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Full Length Research Paper

**Teachers' Knowledge and Practice of Child Learning Assessment in Private and Public Pre- Schools. The Case of Shashemene City Administration, Oromia Region**

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**Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' knowledge and practice of child learning assessment in Shashemene city administration. In this study, a parallel convergent mixed research design was employed. A total of 10 private and 6 public pre-schools were involved in the study. In particular, a total of 117 samples, including 97 teachers, 16 school principals, and 4 cluster supervisors were recruited for data collection using questionnaires and interviews. In addition, focus group discussions, with a total of 24 participants were conducted among the key stakeholders of the pre-schools. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage, frequency, mean and independent t-test). Qualitative data were analyzed using a narrative and thematic description. The result shows that teachers do not have adequate knowledge and practice of child learning assessment and implementing different assessment techniques. The result also indicates that challenges such as a high ratio of children to teachers, lack of learning resources, and lack of proper supervision affect child learning assessment in the selected pre-schools. Therefore, better training for teachers, better management follow-up, parents' active participation in following up their children's results, equipping their children with proper knowledge, facilitating good and effective assessment practice in early childhood care and education need to be considered.*



## Introduction

Child assessment plays an important role in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Effective child assessment can provide baseline data on the knowledge, understanding, and skills of children. This, in turn, is used to develop curricula that strengthen competencies and provide appropriate experiences to support the learning and development of children.

Therefore, child assessment should constitute an integral part of educational programs. When we look back to the concern and attention given to early childhood education and care, there has been little work done in Ethiopia. The 1994 Education and Training Policy states that preprimary education helps children to get ready for primary school. The program takes three years and gives children to express their feelings, investigate their environment, and learning numbers. This policy put forward the need for a holistic child assessment approach at an early age as "kindergarten" focuses on the inclusive development of the child, especially in preparation for formal schooling (MoE, 2010). It is critical that assessment is a learning process and a vital growing component of high-quality early childhood learning programs. Therefore, it is very important to review if its practices are helping and facilitating teaching and learning.

However, there are few studies that were conducted in relation to teachers' knowledge and practice of child learning assessment in Ethiopia. For instance, Firehiwot (2016) conducted the same research and she reported that the statistical profile of preschool teachers shows that about 15.3% of the teachers in Addis Ababa alone were not trained for preschool education. Hence, to the researchers'

In addition, information obtained from child assessment can contribute to making decisions about issues such as identifying children with special needs during intervention programs and moving children's between levels as well as communicating with parents, administrators, legislators, interested parties in the community, and other professionals (Kwi-Ok Nah, 2011).

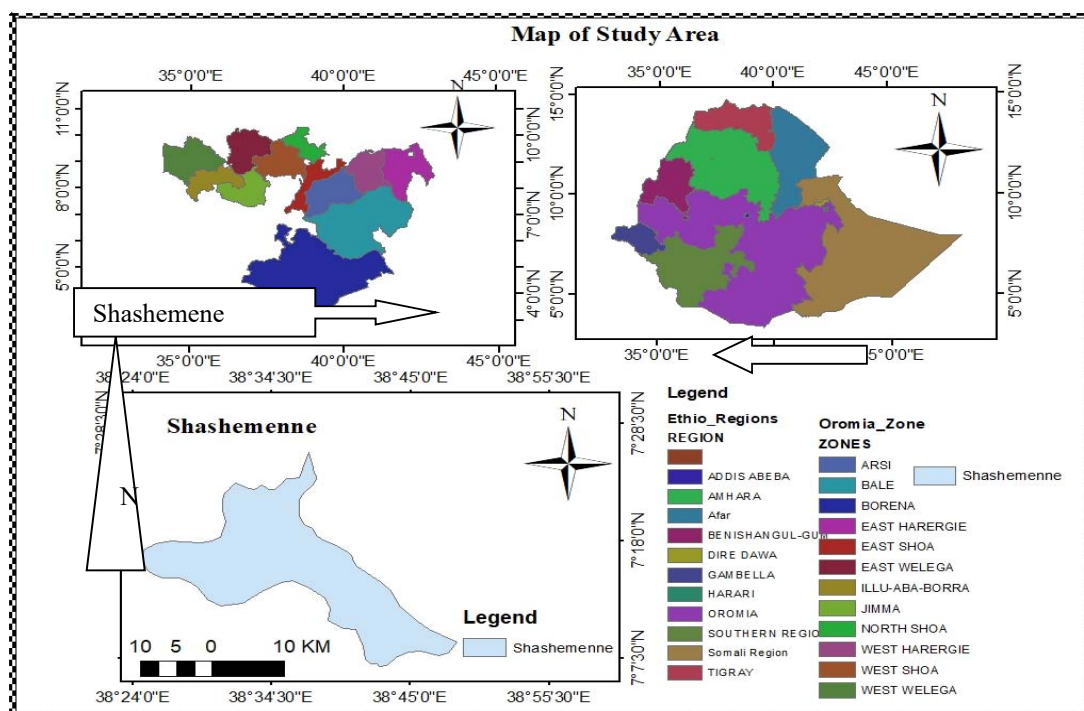
knowledge, there is no scientific study regarding investigating teachers' knowledge, and practices of child learning assessment, particularly in Shashemene city administration. The finding of this study helps as a baseline for concerned bodies to focus on the importance of teachers' knowledge and practice of child learning assessment for preschools and improve the quality of early childhood education. Accordingly, the following basic research questions were formulated.

