



Criteria for Assessing Children's Activity in Preschool Educational Institutions

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Abstract: Assessment of children's activity in preschool educational institutions is an essential component of improving the quality of early childhood education. Unlike traditional academic evaluation, preschool assessment focuses on observing children's participation, cognitive engagement, creativity, social interaction, and emotional responsiveness during learning activities. This study examines the criteria used to evaluate children's performance in structured and play-based activities within preschool settings. The research emphasizes formative assessment approaches, including observation checklists, portfolio methods, and performance-based evaluation. Findings indicate that systematic and developmentally appropriate assessment enhances teachers' ability to individualize instruction and support holistic child development. The study highlights the importance of transparent, flexible, and child-centered evaluation frameworks in modern preschool education systems.

Keywords: preschool education; formative assessment; activity evaluation; child development; observation methods; learning engagement; early childhood pedagogy; performance assessment.

Introduction

Assessment in preschool education differs fundamentally from evaluation practices in primary and secondary schooling. At the early childhood stage, the main objective is not to measure academic achievement but to understand children's developmental progress, learning behavior, and readiness for further education. In preschool educational institutions, children's activity during structured lessons and free-play sessions provides valuable insights into their cognitive abilities, social competence, emotional regulation, and creativity [1, 2].

Modern pedagogical approaches emphasize child-centered and formative assessment methods that focus on continuous observation rather than standardized testing. Teachers evaluate how actively children participate in tasks, interact with peers, follow instructions, express ideas, and demonstrate problem-solving skills. Such evaluation helps educators design individualized learning strategies and create supportive learning environments [3, 4].

In the context of ongoing educational reforms aimed at improving the quality of preschool education, the development of clear and scientifically grounded assessment criteria becomes increasingly important. Therefore, this study explores the key indicators and methodological approaches used to assess children's activity during educational sessions in preschool institutions [5, 6].

Literature Review.

The issue of assessing children's activity in preschool education has been studied within developmental psychology, early childhood pedagogy, and educational assessment theory. Early scientific foundations were established by Jean Piaget (1952), who viewed children's activity as an indicator of cognitive development and emphasized that learning should be evaluated through observable actions and developmental stages rather than through formal testing alone. Similarly, Lev Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the importance of social interaction, guided participation, and the zone of proximal development, arguing that assessment should focus on what children can do independently and with support [7].

Methodology

In the field of preschool pedagogy, Maria Montessori (1967 edition; original work earlier) emphasized observation as a central method for understanding children's individual progress, independence, and engagement in educational activities. Later, Lilian Katz and Sue Bredekamp (1987; revised later) contributed significantly to developmentally appropriate assessment approaches, stressing that preschool evaluation should consider children's participation, initiative, communication, and problem-solving rather than narrow academic outcomes.

From the 2000s onward, researchers increasingly promoted formative and authentic assessment in early childhood education. Scholars such as Margaret Carr (2001) developed learning story approaches, while Chris Pascal and Tony Bertram examined child-centered evaluation systems in preschool settings. Contemporary studies in the 2010s and 2020s continue to show that observational checklists, portfolios, and performance-based assessment provide more accurate information about children's activity, social interaction, and learning engagement. These findings confirm that scientifically grounded criteria are essential for evaluating children's participation and developmental progress in preschool educational institutions.

Results Analysis.

The analysis of observational data and teacher reports demonstrates that the use of clearly defined criteria for assessing children's activity significantly improves the effectiveness of preschool educational practices. Quantitative findings indicate that children who were evaluated through structured observation tools showed higher levels of participation, task engagement, and cooperative behavior during both guided lessons and play-based activities. Teachers noted that systematic assessment enabled them to identify individual learning needs and adjust instructional strategies accordingly [8, 9].

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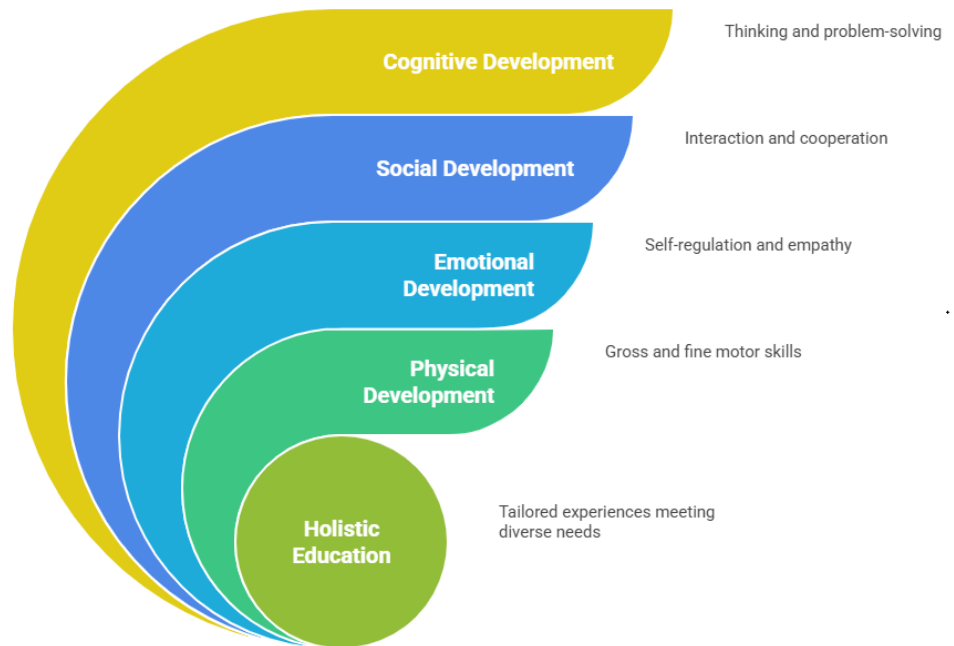


