same stage of development. There are number of standardised tests that are available for the educators to make use of. These include, government regulated testing and the tests designed by prominent early childhood educators and researchers. One of the major limitations of standardised testing is the fact that they need to be administered under the same conditions with the same directions as the original test was performed. Furthermore, the standardised tests do not take into account the regional, cultural and economic variations that may contribute towards the developmental progress of the students. Due to these limitations, these tests are not made use of on a frequent basis, but they are regarded as one of the types of assessment strategies (Spreeuwenberg, 2015).

Class Assignments – Class assignments are referred to the assignments that are given to the students by the teachers in class. After the teachers have completed a lesson plan, then their job will be completed, after they identify how much the students have learned and understood. Hence, in

order to find out how much the students have learned and understood, they give class assignments. These assignments can be open book or close book. In some cases, the students are allowed to collaborate with fellow students and work in groups, whereas, in other cases, they need to work independently. But the teachers make provision of assistance and guidance to the students in the completion of class assignments. Class assignments are given to the students in terms of all subjects. These assignments render a significant contribution in facilitating learning among students and assessing their performance.

Homework Assignments – Homework assignments are the assignments that are given to the students to be completed for homework. The main purpose of these assignments is to enable the students to remember how much they have learned in class. Research has indicated that students usually do well in homework assignments. The reason being, they obtain support and assistance from their parents. The parents are the ones, who guide and assist their children in the completion of homework assignments, but they need to ensure that their children are able to acquire an efficient understanding of the lesson plans and academic concepts. In the parent-teacher meetings, the teachers usually convey the viewpoint to the parents that they may help their children in completion of homework assignments, but they also need to test the children to ensure that they have learned well. Therefore, homework assignments are also known as effective assessment strategies.

Competitions – In nursery schools, the organization of competitions are regarded as one of crucial assessment strategies. Competitions are organized in terms of academic subjects, art and crafts, dancing, singing, poetry recitation, story-telling, fancy dress, sports and games, physical activities and role playing. When the students are to participate in competitions, they are provided with support and assistance by teachers and parents to prepare them. In schools, the teachers may give up their teaching and wholeheartedly dedicate the time and effort to prepare the students, if they are to participate in competitions, even related to extra-curricular and creative activities. When the students perform well, they are rewarded. Therefore, competitions are regarded as one of the common assessment strategies that are put into operation primarily to assess the presentation and conduct of the students.

Activities – The organization of activities are also regarded as one of indispensable assessment strategies. After the teachers have completed the lesson plans, they usually organize various activities for the students. These are related to academic subjects as well as extra-curricular and creative activities. In some cases, participation in activities is motivating and inspiring for the students. As a result, they feel pleasurable and contented. Whereas, in other cases, they may experience challenges. But when the students are to participate in activities, they receive help and support from their teachers. The teachers need to observe and supervise the students and make sure they do well and acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts. Therefore, in nursery schools, the implementation of activities in terms of academic subjects, concepts and creative tasks are regarded as one of the indispensable measures in assessing the performance of the students.

Instructions – Giving instructions is regarded as an integral part of job duties of the teachers. In nursery schools, it is vital for the teachers to communicate with the students in a polite manner and treat them with kindness and courtesy. But they need to observe the students and give them instructions. The instructions are given by the teachers to the students in terms of numerous aspects.

These include, academic subjects, topics, concepts, decorum, personality traits and their participation in extra-curricular and creative activities. In order to ensure that the instructions are given to the students in a well-organized manner, the teachers need to observe their performance and conduct adequately, augment their understanding in terms of various aspects and provide useful instructions. Furthermore, it needs to be ensured by the teachers that methods of instruction prove to be beneficial to the students in generating the desired outcomes. Therefore, instructions are also regarded as one of important assessment strategies.