1. What is the level of teachers' knowledge and practice of child learning assessment in pre-schools?
2. What are the benefits of child learning assessment for young children learning?
3. What are the factors affecting teachers' child learning assessment in pre-school?

## Materials and Methods

### Study area description

This study was conducted in Shashemene city administration of Oromia regional state extending from 40<sup>0</sup>28 to 40<sup>0</sup>50 E longitude and 08<sup>0</sup>10 to 08<sup>0</sup>43 N latitude with an area of 768.88km<sup>2</sup>. Shashemane is located 250km south of Addis Ababa at the edge or escarpment of East African Rift Valley (figure 3.1) the location made the area adjacent to high land and low land having the agro-ecological zones Kolla (tropical), woinadega (subtropical), and Dega (high land).



**Figure1:** Location of the study area.

According to the 2007 report of CSA, the City has a total of 290,000 populations that lives in 8 sub-cities. According to the report of 2007 Shashemene City statistical center, the City is the center of business and also consists of different service giving institutions like Banks, Insurances, Colleges, Schools, and nationally communicating roads or gateways by which Addis Ababa, Wando, Arbaminch, Hawassa, and Bale are connecting each other which makes the city center of business.

#### Research approach and design

In this study, a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative), with the parallel convergent design was used to generate and analyze data obtained from diverse groups of respondents. The design is convenient in collecting extensive quantifiable data from a large sample of respondents within a short period.

#### Data sources

The primary data for this study was collected

from kindergarten teachers, supervisors, principals, and pre-primary education experts at city administration; whereas, the secondary data was obtained from documents like a worksheet, assessment type, lesson plan schedule, assessment checklist, children's portfolios, and teachers' portfolio.

#### Samples and sampling techniques

In this study, using a simple random sampling technique ten (10) private pre-primary namely: Lucy 03, Bright Head start, Biruh Edget Fana, Abune Teklehaimanot, catholic 04, Golden Bridge, Farma, Yawonta, Paradise Valley, and Lead Star were selected. Regarding sample sizes, using simple random sampling techniques, a total of 78 respondents were selected to give an equal chance of being selected in the study. By employing the purposive sampling technique, six (6) public pre-primary schools including Biherawi, Burka Bekumsa, Malka Esa, Burka Gudina, Birbirsakarata, and Edu Madda were also selected. With regard to the total samples of the

study, 97 kindergarten teachers, 4 supervisors, and 16 school Principals were selected, and as well as 1 city education expert was selected by employing the availability sampling technique because this respondent was the only option to be included in the study.

#### Data collection instruments

In this study, questionnaires, unstructured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis was used to collect the data. A questionnaire was selected in collecting the data because the numbers of respondents in the groups were large. Thus, a questionnaire is an appropriate instrument to collect large-scale quantitative data from large numbers of people (Creswell, 2007). Data collection in this study consisted of one questionnaire which was adopted by the researchers. On the other hand, an interview was employed to collect factual and detailed information from 3 public and 6 private preschools teachers, principals, and cluster supervisors. This was done using guided interview questions as this type of interview allows more flexibility and the new question can be forwarded based on the response of previous questions.

Focus Group Discussion is a special type of group interview (Johnson and Christensen, 2004), which was often used to triangulate information obtained by using other data collection instruments. The researcher led the discussions with 24 kindergarten teachers and principals dividing into 6 groups, each group contains 4 members of teachers. In addition, document analysis is the other essen-

tial data collecting tool in this study. Documents that are found in the preschools such as assessment type, lesson plan, schedule, assessment checklist, students' portfolio, and teachers' portfolio were reviewed to obtain deep information and data about the child learning assessment implementation in preschools.

#### Data Analysis Methods

According to Kothari, (2004), data analysis refers to the method by which the data collected through one or more data collecting instruments have been properly edited and then organized in the forms of tables and analyzed by applying various statistical tools. To analyze and interpret the collected data, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data analysis was employed. In this study, the response that was obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively using SPSS version 20. In particular descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation and an inferential statistical tool such as an independent *t*-test were used. On the other hand, data collected from an interview, focus group discussion, and document analysis was organized, summarized, and analyzed systematically using narrative and quotation approach that substantiates with quantitative analysis.

#### Results and Discussion

The major demographic characteristics of respondents were sex, age, education level, and work experiences.

