

Preschool teachers' knowledge of Authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State

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Abstract: *Authentic assessment is the idea of using creative learning experiences to test students' skills and knowledge in realistic situations. Authentic assessment measures pupils' success in a way that is relevant to the skills required of them. It has been observed that preschool teachers do not have knowledge of authentic assessment which make them result to use of test as a medium of assessing pupils' performance in schools. Unknown to them, test could only measure the cognitive development of pupils leaving other developmental domains. A series of research has been conducted to solve this problem using different variables, but the problem still persists. However, none of the study has looked at the preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West local Government Area of Kwara State which is the research gap this study aims to fill. Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of this study comprised all pre-school teacher in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. This study used simple random sampling technique to select 10% of the total population of preschools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State i.e. 30 preschools were used for this study in which 3 teachers were selected in each sampled school. Data collected for this study was subjected to appropriate statistical analysis using the descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean for demographic data, inferential statistics of t-test and analysis of variance was used to test all the hypotheses and research question. The significance level for testing hypotheses was 0.05. The findings of the study revealed that academic qualification and preschool teachers' specialization all have significant differences in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment. Considering the findings and the conclusions drawn in this study. It was recommended that; Teachers should have more knowledge of authentic assessment in order to build relationship with children and pay attention to them. Teacher's seminars on authentic assessment in teaching and learning should be intensified by both state and federal government to make them comply with teaching and learning process.*

Keywords: Teachers, Preschool, Knowledge, authentic assessment

Introduction

Educational assessment is an essential component of the teaching profession. It relates to the method the teacher use in the classroom to obtain information about pupils' performances on assessment tasks, either as a group or individually, using a variety of assessment methods, to determine the extent to which pupils are achieving the target instructional outcomes. In this regard, it is suggested that a sound educational assessment requires a clear conception of all intended learning outcomes of the instruction and a variety of assessment procedures that are relevant to the instruction, adequate to sample pupils' performance, and fair to everyone. A vital instrument for strengthening educational systems is educational assessment (Koh, 2011). Yet, its effectiveness depends on teachers' attitudes, competence, knowledge, and practices due to the continual interaction between these dimensions (Calderhead, 2016).

Using imaginative learning experiences to evaluate students' abilities and knowledge in practical contexts is known as authentic assessment. With authentic assessment, students' success is evaluated in a way that is pertinent to the skills that are expected of them. An authentic assessment is one that requires pupils to apply what they have learnt in a new, complex circumstance or situation. This typically occurs in one of two forms: realistic assessments, which are relevant in nature but require students to engage in situations that mimic the real world, or real-world assessments, which demand students to engage in actual situations in their field. Regardless of the kind, opportunities for practice and/or rehearsal are frequently included in authentic assessment. Throughout a course, authentic assessments frequently serve as a scaffold and give the teacher the opportunity to offer feedback that the students can then use in later drafts. Contrary to conventional assessments (such as essays and multiple-choice exams), authentic assessments require students to participate in complex, real-world, and occasionally messy scenarios or practices (Broadfoot, 2012).

Genuine evaluation has a remarkable capacity to have a lasting effect on both the courses and the students enrolled in them. By giving students the chance to put their skills to the test in novel and applicable circumstances, it helps them get ready for how they will be evaluated in the workplace and demonstrates the relevance of the course material outside of the classroom. An authentic assessment is one that asks students to apply what they have learned to a brand-new situation or circumstance, usually one that corresponds to what would be expected of them in that discipline or field. When creating an authentic assessment for your class, keep in mind that both the students and the facilitator will likely need more time (Chase 2013).

Authentic assessments should always align with the course's learning objectives. In most cases, this will provide an idea of what actions pupils should be able to perform (Chase 2013). When parents register their children in preschool or kindergarten, they

highly hope that their children will be safe, obtain the best education that will stimulate individual growth and development, as well as portray positive high morale and readiness for transition to school. Transforming these into reality requires well-designed early childhood programs in order to enhance child learning and developmental outcomes. However, the questions raised are: how would we know if they are developing well and learning what we want them to learn? Is the program serving children in the preschool years through transition to year one in primary school reflecting satisfactory? How and for what reasons is assessment actually conducted in early childhood programs? According to Hills (2013), assessment should include “procedures that address all domains of learning and development -- social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive, as well as children’s feelings and dispositions toward learning”. Good assessment measures authentic performance, rather than simply testing for isolated skills. Appropriate assessments seek to determine children’s strengths and capabilities, rather than focusing exclusively on revealing their weaknesses or what they do not yet know. Developmentally appropriate assessments include procedures that allow and encourage children to reflect and evaluate their own learning (Hills 2013).