BENEFITS OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

After one has acquired an efficient understanding in terms of assessment strategies, they also need to acknowledge the benefits. The benefits of assessment strategies have been stated as follows:

Promoting Student Learning – The main objective of the teachers in nursery schools is to promote student learning in an effective manner. When they put into operation, the assessment strategies, they not only aim to identify how much the students have learned and whether the teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies have proven to be beneficial to the students, but they need to make use of assessment strategies to facilitate student learning. The assessment strategies need to work towards eliminating any types of problems and challenges that may arise within the course of teaching students. Therefore, one of the important benefits of assessment strategies is to promote student learning.

Improving Teaching-Learning Methods – The implementation of assessment strategies enable the teachers to bring about improvements in the teaching-learning methods. In nursery schools, the teaching-learning methods that are made use of are usually verbal in nature. The teachers make use of books, articles, pictures, flashcards, and other materials to instruct students. When the students are able to acquire an efficient understanding of the lesson plans and teaching-learning methods prove to be effectual, then they are made use. But when the students are unable to learn and understand from these materials, then it is necessary to bring about improvements. The assessment strategies help in identifying the suitability of the teaching-learning methods.

Improving Teaching-Learning Materials – The assessment strategies help in identifying the teaching-learning materials as well. In the field of early childhood education, the teaching-learning materials that are made use of are, textbooks, notebooks, worksheets, flashcards, playthings, games, charts, pictures, models and technologies. When the use of these materials are rendering an important contribution in facilitating student learning, they are made use of. But when the teachers observe that students are experiencing setbacks and challenges, improvements need to be brought about in teaching-learning materials. In nursery schools, there have been utilization of modern, technical and innovative methods in improving the academic performance and learning abilities of students. Therefore, it can be stated that assessment strategies play an important part in improving teaching-learning materials.

Development of Motivation among Students – The assessment strategies are made use of to develop motivation among students. It is vital for the students to develop motivation and interest towards learning. When the students will be motivated towards learning, then they will be able to

understand what the teachers are teaching. Research has indicated that in nursery schools as well, the students aspire to achieve good grades. When the assessment strategies illustrate that they have experienced setbacks in academic performance, they dedicate themselves wholeheartedly towards acquiring an efficient understanding of the academic concepts and enhance their performance. Therefore, assessment strategies lead to development of motivation among students.

Generating Awareness among Parents – The assessment strategies help in generating awareness among parents regarding the performance of the students. In the field of early childhood education, parents guide and direct their children towards learning. When they have a class test or have to participate in the competition, the parents need to make provision of assistance to prepare them well. The various types of assessment strategies that are put into operation by the teachers are beneficial in generating awareness among parents regarding how their children are performing. This information helps in making improvements in their responsibilities of promoting effective learning and leading to progression of their children.

Promoting Self-Monitoring – When the child reaches the age of four, he recognizes the significance of education. He is aware of the fact that attending schools will enable him to generate information in terms of subjects and concepts and enrich their overall quality of lives. When the students experience setbacks in academic performance, they feel disheartened and aim to work diligently and conscientiously. They self-monitor their performance. When the students are able to self-monitor their performance, they are able to bring about improvements. Therefore, the utilization of assessment strategies will enable the students to self-monitor their performance and inculcate the traits of meticulousness, inventiveness and creativity.

Encouraging Practicing – It is comprehensively understood that practice makes the man perfect. During the stage of early childhood, when the foundation of learning is created and students are imparted information in terms of lesson plans, and extra-curricular and creative activities, they are encouraged to get engaged in regular practice. Regular practice will help in augmenting their knowledge and understanding. The assessment strategies may give constructive as well as unconstructive outcomes in terms of students, but they encourage practicing. When the performance has been constructive, then the students need to maintain their performance. On the other hand, when the performance has been unconstructive, then the students need to learn and get engaged in regular practice to reinforce their understanding. Therefore, it can be stated, one of the important benefits of assessment strategies is to encourage practicing.