**Table 1:** Background Information of the respondents

R.No	Variables	Administration		Teachers	
		No	%	No	%
1	Sex				
	Male	8	40	-	-
	Female	12	60	97	100
2	Age				
	Below 20	-	-	-	-
	21-30	6	30	40	41.2
	31-40	10	50	52	53.6
	Above 40	4	20	5	5.1
	Total	20	100	97	100
3	Work experience				
	<1 year				
	1--5 y ears	5	25	10	10.3
	6-10 years	9	45	53	54.6
	>10 years	6	30	34	35
	Total	20	100	97	100
4	Educational Level				
	Certificate	9	45	57	58.8
	Diploma	4	20	40	41.2
	Degree	7	35	-	-
	Total	20	100	97	100

Source: Field survey January, 2020

As indicated in Table 1 above, all teachers in the KGs under research were females. As Chowdhury and Chaudhry (2002), priority should be given to females to be trained as teachers in the kindergarten because they are naturally endowed with motherly care which is very important for the children at that level (Chowdhury and Chaudhury 2002: 145). On the other hand, 8(40%) principals were males while the remaining 12(60%) administrators and 97(100%) of the teachers were females.

The result showed that 40(41.2%) teachers and 6(30%) administrators were between the ages of 21-30 years. The other 52(53.6%) teachers and 10(50%) administrators were between 31-40 years. Thus the majority of the respondents were in this age group and the rest were very few 5(5.1%) teachers and 4(20%) administrators were in the age group of above 40 years. This revealed that most teachers and administrators lie in a very active and productive age which is required for

the task that is needed in early childhood education. This is because the amount of play-time and physical activity is much greater than the higher level. The teachers', as well as the principals' age, were found matured to understand the purpose of the study and respond appropriately.

Regarding the experience 10(10.3%) of teachers and 5(25%) of administration had work experience ranging between one and five years. Whereas, 53(54.6%) of teachers and 9(45%) of administration had work experience ranging between six and ten years. The other 34(35%) of teachers and 6(30%) of administrators had a work experience of above ten years. This shows even if the teachers are young, yet they have good experience to deliver the required child nurturing and development.

Concerning the teachers' qualifications, 57(58.8%) of teachers and 9(45%) administrators have a certificate in ECCE education.

This means the educational level of the participants is above the minimum standard of MOE which states that the minimum requirement of pre-school teachers' education level is 10 grades complete. 40(41.2%) teachers

and 4(20%) administration staffs have a diploma in other education. While 7(35) of administration staffs have B.A degree. This implies that half of the percentage of the teachers and administration staff were not trained in KG education training.

**Table 2:** Teachers' and principals' knowledge towards child learning assessment

No.	Items	Respondents	N	DA	U	A	Mean	SD	Sig
				%	%	%			
1	Teachers do know how, when, what, and why to assess	Teachers	97	55(56.7)	12(12.4)	30(30.9)	2.69	1.253	0.343
		Principals	20	15(75)	1(5)	4(20)	2.40	1.188	
		Total	117	70(59.8)	13(11.1)	34(29.1)	2.55	1.221	
2	Teachers know the applications of child assessment techniques for children learning	Teachers	97	80(82.5)	4(4.1)	13(13.4)	2.16	1.038	0.591
		Principals	20	17(85)	-	3(15)	2.30	0.923	
		Total	117	97(83)	4(3.4)	16(13.6)	2.23	0.981	
3	The teachers understand the area that is covered regarding the assessment of pre-school children.	Teachers	97	70(72.1)	3(3.1)	24(24.7)	2.45	1.155	0.201
		Principals	20	18(90)	-	2(10)	2.10	0.912	
		Total	117	88(75.2)	3(2.6)	26(22.2)	2.28	1.034	
4	The teachers know about the policies and guidelines in place regarding pre-school children assessment.	Teachers	97	75(77.3)	10(10.3)	12(12.4)	2.26	0.930	0.480
		Principals	20	18(90)	-	2(10)	2.10	0.718	
		Total	117	93(79.5)	10(8.5)	14(12)	2.18	0.824	
5	The teachers know how to communicate assessment results with parents		97	65(67)	5(5.2)	27(27.8)	2.53	1.316	0.384
		Principals	20	17(85)	-	3(15)	2.25	1.118	
		Total	117	82(70)	5(4.3)	30(25.7)	2.39	1.217	

**Source:** Field survey January 2020

Note: A= agree, U= undecided, DA= disagree and N= Population, and to analyze this data the researcher merged strongly agree and agree= "Agree", Disagree and strongly disagree = "Disagree".