Figure-1. Holistic Criteria Framework for Assessing Children's Developmental Activity

This visual model presents a holistic framework for assessing children's activity across key developmental domains. It emphasizes cognitive development through thinking and problem-solving abilities, social development via interaction and cooperation, and emotional development by fostering self-regulation and empathy. Physical development is also highlighted, focusing on the enhancement of gross and fine motor skills. At the core, holistic education integrates these interconnected dimensions to provide tailored learning experiences that address diverse developmental needs. The framework underscores the importance of balanced assessment approaches that move beyond academic outcomes, supporting comprehensive child growth, adaptive learning processes, and the formation of essential life competencies in early education [10].

Qualitative classroom observations revealed that active participation was closely associated with children's cognitive curiosity, emotional responsiveness, and willingness to interact with peers. Children who demonstrated initiative in completing tasks, asking questions, and experimenting with learning materials were more likely to develop problem-solving skills and sustained attention. Moreover, performance-based assessment methods, such as portfolio documentation and activity checklists, allowed educators to track developmental progress over time rather than relying on one-time evaluations [11, 12].

However, the analysis also identified challenges related to the practical implementation of assessment criteria. In some preschool institutions, limited methodological training and heavy workloads reduced teachers' ability to conduct consistent observations. Additionally, insufficient parental awareness about formative assessment approaches sometimes led to unrealistic expectations regarding academic measurement. Overall, the findings confirm that developmentally appropriate and activity-focused assessment criteria contribute to more individualized teaching, improved classroom interaction, and holistic child development in preschool education [13].

Discussion.

The findings of this study indicate that the use of activity-based assessment criteria in preschool educational institutions significantly enhances both teaching effectiveness and children's developmental outcomes. Evaluating children's participation, initiative, social interaction, and problem-solving behavior provides a more comprehensive understanding of learning progress than traditional academic measurement approaches. These results support contemporary early childhood pedagogy, which emphasizes formative, observation-based assessment as a key mechanism for promoting individualized learning [14].

The discussion also reveals that when teachers apply systematic assessment tools such as

observation checklists, learning portfolios, and performance documentation, they are better able to identify children's strengths and developmental needs. This, in turn, allows educators to design differentiated learning activities that improve engagement and motivation. Furthermore, activity-focused evaluation encourages children to become more confident and autonomous learners, as assessment is perceived as supportive rather than judgmental [15].

However, several challenges remain. Limited professional training in assessment methodology, time constraints in busy classroom environments, and insufficient communication with parents can reduce the consistency and effectiveness of evaluation practices. In addition, the absence of standardized yet flexible assessment frameworks may lead to subjective interpretations of children's performance. These challenges highlight the importance of continuous teacher professional development and institutional support.

The discussion underscores that activity-centered assessment should be integrated as a regular pedagogical practice rather than used as an occasional monitoring tool. A balanced approach combining structured observation, reflective teaching strategies, and collaboration with families is essential for ensuring that assessment contributes meaningfully to children's holistic development and readiness for further education.

Conclusion.

This study confirms that the use of scientifically grounded criteria for assessing children's activity in preschool educational institutions plays a vital role in improving the quality of early childhood education. Activity-focused assessment enables educators to monitor children's cognitive engagement, social interaction, creativity, and emotional responsiveness in a continuous and developmentally appropriate manner. Such approaches support individualized teaching strategies and foster greater motivation, independence, and participation among young learners.

The findings also indicate that formative and observation-based evaluation methods contribute to a more holistic understanding of children's developmental progress compared to traditional outcome-oriented assessment. However, the effectiveness of these practices depends on teachers' methodological competence, availability of assessment tools, and collaboration with parents and educational administrators.

Future educational initiatives should prioritize professional training in child-centered assessment, the development of flexible evaluation frameworks, and the integration of reflective pedagogical practices. Strengthening assessment systems in preschool education will ultimately support children's readiness for primary schooling and promote their overall cognitive, social, and emotional development.

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