Some subject areas have traditionally required students to create goods or complete practical tasks in order to show proficiency. In many academic fields, students' mastery of different learning objectives does not always translate into a display of their abilities in real-world situations. As a result, evaluating mastery should not be mistaken for evaluating learning in real-world circumstances. Moreover, any technique used to evaluate pupils' mastery of narrowly specified capabilities, does not preclude using methods designed to more comprehensively assess complex capabilities, but not to a mastery level. It's important to keep in mind that assessments often involve a determination of whether the necessary level of achievement has been attained based on evidence found in samples of student performances. Obviously, this concerns subjects in the curriculum that aren't being tested. (Badders, 2010).

Authentic assessment does not indicate complete knowledge of the subject, but both factors may be improved by a well-designed, authentic assessment. In recent times, authentic assessment has been discussed in relation to broadening assessment practices across all disciplines in higher education and aligning them more closely with expected learning outcomes (Koh, 2011). Pope (2009) stated that teachers' professional development in educational settings should include instruction on assessment ethics. Authentic assessment is a Genuine evaluation is an useful tactic for for early childhood educators to analyze information gathered during everyday classroom activities and routines in order to understand each unique child’s development. Teachers gain valuable knowledge about every student and the class as a whole when they consistently and thoroughly reflect on observation notes, photographs, artistic creations, emergent writing, and dictations. With this knowledge, educators may design experiences and activities that cater to kids' interests and needs. In addition to receiving valuable information from each family, teachers can communicate with them on how each kid is developing. The ability to lessen implicit or inadvertent biases makes authentic assessment even more effective. Implicit biases are automatic, subliminal methods through which we interpret the world and make behavior predictions. In particular, unconscious biases might impact teachers' expectations and interactions with the young students in their classrooms.

Different factors can be responsible for the teachers lack of knowledge with respect to authentic assessment among these factors are school type and specialization. The specialization of the teacher is what defines the teacher professional skill because of varying field of study in education, a teacher who is an expert of early childhood might have knowledge of authentic assessment as it is part of the content, and they have been exposed to during the training period. In our preschool today most of the teachers employed are not specialist in early childhood but because of the fact that they did education related courses, employers in schools assume they are qualified to work in their establishments. Teachers from early childhood fields of study have been exposed to the content of authentic assessment and have knowledge about it un like teachers from other field of study in education.

Ojala (2013) research findings revealed that there is a significant difference between the teacher specialization and knowledge of authentic assessment based on the report on the qualitative data collected. Also, Shepard (2011) research findings revealed that teacher’s knowledge of authentic assessment varies as some respondents of the study who do not specialize in early childhood are not familiar with the term authentic assessment while some that specialize early childhood are familiar with authentic assessment. Another factor that could be responsible for the lack of knowledge with respect to authentic assessment is the type of school the teacher is working which could be a private or public school.

Falk (2011) research findings revealed that teachers working in private schools have higher knowledge of authentic assessment than teachers in public schools. Different research has revealed different findings, which has led to different controversy on the issue of teachers’ knowledge of authentic assessment so this present study also wants to find out if school, gender, and teacher specialization affects the teachers knowledge of authentic assessment as claimed by previous findings so as to contribute to literature on the issue of teachers’ knowledge of authentic assessment.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers can foster an environment where students feel more at ease discussing their knowledge and interacting with other students by using authentic assessment. Since authentic assessment places more emphasis on the real learning process than just checking off material learned from textbooks, teachers and students can achieve better results than they would with typical standardized testing.

Most preschool teachers' knowledge authentic evaluation is notis not encouraging and not yet to understand the current way the assessment records should be kept. Teacher over dependent on measuring student progress in the cognitive domain in a school-based instrument with total neglect of affective and psychomotor domain of learning which has become a source of worrying to the researcher. It has been observed that preschool teachers does not have knowledge of authentic assessment which make them to result to use of test as medium of assessing pupils' performance in schools unknown to them that test only could measure the cognitive development of pupils leaving other developmental domains as series of research has been conducted to solve this problem using different variables but the problem still persists. However, none of the study has looked at the preschool teacher's knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West local Government Area of Kwara State which is the research gap this study aims to fill.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin west local government area of Kwara state?

Research Hypotheses

- 1 There is no significance difference in preschool teacher's knowledge of Authentic Assessment in Ilorin west local government area of Kwara state based on specialization.
- 2 There is no significance difference in preschool teacher knowledge of Authentic Assessment in Ilorin west local government area of Kwara state based on school type.

Methodology

This study employed a straightforward random sampling technique to choose 30 preschools, or 10% of the total number of preschools in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. Three teachers were chosen for each sampled school. In order to examine all of the hypotheses and the research question, the data obtained for this study was subjected to the appropriate statistical analysis, employing the descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, and mean for demographic data. At a significance threshold of 0.05, each hypothesis was tested.

Results

Research Question 1: what is the level of preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State.