Regarding item no 1 of Table (2) above, 55(56.7%) of teachers and the majority 15(75%) of principal respondents were not known how, when, what, and why to assess. The rest 13 (11.1%) and 34 (29.1%) of the total respondents rated undecided and agree respectively. The mean score of teachers and principals were 2.69 and 2.40 respectively. This shows that there was no significant dif-

ference in mean scores between teacher respondents and principal respondents (p-value> 0.05). This affirmed that teachers do not know how, when, what, and why to assess. To substantiate this finding during document analysis the researcher observed the teachers' educational background 40(41.2%) teachers and 4(20%) principals have a diploma in other education. While 7(35) of principals have B.A degree. This implies that half of the percentage of the teachers and principals were not trained in relating to early childhood education.

Concerning this, the knowledge and educational background relating to early childhood education is seen to greatly contribute to the ease of which assessment is understood and conducted, supporting what has been found in many other studies (Basford & Bath, 2014; Ridzwan & Mokhsein, 2017; Buldu, 2010; Chilvers, 2002; National Research Council, 2001; Payler, 2009).

Regarding item no 2 of Table 2, the respondents were asked the degree to which teachers know the applications of child assessment techniques for children learning. Accordingly, the majority 97(83%) of the respondents (teachers and principals) replied disagree. Whereas, only 4(3.4%) and 16(13.6%) of the respondents rated undecided and agree respectively. The average mean score for teacher ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 1.038$ ) and principals ( $M = 2.30$ ,  $SD = 0.923$ ). The variation in responses was also confirmed by the *t*-test ( $P\text{-value} > 0.05$ ) shows there is no statistical significance difference between the teacher and principal respondents. This confirmed that teachers do not know the applications of child assessment techniques for children learning.

It was further supported by one of the participants in FGD. She asserts that:

I apply different approaches to assess children learning through formal testing, quiz, and worksheet and ask a question because it is easy to identify the strength and weakness of children in academic achievement. (January, 2020).

In contrast to this finding, NAEYC (2009) and NAECS/SDE (2003: 10) state that often people think of child assessment as formal testing only, but the assessment has many components and many purposes. Child assessment methods include observation, documentation of children's work, checklists and

rating scales, and portfolios.

Regarding item no 3 of the same table above, respondents were asked the level of teachers' understanding of the area that is covered regarding pre-school children assessment. Accordingly, the majority 88(75.2%) of the respondents (teachers and principals) replied disagree. The rest 3(2.6%) and 26 (22.2%) of them rated undecided and agree respectively. The mean score of teachers and principals was 2.28 which is below the average. There was no significant difference between teachers and principals ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This confirmed that teachers do not understand the area that is covered regarding the assessment of pre-school children.

As can be seen from item no 4 of table 2 above, the respondents were asked to rate the degree to which the teachers know about the policies and guidelines in place regarding pre-school children assessment, and the majority 93(79.5) of the total respondents (teachers and principals) perceived that they have no awareness of the policies and guidelines regarding child learning assessment in the pre-school. Only 14(8.5%) of respondents agreed that teachers and principals know the policies and guidelines of implementing child learning assessment; whereas 10(8.5%) of respondents rated undecided. The mean score of teachers and principals was 2.18 which is also below the average. The *t*-test result showed that there was no significant difference between teachers and principals ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This confirmed that teachers do not know about the policies and guidelines in place regarding pre-school children's assessment.

Item no 5 of Table 2 indicates that the respondents were asked the extent of teachers' knowledge of how to communicate assessment results with parents, and the majority

82(70%) of the respondents (teachers and principals) replied disagree. The rest 5(4.3%) and 30 (25.7) of the respondents rated undecided and agree respectively. The mean score of teachers and principals was 2.39 which is below the average. The result of the *t*-test shows that there was no significant difference between teachers and principals (*p*-value >0.05). This confirmed that teachers do not know how to communicate assessment results with parents. This result was further supported by one of the interview participants. She states:

...we meet two times a year with the parents, they formally communicate the results through marks but in an informal way by explaining to each parent where their child has reached aspects of all development in his/her physical, affective, social, and cognitive development. (January, 2020).