Giving Feedback – After the teachers have made use of the assessment strategies, they are to give feedback to the students. Research has indicated that in nursery schools, students develop curiosity towards learning and aspire to acquire feedback. The teachers give them feedback on the basis of their performance. When the teachers are giving feedback, they need to ensure they communicate with the students in a friendly manner. As giving of feedback in an unconstructive manner is demotivating to the students. Therefore, it can be stated that effective utilization of assessment strategies facilitates in giving feedback and bringing about improvements in the academic performance of the students.

Encourages and Guides Effective Approaches to Learning – The assessment strategies help in encouraging and guiding effective approaches to learning. This is comprehensively understood that in order to facilitate learning and understanding among students, it is necessary to encourage and guide effective approaches. When the teachers are training students in terms of academic subjects, or encouraging their participation in extra-curricular and creative activities or imparting them training in terms of drawing and painting, they need to implement various approaches. When they are putting into practice effective teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies and assessment strategies, they are able to generate awareness in terms of effective approaches to learning.

Defines and Protects Academic Standards – One of the important benefits of assessment strategies is defining and protecting academic standards. In nursery schools, education takes place in accordance to various norms and principles. When the educators are to carry out various tasks and functions within the academic institutions, they need to follow various standards and norms. The effective implementation of assessment strategies helps the educators to define and protect academic standards. When the tasks and functions will be implemented in accordance to the academic standards, then the educators will be able to benefit in number of ways. These include, promoting student learning, augmenting one's knowledge and competencies and bringing about improvements in the overall system of education. Therefore, it can be stated that assessment strategies helps in defining and protecting academic standards.

MAKING ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES PRODUCTIVE

Nearly every student has undergone the experience of spending large amount of time in preparing for a major assessment. The main objective behind this task is to discover that material, he or she has studied was different from what the teacher chose to focus upon in putting into operation, the assessment strategies. This experience augments the understanding of the students in terms of two unfavourable experiences. First that students realize that hard work and efforts do not pay off in school. The reason being, the time and effort that they spent in studying had less or no influence upon the academic outcomes (Guskey, 2003). Second is, they learn that teachers are vested with the responsibilities of generating information among students in terms of lesson plans and academic concepts. After they have completed the lesson plans, they conduct assessments in order to find out whether the students have acquired efficient understanding or they experience problems and challenges. But it is up to the students to pay adequate attention in class, acquire support and assistance from teachers and parents and develop interest and enthusiasm towards learning.

The educators are vested with the responsibilities of making assessments productive. They need to take into consideration various factors, when they are putting into operation, the teaching-learning methods and assessment strategies. These include, grade levels and age groups of students, academic subjects and concepts, educational goals and objectives and overall system of education. When the assessment strategies need to be productive, it has to be ensured that they are able to identify the flaws and inconsistencies and bring about improvements. The assessment strategies cannot remain the same throughout. Within the course of time, it is essential to bring about improvements in them. With advancements taking place and with the advent of technologies, it is necessary to make use of modern, scientific and innovative methods in assessment strategies. For

this purpose, it is vital for the educators to conduct research and generate information in terms of technical and pioneering methods. Therefore, it can be stated that educators need to conduct research on regular basis and augment their knowledge and understanding in terms of bringing about transformations in assessment strategies.

Large-scale assessments like all assessments are designed for a specific purpose. The specific purpose of assessments is not only to bring about improvements in the academic performance of the students, but also to enrich the overall system of education. The assessment strategies are not put into practice in schools after a certain period of time, but they are put into practice upon completion of every lesson plan. For instance, when the teachers are teaching students how to colour a picture, then too they need to make use of assessment strategies, whether the students have understood the concept or experience setbacks. Setbacks are regarded as barriers within the course of academic performance of the students and achievement of desired goals and objectives. Therefore, one of the important aspects in terms of which productivity of assessment strategies can be identified is, they help in identifying setbacks. After these have been identified, the teachers would implement the methods and approaches to bring about improvements.