Table 1: Table showing the proportions and the standard deviation of the level of preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State

S/N	ITEMS	Yes	No	Mean
1	Authentic assessment is a performance-based assessment	77(85.6)	13(14.4)	1.9
2	Authentic assessment requires children to demonstrate what they know	69(76.7)	21(23.3)	1.8
3	Authentic assessment is the evaluation of children actual learning and the instructional activities in which they are involved	72(80.0)	18(20.0)	1.8
4	Authentic assessment is ongoing assessment over the entire school years	69(76.7)	21(23.3)	1.8
5	Authentic assessment is not a cooperative process, it does not involve children, teachers, parents and other professionals	70(77.8)	20(22.2)	1.8
6	Authentic assessment encourages children to show to show what they through presentations and participation	68(75.6)	22(24.2)	1.8
7	Portfolio, rating scale, observation etc, are tools used by the teacher for authentic assessment	75(83.3)	15(16.7)	1.7
8	Authentic assessment relies heavily on informal assessment	71(78.9)	19(21.2)	1.6
9	Authentic assessment involves the use of standardized test	69(76.7)	21(23.3)	1.7
10	Authentic assessment takes into account children's cultural, language and other	67(74.4)	23(25.6)	1.8

 Weighted mean 1.77

Note: The figures in parentheses are in percentages

Table 1 showed the level of preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. The following are preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment as follows: Authentic assessment is a performance-based assessment (1.9) Authentic assessment requires children to demonstrate what they know (1.8), Authentic assessment is the evaluation of children actual learning and the instructional activities in which they are involved (1.8), Authentic assessment is ongoing assessment over the entire school years (1.8), Authentic assessment is not a cooperative process, it does not involve children, teachers, parents and other professionals (1.8), Authentic assessment encourages children to show to show what they through presentations and participation (1.8) Portfolio, rating scale, observation etc, are tools used by the teacher for authentic assessment (1.7), Authentic assessment relies heavily on informal assessment (1.6), Authentic assessment involves the use of standardized test (1.7), Authentic assessment takes into account children's cultural, language and other (1.8). The weighted mean was 1.77, which mean that calculated mean was greater than fixed mean (1.5). This implies that the level of preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State is high

Ho1: there is no significant difference in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on specialization

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on specialization

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between Groups	413.881	1	413.881	84.851	.000
Within Groups	429.241	88	4.878		
Total	843.122	89			

Table 2 showed the summary of ANOVA on preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on specialization. There was significant difference on the preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on specialization ($F_{(1,88)} = 84.851$; $P < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis that state that there is no significant difference on the preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on specialization was rejected. This implies that there was significant difference on the preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on specialization.

Ho2: there is no significant difference in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on school types

Table 3: Summary of t.test result showing difference in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on school types

	School types	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	F	df	Sig	Decision
Authentic assessment	Public	21	13.52	2.48	-11.72	12.216	88	.001	Not Sig
	Private	69	19.17	1.74					

Table 3 showed the summary of t.test showing difference in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on school types. It was revealed that public schools had mean score 13.52 and standard deviation 2.48 while private schools had mean score 19.17 and standard deviation 1.74, the t was -11.72, degree of freedom 88, F was 12.216 and significant level of .001 ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there was no significant difference in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on school types was rejected. This implies that there was significant difference in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State based on school types

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that teachers are well knowledgeable with authentic assessment of children learning. This figure indicates that they were interested in supporting their learners. This works together with the reports of Maria & Jorge in Spain found out that robust evidence of the positive impact of authentic assessment on all indices of academic outcomes considered. In addition, the results of test revealed that authentic assessment improved students' satisfaction and was perceived by students as a procedure that promotes deeper learning.

Based on specialization, the study's findings indicated that there were significant differences in pre-school teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Kwara State's Ilorin West Local Government Area. It is clear that respondents with specializations other than ECP/PES were found to be more numerous than other respondents.

In the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, the null hypothesis claimed that there was no significant difference in pre-school teachers' understanding of authentic assessment based on school type. It was rejected in the sense that, private school respondents were found more in number than public school respondents.

Conclusions

The study shed light on the pre-school teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment. The study's conclusions showed that preschool teachers' academic qualification and specialization all have a significant difference in preschool teachers' knowledge of authentic assessment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should have more knowledge on authentic assessment in order to build relationship with children and pay attention to them.
2. Teacher's seminars on authentic assessment in teaching and learning should be intensified by both state and federal government to make them comply with teaching and learning process.
3. Policy makers should revisit guidelines and standard of assessment so as to come out with best of international practice.
4. The school owner/head teacher should provide a basis to encourage teacher and also organize training for teachers on authentic assessment
5. Ministries and other concerned agencies should set workshop and other educational forum to equip both service and pre service primary school teachers.

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