

Students Assessment in Kindergarten

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ABSTRACT

Assessment system is an important part of kindergarten education. Over the past decade, the development of kindergarten education has led to its assessment system reform. Children academic performance, as a central issue concerned by parents and kindergartens in nowadays society, has widen current students assessment system in kindergartens. Based on relevant theories, this study proposes that playing, as a form of students assessment, is an effective way to adjust the current situation of kindergarten education. It can help teachers to assess students academic performance and cognitive development, keep students make progress, and provide meaningful reference for the reform of kindergarten assessment system. Therefore, students assessment system is worth exploring and optimizing by kindergarten teachers and related educators in future studies.

Keywords: *students assessment system, children academic performance, playing, kindergarten, parents, teachers*

1.BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Since the development of the accountability initiatives, kindergarten has increased academic requirement in students assessment [1] [2] [3]. The fact that educators and parents have to admit is that students are expected to gain higher and more academic outcomes when they enter into the first grade of primary school and such expectation increases dramatically [4] [5] [6]. Recently, this issue in the field of early childhood education has also attracted widespread concern.

With the advent of the information age and the increasingly fierce social competition, people pay more and more attention to education. Many parents believe that knowledge is the main factor to improve children's comprehensive quality and future social competitiveness. In public education, the threat of miseducation is now great for most young children, that is, the teaching purpose for 'superkid' [7], as parents do not want their children lag behind others at the starting line. Parents ask kindergartens to pay more attention to their children's academic development and hope they can learn massive academic knowledge in advance. Through the analysis of children's mental and cognitive development, the author believes that parents' high expectations for kindergarten education are developing in the wrong direction, i.e., children academic performance assessment should be in accordance with their developmental traits.

Kindergartens and teachers are trying to balance the previous developmental curriculum with the current academic curriculum [5]. In addition, the traditional kindergarten evaluation system has also made some changes to adapt to this status quo and also faces many challenges [8] [9]. Kindergarten education has always been focused on children's overall development, such as independence skill, social skill and communication skill [10], but now, the assessment of kindergartens has been expanded to include a rigorous focus on academic learning standard [11]. To cope with the pressure of academic requirements, teachers have to change their teaching strategies, but this has allowed kindergarten teaching to develop into teacher-centred and evaluation-oriented teaching rather than student-centred teaching [12].

The present students assessment system of kindergartens is not perfect enough to provide teachers with detailed reference. In addition, the lack of teacher's professionalism has led to inaccurate assessment on children's academic performance in most kindergartens.

In order to promote curriculum improvement in kindergartens, the reform of students assessment system is essential. This can not only solve the problem of academic pressure faced by kindergartens, but also provide valuable suggestions for the reform of the kindergarten evaluation system in more regions. Based on this, this study proposes to use 'playing' activity to

assess children's academic performance in kindergarten.

2. IMPLICATION ON STUDENTS ASSESSMENT IN KINDERGARTEN

Playing can be designed as a measure of competence and as a guide in determining teaching objectives [13]. Pellegrini and Smith define play as "an activity that has no direct purpose" (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998, cited in Pellegrini, 2001) [14]. But this is conflict with the purposeful assessment-oriented activities [14]. That is to say, the students assessment system should be established on the developmental traits of students.

Beginning in kindergarten, teachers are required to monitor students and ensure that they have achieved the desired learning goal. For young children, playing is considered to be an appropriate and meaningful assessment content, which has an irreplaceable role for assessing children retardation and special education needs [15].

Each child loves to play, and children can gain a lot from playing. It can not only promote the output and mastery of academic knowledge, but also stimulate children's various skills [16]. People imagine playing in different ways. Some people think about playing with toys, others think about playing with good friends. There is no specific definition of playing. According to the research of Klein, Wirth and Linas [17], they believe that playing is related to our positive emotions, active participation, and intrinsic motivation. Piaget proposed cognitive developmental theory and divided children's cognitive development into four stages: sensorimotor stage (birth to 2 years old), preoperational stage (2 to 7 years old), concrete operational stage (7 to 12 years old), and formal operational stage (12 years old to adulthood). In line with this, Piaget and Inhelder further indicated that playing also contained four stages: practice play or functional play, symbolic play, games with rules and games with construction [18]. In the process of playing, children begin to learn to use some simple symbols, which is very important for children's thinking and logic development in the future [19]. Piaget also found that when children play together, conflict and communication are inevitable that promote the development of moral judgment and interpersonal skills [20].

According to Vygotsky, children will create a zone of proximal development for themselves while playing [21]. They show their strong motivation to interact with others. Vygotsky thinks that this motivation is from children's pursuit of pleasure. When children are motivated, they are able to achieve higher goals and make more progress, this process is viewed as zone of proximal development. Above all, Piaget and Vygotsky both believe that children can develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills through games. Children view game as a fun and worthwhile activity and are would like to show their

effort when they are playing, so that teachers can easily assess their academic performance.

Playing as a form of academic assessment in which children can also practice knowledge in mimic real-life scenarios. Children will feel relaxed in this environment, without any external pressure imposed on them. Since playing is a child-centred situation, it is easy to establish support when teacher and children are playing together. There is no need for teachers to follow a prescribed order or script.

In order to assess the right skills for each student, teachers can change the scenarios and cues when students are playing. For example, while assessing language learning, children need to engage in diverse meaningful conversations and try new vocabularies in their play time. Improving language through play is one of the goals of literacy. Play allows students to use the target language in a safe and comfortable environment. It is discovered that children always show their higher levels of language and cognitive skills while interacting with friends [22]. Therefore, language is best to acquired in play. Each child can be assessed by playing. This form of assessment not only can achieve the assessment goal but also can guide students to make progress. Moreover, it is also a feasible way which can both reduce children's learning pressure and motive their learning interests.

For the future students assessment direction of the kindergarten, it should both contain academic and other aspects of development assessment. Formative assessment is more suitable for kindergarten assessment. Especially through playing activity, teachers can observe children and record their relevant academic achievements, such as literacy, number and letter recognition, as they interact with others, teachers and classroom materials. Critical thinking, attention and interpersonal skills can also be observed during this process. This is an assessment that provides more accurate information about a student's achievement and cognitive ability.

3. CONCLUSION

In early childhood, learning is interwind with playing. Based on previous discussion, this study suggests that popularize playing as a form of academic assessment in current kindergarten education is crucial. It can not only benefit children's social skill, but also improve their emotion and academic development. However, one of the drawbacks of applying this assessment only is that not all children are able to perform their highest level of ability. In other words, during playing activities, some students can be assessed by observation; others need teachers to ask questions. Therefore, formal academic assessments should also be taken into account. In order to reach the best effect of the evaluation system, it is necessary to combine with other assessment methods.

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