

EFPY: 910
Methods of Assessment in Child
Development
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Methods of Assessment in Child Development: Introduction

- Definitions
- Purpose of Assessment
- Principles of Assessment
- Criteria for Good Assessment
- What to Assess
- Types of Assessment
- Ethics of Assessment

Definitions

- **Assessment:** Process of collecting information about children's development, learning, behavior, academic progress, and need for special services in order to plan and implement curriculum and instruction (Morrison, 2006)
- **Testing:** Formal, systematic, and standardized procedures for gathering samples of students' behavior.
 - *"Test" and "Examination" will be used as synonyms*

Purposes of Assessment

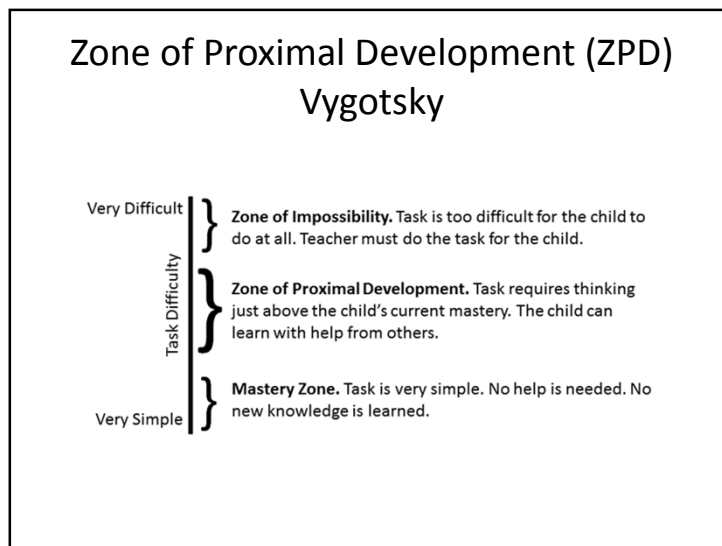
- **Assessment to inform instruction**
 - Teachers know what should and should not be taught
 - Share information about student growth, development, and performance with students, parents, teachers, and others
- **Assessment for diagnostic and selection purposes**
 - Make decisions about placement, promotion/retention, and graduation
 - **Selection:** Identify students prepared for a particular curriculum/educational intervention
 - **Diagnosis:** Identify special learning needs
- **Assessment for accountability and program evaluation**
 - Information about the quality of a school and specific educational programs

Purposes of Assessment

(Morrison, 2006, p. 157)

Children	Families	Early Childhood Programs	Early Childhood Teachers	Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify what children know •Identify children's special needs •Determine appropriate placement •Refer children and/or families for additional services to agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Communicate with parents to provide information about their child's progress and learning •Relate school activities to home activities and experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Make policy decisions regarding what is and is not appropriate for children •Determine how well programs and services children receive are beneficial and appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify children's skills, abilities, and needs •Make lesson plans •Select materials •Report to parents and families about children's developmental status and achievement •Monitor and improve the teaching-learning process •Group for instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Provide a basis for public policy (e.g., legislation, recommendations, and statements) •Provide info relating to school-wide achievements

- ### Instruction and Assessment
- When properly done, assessment not only *evaluates* but also *enhances* students' learning and teachers' instruction
 - Teacher instruction, student learning, and assessment are continuously inter-related activities
 - Assessment of children's growth and development is essential for effective teaching and learning
 - What is taught and how it is taught requires teachers to make choices
 - The foundation for these choices should be based on assessment of children's current skills and aptitude for future learning
 - **ZPD:** Range of tasks that an individual can not do alone but can accomplish when assisted by a more skilled partner



- ### Instruction and Assessment
- Learning is a process of building new understandings on the foundation of existing knowledge and skills
 - Therefore, learning will be most effective when built on what children already know and can do
 - Teachers should understand a child's zone of proximal development – the area where learning is within reach but takes the child just beyond his or her current skills
 - *Example: Walking across a balance beam*
 - Role of assessment is to provide insight into educational experiences that will be most effective in helping children learn and grow beyond where they currently are

Criteria for Good Assessments (NAEYC, 2003)

- Developmentally appropriate
- Culturally and linguistically relevant
- Tied to children's daily activities
- Based on best practices of assessment procedures
- Includes families both in the assessment process and sharing results
- Connected to specific beneficial purposes:
 - Foundation for decisions about teaching and learning
 - Identify concerns that require intervention for individual children
 - Help schools/programs improve their quality of education

