



The Effectiveness of a Training Program in Early Childhood Developmental Observation Skills for Kindergarten Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of an early childhood developmental observation skills training program for kindergarten teachers at RA-X. The program was developed in response to preliminary findings indicating that teachers experienced difficulties in conducting systematic, objective, and developmentally appropriate observations of young children. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions. The intervention consisted of a two-day training program covering observation techniques for physical, cognitive, language, and socio-emotional development using simple and practical instruments. The results demonstrated significant improvements in teachers' understanding of developmental indicators and their confidence in documenting children's progress. These findings highlight the importance of structured training programs in supporting accurate developmental assessment and effective communication with parents. Implications for educational practice and future program development are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Observation of early childhood development is a fundamental component of effective teaching and learning in early childhood education settings. Through systematic observation, teachers are able to identify children's actual developmental levels, evaluate the appropriateness of learning stimulation, and compile informative progress reports for parents. Accurate observation enables educators to design learning experiences that are responsive to children's individual needs and developmental characteristics.

However, in practice, many teachers experience difficulties in conducting objective and systematic observations. Limited understanding of developmental theories and a lack of standardized observation instruments often lead teachers to rely on memory or brief, unsystematic notes. As a result, developmental records tend to be incomplete and less informative, reducing their usefulness for educational planning and parent communication.

These challenges were also identified at RA-X, an early childhood education institution that aims to develop children with strong character and competence. Preliminary assessments revealed that teachers faced constraints in observing children's development due to limited knowledge and practical observation skills. Developmental documentation was generally based on recall rather than systematic recording, leading to generalized progress reports that did not fully reflect children's developmental profiles. Parents expressed similar concerns, noting that the reports they received lacked detailed and meaningful information.

This situation underscores the need for structured training programs that enhance teachers' observation skills. Such training should not only introduce developmental indicators but also provide practical guidance on the use of simple, objective, and applicable observation instruments. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effectiveness of an early childhood developmental observation skills training program for RA-X teachers and to contribute to the improvement of assessment practices in early childhood education settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Childhood Development

Early childhood development encompasses physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and language domains. According to Piaget, children aged 2-7 years are in the preoperational stage, which is characterized by symbolic thinking, intuitive reasoning, and reliance on concrete experiences. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), highlighting the role of adult guidance and scaffolding in optimizing children's developmental potential. Erikson further explained that children in the initiative versus guilt stage require emotional support to explore their environment confidently without excessive fear of making mistakes.

Developmental Observation

Observation is a systematic process used to examine children's behavior in natural contexts. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) emphasizes that observation should be conducted continuously and utilize various methods, including anecdotal records, checklists, and portfolios, to ensure comprehensive and accurate developmental assessment.

Teacher Training

Training is a systematic process designed to enhance knowledge and skills through methods such as lectures, simulations, role-playing, case studies, and group discussions (Noe, 2013). Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model explains that training effectiveness can be assessed through improvements in participants' knowledge, skills, workplace behavior, and overall outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-intervention design with a pre-post evaluation approach to measure the effectiveness of the training program. The intervention focused on improving teachers' skills in observing and documenting early childhood development using structured and practical observation instruments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Initial Observation Results

Prior to the intervention, teachers did not conduct systematic observations. Developmental records were general in nature (e.g., "active child" or "quiet child") and did not describe specific developmental aspects. There were no standardized observation instruments, and classroom dynamics often made systematic observation difficult.

2. Interview Results

- Teachers reported low confidence in conducting developmental observations.
- Parents indicated that children's progress reports were overly general and lacked detailed descriptions.
- The school principal stated that the institution did not yet have a standardized observation system

3. FGD Results

Teachers expressed the need for simple observation instruments, practical training sessions, and clear developmental indicator guidelines to support daily observation activities.

4. Training Results

- Post-test results showed a substantial increase compared to pre-test scores.
- Teachers demonstrated improved ability to complete checklists and anecdotal records accurately and reported greater understanding of early childhood developmental indicators.

- Participant evaluations indicated that the training was highly beneficial, with high satisfaction and relevance scores.

Table 1. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Scale	Z	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	p	Information
Observation	-3.18b	34.85	68.00	0.001	Significant

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test results indicate a significant improvement in participants' observation skills following the training program. The pre-test mean score of 34.85 reflects a low level of understanding prior to the intervention. The obtained Z value of -3.18 with a significance level of $p = 0.001$ indicates that the observed changes were statistically significant and not due to chance.

After the training, the post-test mean score increased markedly to 68.00, nearly doubling the pre-test average. This improvement demonstrates the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing teachers' understanding and skills related to early childhood developmental observation, including the identification of physical, cognitive, language, and socio-emotional indicators. These findings support the conclusion that the observation skills training had a significant and positive impact on the professional competence of RA-X teachers.

The results align with Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes that effective learning occurs through scaffolding. In this context, the training functioned as scaffolding by gradually supporting teachers in developing observation competencies. Improved pre-post test scores indicate that the training successfully enhanced teachers' conceptual understanding and practical skills.

Teachers also reported increased confidence in documenting children's behavior objectively, while the availability of standardized instruments facilitated more accurate and consistent developmental records. These improvements contribute to the preparation of meaningful progress reports for parents.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The early childhood developmental observation skills training program was proven effective in improving the ability of RA-X teachers to conduct systematic and objective observations. Teachers gained new knowledge, successfully utilized observation instruments, and demonstrated increased confidence in preparing child development reports.

It is recommended that schools consistently implement standardized observation instruments each semester. Ongoing mentoring is also necessary to ensure that teachers' observation skills are maintained and further developed. Additionally, children's progress reports should be provided to parents on a regular basis, such as monthly. Similar training programs may be expanded to cover other assessment aspects in early childhood education.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research may examine the effectiveness of similar training programs on a larger scale, extend the duration of the intervention, or compare different training delivery methods, such as online and face-to-face formats. Further studies could also explore the impact of systematic observation on improving classroom learning quality.

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