**Benefits of Child Learning Assessment**

**Table 3:** Teachers’ and principals’ response based on the benefits of child learning assessment

No.	Items	Respondents	N	DA	U	A	Mean	SD	Sig
				%	%	%			
1	Monitor child learning and developmental progress.	Teachers	97	13(13.4)	2(2.1)	82(84.5)	3.78	0.881	0.311
		Principals	20	6(30)	-	14(70)	4.00	0.795	
		Total	117	19(16.2)	2(1.7)	96(82.1)	3.89	0.838	
2	Check the effectiveness of the educational program	Teachers	97	22(22.7)	10(10.3)	65(67)	3.61	1.132	0.606
		Principals	20	3(15)	1(5)	16(80)	3.75	1.020	
		Total	117	25(21.4)	11(9.4)	81(69.2)	3.68	1.076	
3	Identify children who may need further assistance	Teachers	97	22(22.7)	5(5.2)	70(72.2)	3.64	1.023	0.180
		Principals	20	-	-	20(100)	4.20	0.410	
		Total	117	22(18.8)	5(4.3)	90(76.9)	3.92	0.717	
4	Identify strengths of the young children	Teachers	97	19(19.6)	6(6.2)	72(74.2)	3.59	1.106	0.324
		Principals	20	2(10)	1(5)	17(85)	3.85	0.938	
		Total	117	21(17.9)	7(5.9)	89(76.2)	3.72	1.022	
5	Identify weaknesses of the young children	Teachers	97	10(10.3)	1(1)	86(88.7)	3.79	0.841	0.261
		Principals	20	4(20)	2(10)	14(70)	3.55	1.050	
		Total	117	14(11.9)	3(2.6)	100(85.5)	3.67	0.946	
6	Encourage parents’ full participation in the assessment process.	Teachers	97	5(5.2)	-	92(94.8)	3.90	0.568	0.721
		Principals	20	2(10)	-	18(90)	3.95	0.759	
		Total	117	7(5.9)	-	110(94.1)	3.93	0.664	
7	Providing information that can be used to inform their caregivers and teachers, to improve the quality of their care and educational environments	Teachers	97	14(14.4)	3(3,1)	80(82.5)	3.77	1.016	0.112
		Principals	20	-	2(10)	18(90)	4.15	0.587	
		Total	117	14(11.9)	5(4.3)	98(83.8)	3.96	0.802	
8	Assessment result used as a base for promotion	Teachers	97	32(33)	6(6.2)	59(60.8)	3.35		0.159
		Principals	20	8(40)	-	12(60)	4.20		
		Total	117	40(34.2)	6(5.1)	71(60.7)	3.78		

Source: Field survey January 2020



Note: A= agree, U= undecided, DA= disagree and N= Population, and to analyze this data the researcher merged strongly agree and agree= "Agree", Disagree and strongly disagree = "Disagree".

Regarding item no 1 of Table 3, the respondents asked about monitoring child learning and developmental progress, and the majority 96 (82.1%) of the respondents replied agree. The remaining 2(1.7%) and 19(16.2%) of them rated undecided and disagree respectively towards monitoring child learning and developmental progress. The mean score of teachers and principals was 3.78 and 4.00 respectively. This shows that there was no significant difference in mean scores between teacher respondents and principal respondents ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). The following are the interactions made during the interview with the teachers collaborates what emerged from the questionnaire data:

The benefits of assessment are to evaluate their physical, mental, and social development, and help their learning grow, help their knowledge grow to assess their academic potential to decide if a child should repeat or not. (January, 2020).

This finding is further supported by Gullo (2005) states that assessment in early childhood education serves different purposes and benefits. The most valued purposes and benefits of assessment in early childhood education are to monitor child learning and development. As indicated in Table 3, the majority 81 (69.2%) of the respondents (teachers and principals) replied agree. The rest 11(9.4%) and 25 (21.4%) of the total respondents rated undecided and disagree respectively. It was also further supported in the analysis that the mean score of teacher and principal respondents was 3.61 and 3.75 respectively which shows that there was no significant differ-

ence in mean scores ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This affirmed that child assessment checks the appropriateness or effectiveness of the educational program.

In Table 3, the respondents were asked about identifying children who may need further assistance and the result showed that the majority 90(76.9%) of the total respondents (teachers and principals) replied agree. The rest 5(4.3%) and 22(18.8%) of the total respondents rated undecided and disagree respectively. As the result in table 3 noted, the mean score of teacher and principal respondents was 3.64 and 4.20 respectively. This shows that there was no significant mean difference between teacher respondents and principal respondents ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This confirmed that child assessment identifies children who may need further assistance. This finding is supported by Snow and Hemel (2008:32) child assessment data used for planning activities and tracking learning collected individually about all children in a program or classroom can be used at the individual child level to identify children who may need further assistance of the group as a whole and at the center or school level.

Regarding item 4 in Table 3, the respondents were asked to identify the strengths of the young children and the result reveals that the majority 89 (76.2%) of the total respondents (teachers and principals) replied agree. The rest 7(5.9%) and 21(17.9%) of the total respondents rated undecided and disagree respectively. There was also no significant mean difference among teacher respondents ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=1.106$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.933$ ) ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This confirmed that child assessment is critical to identify the strengths of the children. These findings further supported by Snow and Hemel (2008:32) in a sense that child assessment

data used for planning activities and tracking learning collected individually about all children in a program or classroom can be used at the individual child level to identify strengths and weaknesses of the group as a whole and at the center/school level.

Regarding item 5 in Table 3, the respondents were asked to identify weaknesses of the young children, and the result unfolds that the majority 100 (85.5%) of the total respondents replied agree. The rest 3 (2.6%) and 14 (11.9%) of the respondents rated undecided and disagree respectively. These findings also further supported in the *t*-test that the mean differences between teacher respondents ( $M=3.79$ ,  $SD=0.841$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.050$ ) were not statistically significant ( $p$ -value  $>0.05$ ). This approved that child assessment helps to identify the weaknesses of the children.