Criteria of Good Assessment

- Assessment must be intentional (purposeful) and systematic
- Assessments should be based on objectives for instruction
- Assessments should have reasonable reliability and validity evidence

Principles of Assessment

- Assessment is an ongoing process
- Assessment uses information from multiple sources collected over time
- Tests, while an important tool in assessment, are only one of many options needed for acquiring information about the child's knowledge and skills

Principles of Assessment

- Children demonstrate their knowledge or skills through active engagement in classroom activities, which can then be assessed by informal assessments
- Teachers assess children by observing and documenting children's skills and knowledge as they participate in classroom activities
- Assessment is of limited value in the absence of instruction or intervention
 - The meaning of an assessment is closely tied to its utility - its contributions to decision making about intervention or its confirmation of a child's progress in an intervention

What Should Be Assessed

- For some purposes of assessment, children's previously developed skills and abilities should be assessed
- For other purposes of assessment, children's readiness to benefit from educational programs should be assessed

Domains of Development

- **Cognitive skills:** Thinking skills and knowledge
- **Social skills:** Interactions with others
- **Emotional skills :** Understanding and regulating feelings
- **Self-regulation skills:** Ability to plan, guide, and monitor own behavior
- **Physical skills**
- *Early Childhood Education should seek to nurture development in all domains*

Developed Skills

(US Department of Health and Human Services, 2015)

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Cognition (Mathematical Thinking and Scientific Reasoning)
- Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

Readiness to Learn

- Receptivity to learning
 - Physically healthy, rested, nourished
 - Enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities
 - Able to communicate needs, wants, and thoughts verbally in their primary language
- Teachers' beliefs about a child's readiness to enter school:
 - Takes turns and shares
 - Not disruptive of class
 - Sensitive to other children's feelings
 - Can follow directions

Types of Assessments

- Formative vs. Summative Assessment
 - **Formative:** Evaluation before or during instruction to provide feedback to teacher/student
 - **Summative:** Evaluation after instruction for grading

Formative vs. Summative Assessment

- A pre-test for teachers to determine what letters a child knows
- A comprehensive exam in child development
- The WAEC
- During teaching practice, daily feedback from a supervising teacher
- A teacher's questions at the end of a lesson to determine whether students have grasped the main idea
- End of term examinations
- This slide...

Types of Assessments

- Formal vs. Informal Assessment
 - **Formal:** Pre-developed tests related to specific developmental skills or curriculum content
 - **Informal:** Assessment of child development and learning that are ongoing, in many contexts, usually designed and carried out by the classroom teacher

Formal vs. Informal Assessment

- WAEC
- Asking children questions during a lesson to test understanding
- Observing children's faces to see if they demonstrate understanding
- Common Entrance Exam

Types of Assessments

- Objective vs. Subjective Assessment
 - **Objective Assessment:** Scoring does not require interpretation
 - **Subjective Assessment:** Examiner must make a personal judgment about the quality of work

Objective vs. Subjective Assessments

- Essay questions
- Multiple choice items
- True/False Items
- Observation of behavior
- Fill-in-the-blank
- Student answers to questions
- Matching items

Ethics of Assessment

- **Confidentiality:** Identities and results are revealed only to the intended audience and all information will be discussed only in professional settings.
- **Consent:** Individuals (or parents, in the case of children) have given their permission to be evaluated and/or assessed

Ethics of Assessment

- Only 1 assessment should NOT be used as the basis for significant decisions
 - Use multiple assessment tools for major educational decisions: interviews, anecdotal records, daily performance samples, standardized testing
 - “One measure...cannot be the sole source for evaluating a student’s progress” (Enz & Morrow, 2009, p. 8)
- No test score should be considered infallible or immutable (perfect or unchangeable).
- Educators should consider the consequences of an assessment and ensure that the assessment will be educationally beneficial

Ethics of Formal Assessment of Young Children

- Assessment should benefit the child
- Assessment should have a specific purpose
- Formal assessments should have reliability and validity evidence
- Assessments should be age-appropriate in the content and method of assessment
- Assessment should be linguistically appropriate

Challenges in Assessing Young Children

- Children's attention and self-regulation abilities to be purposeful are only beginning to develop
 - Young children can have difficulty attending to verbal instructions
 - Children may not understand the importance of the assessment
 - Children's language abilities may not allow them to communicate what they know
 - Children may not be able to report how they are feeling or thinking

Challenges in Assessing Young Children

- The younger the child, the more difficult it is to obtain valid test results
 - Performance on a test can be affected by the child's physical condition, emotional state, and conditions of assessment