When the educators are putting into operation the assessment strategies, they need to ensure that they do not impose any negative influences upon students. In other words, the assessment strategies need to take into consideration, the traits of morality and ethics. Their effective implementation needs to take into consideration norms, values, standards and principles. Another important point that needs to be taken into consideration is, when the students are given class assignments, homework assignments, exams, tests or are to be prepared to participate in competitions, they need to be given sufficient time. As in nursery schools, when there is initiation of learning among students, they are slow and take time in understanding things. Therefore, when they will be allowed sufficient time, they will be able to understand and prepare themselves well. Therefore, it can be stated that assessment strategies can be productive, when they take into consideration the traits of morality and ethics and students are given sufficient time to implement task or activity.

The assessment strategies enable the educators in communicating important factors that are necessary in order to lead to effective growth and development of students. In nursery schools, the educators not only have the objective of generating information among students in terms of academic concepts and extra-curricular and creative activities, but they also impart them information in terms of norms and values. These are necessary to enable them to become good human beings and productive citizens of the country. In order to implement the assessment strategies in an effective manner and generate the desired outcomes, it is necessary for the teachers and parents to work in collaboration with each other. Collaboration can take place in a well-organized manner between them, when they get engaged into effective communication and exchange ideas and suggestions with each other in order to lead to progression of children. Therefore, augmenting productivity of the assessment strategies facilitate effective communication and collaboration among parents and teachers.

Productivity in assessment strategies has proven to be beneficial to the educators, parents and students. The educators are able to determine, whether the students are meeting the goals of

instruction (Partners in Learning, 2010). The parents are able to generate awareness in terms of how their children are learning and progressing. The students themselves are able to self-monitor their performance, develop motivation and inculcate the traits of diligence, resourcefulness and conscientiousness. These are vital to acquire understanding of the academic concepts and achieve educational goals. It is necessary for the educators, parents and teachers to work in collaboration and integration with each other to achieve the desired goals and objectives. Therefore, it can be stated that to promote student learning, perform one's job duties well, achieve academic goals and enrich the overall system of education, it is necessary to work towards enhancing productivity in the assessment strategies.

CONCLUSION

In the field of early childhood education, the implementation of assessment strategies have the primary objective of identifying the flaws and inconsistencies in the academic performance of the students, teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies and teaching-learning materials. After the flaws and inconsistencies have been identified, the educators need to put into operation the measures to bring about improvements. The role of assessment strategies is identified in determining the level of functioning of students. These are in terms of individual-focused screening, community-focused screening, and identification of the academic performance of the students. The types of assessment strategies are, observations, portfolios, educator ratings, parent ratings, standardised tests, class assignments, homework assignments, competitions, activities, and instructions. When these assessment strategies are put into operation, it is vital to take into account grade levels, academic subjects and academic goals.

The benefits of assessment strategies are, promoting student learning, improving teaching-learning methods, improving teaching-learning materials, development of motivation among students, generating awareness among parents, promoting self-monitoring, encouraging practicing, giving feedback, encourages and guides effective approaches to learning and defines and protects academic standards. In order to make assessment strategies productive and enhance the overall system of education, it is necessary to make use of modern, scientific and innovative assessment strategies. Within the course of time, it is necessary for the educators to bring about changes in assessment strategies as well. Another important factor that needs to be taken into account is educators and parents need to work in collaboration and integration with each other. Finally, it can be stated that assessment strategies are not only facilitating towards student learning but also in upgrading the overall system of education.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Early Childhood Assessment. (2014). Retrieved May 09, 2020 from resourcesofearlylearning.org
- Guskey, T.R. (2003). *How Classroom Assessments Improve Learning*. Retrieved May 10, 2020 from ascsd.org
- Partners in Learning. (2010). Miami University. Retrieved May 10, 2020 from performancepyramid.miami

Snow, C.E. & Hemel, S.B.V. (2008). Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How? National Research Council. Retrieved May 09, 2020 from acf.hhs.gov

Spreeuwenberg, R. (2015). Early Childhood Education Assessment Tools. Retrieved May 09, 2020 from blog.himama.com