Regarding item 6 in Table 3, the respondents were asked about the encouragement of parents' full participation in an assessment process, and the result shows that the majority 110 (94.1%) of respondents replied agree and the rests 7 (5.9%) of the respondents rated disagree. The result of the *t*-test reveals that the mean difference between teacher respondents ( $M=3.90$ ,  $SD=0.568$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.759$ ) was not statistically significant ( $p$ -value  $>0.05$ ). This affirmed that child assessment encourages parents to participate in the child learning assessment process. This result was also supported by one of the interview participants. She states as follows:

...Child assessment process is benefits for the parents because it gives them an insight through the assessment information to what the children are currently doing and how they can get involved in their children's learning and development".

Interview participant, (January, 2020).

This finding is further supported by Birbili and Tzioga (2014). As the authors noted, collaborating with parents in documenting and reflecting on children's learning and development is important not only because it provides teachers with richer and more accurate information but also because it helps parents to understand the role assessment can play in children's learning and motivation. Moreover, when parents are provided with opportunities to observe, record, and reflect on their children's learning they are able both to see the 'acts and products' of learning and to appreciate their child's progress, efforts, successes, and achievements over time.

Regarding item 7 in Table 3, the respondents were asked about providing information that can be used to inform their caregivers and teachers, to improve the quality of their care and educational environments. The result shows that the majority 98 (83.8%) of the respondents replied agree. The rest 5 (4.3%) and 14 (11.9%) of the respondents rated undecided and disagree respectively. The result of the *t*-test reveals that the mean difference between teacher respondents ( $M=3.77$ ,  $SD=1.016$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.587$ ), was not statistically significant ( $p$ -value  $>0.05$ ). This approved that child assessment provides information that can be used to inform their caregivers and teachers, to improve the quality of their care and educational environments, and to identify child risk factors that can be remedied. This finding was supported by Snow & Hemel (2008).

In Table 3, the respondents were also asked about the assessment result which is used as a base for promotion, and the result shows that the majority 71 (60.7%) of them replied agree, and 6 (5.1%) and of teachers and

40(34.2%) of principal respondents rated undecided. As the result indicates, the mean difference between teacher respondents (M=3.35, SD=1.031) and principal respondents (M = 2.20, SD = 1.436), was statistically significant (p-value< 0.05). However, since the majority of respondents were agreed, the assessment result was used as a base for promotion. To support this idea group discussion was held with teachers and one of the participants perceived that:

...the assessment result is used as a baseline for promotion because we

need the means to justify whether a child can pass to the next level or not. Interview Participant, (January, 2020).

This finding is in contrast with MoE (2010:29) that suggests assessment should not be used as a basis for promotion, retention, or selection which means it must not be used to label the child.

**Factors that affect Child learning Assessment**

**Table 4.** Teachers and principals' response towards the factors that affecting child learning assessment.

No.	Items	Respondents	N	Low	Medium	High	Mean	SD	Sig
				%	%	%			
1	Teachers do not know child assessment	Teachers	97	9(9.3)	11(11.3)	77(79.4)	4.21	1.070	0.066
		Principals	20	4(20)	2(10)	14(70)	3.70	1.302	
		Total	117	13(11.1)	13(11.1)	91(77.8)	3.96	1.186	
2	Parents do not give feedback about the child assessment practicing in pre-schools	Teachers	97	21(21.6)	21(21.6)	55(56.7)	3.64	1.416	0.743
		Principals	20	1(5)	3(15)	16(80)	3.75	1.118	
		Total	117	22(18.8)	24(20.5)	71(60.7)	3.70	1.267	
3	Lack of sufficient time	Teachers	97	16(16.5)	19(19.6)	62(63.9)	3.85	1.310	0.988
		Principals	20	2(10)	2(10)	16(80)	3.85	0.813	
		Total	117	18(15.4)	21(17.9)	78(66.7)	3.85	1.062	
4	The ratio of children to teachers is high	Teachers	97	22(22.7)	14(14.4)	61(62.9)	3.63	1.379	0.594
		Principals	20	2(10)	3(15)	15(75)	3.80	0.834	
		Total	117	24(20.5)	17(14.6)	76(64.9)	3.72	1.107	
5	Lack of enough materials	Teachers	97	4(4.1)	29(29.9)	64(66)	4.06	0.966	0.352
		Principals	20	1(5)	3(15)	16(80)	3.85	0.671	
		Total	117	5(4.3)	32(27.3)	80(68.4)	3.96	0.819	
6	Lack of proper supervision	Teachers	97	20(20.6)	27(27.8)	50(51.5)	3.52	1.308	0.177
		Principals	20	4(20)	6(30)	10(50)	3.10	0.852	
		Total	117	24(20.5)	33(28.2)	60(51.3)	3.31	1.080	
7	The schedule does not promote the practice of informal assessment	Teachers	97	19(19.6)	15(15)	63(64.9)	3.58	1.306	0.292
		Principals	20	2(10)	2(10)	16(80)	3.90	0.852	
		Total	117	21(17.9)	17(14.5)	79(67.6)	3.74	1.079	

Source: Field survey January 2020

Note: L =Low, M=Medium, H= High and to analyze this data the researchers merged Very high and high = “High”, Low and Very Low =“Low”.

As one can see from item 1 in Table 4, the respondents were asked to rate the idea that says “teachers do not know child assessment”, and the result shows that the majority 91(77.8%) replied high. Whereas the rest

13(11.1%) and 13(11.1%) of the respondents rated medium and low respectively. As indicated in the Table 4, the mean difference between teacher respondents ( $M=4.21$ ,  $SD=1.070$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = 1.302$ ), was not significant ( $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ ). This revealed that teachers do not know child assessment. To substantiate this idea, an interview was conducted with the cluster resource center supervisor and stated as follows:

The major problem that we face in the child assessment process is the lack of qualified teachers in early child care education. The reason is that teachers who have completed their secondary education do not get any training or workshop concerning child assessment and learning before they are engaged in their actual teaching in the preschool. Moreover, they didn't know how to handle or treat them concerning meet learning of the children. (January, 2020).

Concerning this, factors such as lack of training, especially in the assessment knowledge and understanding about child development and psychology among teachers hinder the implementation of child learning assessment (Balkish *et al.*, 2010).

Regarding item 2 in Table 4, the respondents were asked to rate the view that says “parents do not give feedback about the child assessment practicing in preschools”, and the result indicates that the majority 91(77.8%) of the respondents replied high. While the rest 13 (11.1%) and 13 (11.1%) of the respondents rated medium and low respectively. However, the mean difference between teacher respondents ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=1.416$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 1.118$ ) was not significant ( $p$ -

value  $> 0.05$ ). This affirmed that parents do not give feedback about the child assessment practicing in preschools. To support this idea a group discussion was held with teachers and principals and they perceived that:

Most of the parents are not willing to follow up their children in attending the program even if the preschools have the program to meet the parents every month to discuss with them about their children's behavior and performance. They have mentioned that most of the parents do have a lot of works and they do not have time to come to school since most of the parents are business persons (January, 2020).

In Table 4, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which lack of sufficient time affects the child learning assessment and the result shows that the majority 78(66.7%) of the respondents replied that lack of sufficient time highly affects the child learning assessment whereas 21(17.9%) and 18(15.4%) of them rated medium and low respectively. As also indicated in the Table 4, the mean difference between teacher respondents ( $M=3.85$ ,  $SD=1.310$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.813$ ) was not statistically significant ( $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ ). This indicates that lack of sufficient time is the critical problem that affects child learning assessment in Shashe-mene. This result was also further supported by one of the teachers and her idea is discussed below:

It is very difficult to have sufficient time for child assessment because I am the only one in charge of my class and have to lead the activity. Children have to do their activities by them-

selves in learning areas when I do assessments. It takes too much time to observe and record their individual need and interest area (January, 2020).

The demand for the time and the effort spent on the different aspects of children's assessment were cited as potential roadblocks for its regular use in kindergarten classrooms, despite its perceived usefulness (Buldu, 2010; Nah, 2014). Time was also found to be a major obstacle in allowing an organic transition from educators employing a traditional individualistic documentation approach to a more socio-cultural one (Fleer & Richardson, 2004).

In Table 4, respondents were asked the degree to which high ratio of children to teachers affecting child learning assessment, and the result reveals that the majority 76 (64.9%) of them replied as high whereas 17(14.6%) and 24(20.5%) of were rated as medium and low respectively. The mean score of teachers and principals was 3.63 and 3.80 respectively but statistically, the difference was not significant ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This indicated that a high ratio of children to teachers is one of the factors that affect child learning assessment. This result is also supported by results extracted from interviews among teachers and principals. They perceived that:

It is hard to assess each child in the classroom because the ratio of children to teachers is more than 1:70 in per-classroom. Thus, it is difficult to assess individual children numbering over 70 in class. Interview, (January, 2020).

Teacher structure, adult-child ratio, and group size were found to be associated with the quality of early years' service provision,

with the co-teacher structure, lower ratio, and smaller group size pointing to greater positive teacher behaviors and higher child care quality (Shim, Hestenes, & Cassidy, 2004).

Regarding item 5 in Table 4, the respondents were asked the degree to which lack of enough materials affecting child learning assessment, and the result shows that the majority 80 (68.4%) of the respondents replied high whereas the rest 32(27.3%) and 5(4.3%) of them rated as medium and low respectively. The mean score of teachers and principals was 4.06 and 3.85 respectively but statistically, the difference was not significant ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This affirmed that lack of enough materials is one of the factors that affect child learning assessment.

This finding was supported by Buldu (2010) that the co-teacher structure is thought to be more collaborative and fosters a more constructive atmosphere for learning, creating a positive environment for educators. Apart from this, other structural aspects such as equipment, material, and financial support, especially by the leadership of early childhood settings, are considered to be essential to effectively adopt the practice of documentation.

Regarding item 6 in Table 4, the respondents were asked to rate the degree to which lack of proper supervision affecting child learning assessment, and the result reveals that the majority 60(51.3%) of the respondents replied high, and the rest 33(28.2%) and 24(20.5%) of them rated as medium and low respectively. The mean score of teachers and principals was 3.52 and 3.10 respectively. However, statistically, the difference was not significant ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ).

This result affirmed that lack of proper supervision is one of the factors that affect child learning assessment.

As one can understand from item 7 indicated in Table 4, the respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which the schedule does not promote to practice informal assessment which affects child learning assessment, and the result unfolds that the majority 79 (67.6%) of the respondents replied high whereas the rest 17(14.5%) and 21(17.9%) of them rated as medium and low respectively. As indicated in the same Table (4), the mean difference between teacher respondents ( $M=3.58$ ,  $SD=1.306$ ) and principal respondents ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.852$ ) was not statistically significant ( $p\text{-value}>0.292$ ). Thus, one can conclude that the schedule which does not promote the practice of informal assessment is one of the factors that affect child learning assessment.

This result also substantiates the result extracted from document analysis. The researchers reviewed that the schedule which was prepared in pre-schools is more emphasis on formal assessment practice such as tests, examinations, and worksheets. Therefore, this result indicates that the learning assessment practice schedule didactically structured rigidly and fixedly like that of the formal school system. Therefore, this result confirmed that the assessment schedule is not promoting informal assessment practice.

As a solution to the above stated major factors affecting assessment practice in pre-schools, principals, teachers, and cluster supervisors suggested the following points:

Better training for teachers, better management follow up, parents need to be more present and active with

the school to follow up their children's learning and development results; being equipped with the proper knowledge to do so are seen as important by educators in facilitating good and effective assessment practice in early childhood care and education. (January, 2020).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusions

Based on the major findings, the following conclusions were drawn. The major objective of the study was to explore the teachers' knowledge and practices of child learning assessment in Shashemene city administration. The practice of child assessment has been benefited a considerable number of young children learning in monitor child learning and developmental progress, check the appropriateness or effectiveness of the educational program, identify children who may need further assistance and weaknesses of the young children, strengths of the young children, encourage parent's full participation in the assessment process, and providing information that can be used to inform their caregivers and teachers, to improve the quality of their care and educational environments.

However, the kindergarten teachers solely employ use of teachers are not using developmentally assessment practices in assessing young children learning. Teachers do not know how, when, what, and why to assess and the applications of child assessment techniques for children learning. School teachers do not understand the area that is covered regarding the assessment of pre-school children. This is because those teachers do not know about the policies and guidelines in place regarding pre-school children assessment. The study concludes that teachers do not know how to communicate assessment

results with parents and there are also problems that parents do not give feedback about the child assessment practicing in pre-schools. Other challenges such as lack of sufficient time, high ratio of children to teachers, lack of enough materials, lack of proper supervision, and poor schedule affect the implementation of effective child learning assessment in private and public preschools.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the preceding findings and conclusions the following recommendations were forwarded:

The practical child assessment of pre-schools in Shashemene city administration has a positive indication in monitor child learning and developmental progress, check the appropriateness or effectiveness of the educational program, encourage parent's full participation in the assessment process, and providing information that can be used to inform their caregivers and teachers, to improve the quality of their care and educational environments. Therefore, to sustain and improve this practice, the Shashemene city administration education office, pre-school teachers, families, and communities shall be closer through strengthening the connections between children's learning and experiences to enhance children's interactions with various contexts and to build their identity.

It is recommended that the Shashemene city administration education office need to organize short-term training and workshops for pre-school teachers particularly in child assessment practices so that they would improve their knowledge on the use of developmentally appropriate assessment practices in a more interactive manner.

The Shashemene city administration pre-school principals and CRC supervisors shall be recommended that they provide timely feedback for pre-school teachers concerning the strengths and weaknesses they observed in the child assessment practice. Since the outcome of the program contributed to monitoring child learning and developmental progress, it is critical to check the appropriateness or effectiveness of the educational program. Identify children who may need further assistance is critically important based on the analysis of the child's strengths and weaknesses. More importantly, it needs to encourage parents to fully participate in the assessment process and be able to provide information that can be used to inform their caregivers and teachers to improve the quality of their care and educational environments as a whole. Moreover, professionals, non-governmental organizations, and responsible bodies shall participate in support of child assessment for young children learning to create a good group effort for constructing competent future citizens.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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