

Exploring the Kindergarten Teachers' Assessment Practices in Ghana

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating kindergarten teachers' assessment practices based on two subscales: (a) teachers' modes of assessment frequently used, and (b) their reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment. The sequential mixed methods research design was employed. The quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires administered to 192 teachers in public and private kindergartens in six regions of Ghana. The qualitative data were gathered through interviews with three participants selected from the 192 sampled teachers. Independent samples t-test was employed to test the quantitative data. The results of the study indicated that paper- and- pencil test mode of assessment is used frequently by the teachers. In addition teachers also appeared to be using a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of the parents and educational leaders without meeting the curriculum assessment prescription. Results further showed no significant difference between the public and private kindergarten teachers on almost all the items in the two subscales used in this study but differed significantly on four reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment. Teachers' assessment practices are therefore not supported by any known developmentally assessment theory for children. Workshops and in-service education and training are therefore recommended for all the stakeholders including the parents, educational leaders and teachers on the use of developmentally appropriate assessment practices in a much more interactive manner.

1.0 Introduction

Formal child care provision in education has been problematic worldwide since the days of yore. It probably took the enviable efforts of great philosophers and reformers like John Locke, Jean Piaget and Jack Jean Rousseau, who had to fight at their peril to change society's poor perception about children. Until recently, pre-school education and for that matter early childhood care and development was seen as a less important aspect of educational systems in many developing countries including Ghana. Today, this is rapidly changing. In Ghana, early childhood care and development has been integrated into the formal educational system thanks to the new educational reform. It has, therefore, become compulsory before proceeding to primary school. It has been noted that early childhood education is an important foundation in the life of children, particularly in today's dynamic society and in a world where more and more children in both the urban and rural areas are left unattended to (Said, Wallhager, Cungua, & Ngie, 2003).

Assessment of children should be carried out for the primary purpose of providing adults with the information they need to plan more appropriately for children's ongoing development and should involve strategies that support rather than threaten children's feelings of self-esteem (Amponsah, 2004). Assessment of curriculum effectiveness is an integral aspect of early childhood programmes. Developmental goals and learning outcomes are set for children and these must be monitored to see how well they are being achieved (GES, 2009).

Today, however, there is an intensity surrounding the issues of assessment of young children. The perceived need to account for children's learning has led to 'high stakes testing', and the most blatant misuse of assessment. Despite the negative effects associated with tracking practices, a single test score continues to be the basis on which young children are grouped, retained in grade, or assigned to special education classes (McGill-Franzen & Allenton, 1993). Children's score on standardised tests have been blatantly misused in the economic marketplace as well. Test scores are published by school and grade in local newspapers and reported in the media; real estate firms then include such test scores of children in specific school districts to promote the sale of homes (Seefeldt & Galper, 1998).

Assessment in early childhood is not a new practice in Ghana. Early childhood professionals use a range of assessment tools to identify children's interactions, conversations, ideas and expressions in order to better understand each child's strengths, abilities and interests.

Young children are disreputably difficult to assess accurately and that clear guidelines regarding the nature, functions and uses of early childhood assessments, including assessment formats that are appropriate for use in culturally and linguistically diverse communities must be created to help in establishing a developmentally appropriate assessments in preschools in Ghana. This is very important since all children deserve to be served equitably early care and educational services as well as, if the need be, by interventions services. This requires that there may be fair and effective personnel and tools to assess their learning and identify their needs (Anane & Anhwere, 2013). Unfortunately, in Ghana the kindergarten teacher appears to be someone with the lowest academic and professional background (Cobbold & Boateng, 2015).

This system whereby educational programme quality now is being judged by childrens' test score is with us here in Ghana as there is a national league results being published in the national dailies at the Senior High School level to create an unnecessary and unhealthy competition among schools without taking into account other prevailing conditions in the various schools in Ghana. The big question to ask, therefore: "Is education meant for life or for high stakes or test scores?"

Modern Ghanaian society and other societies the world over have placed great expectations on the early years of life. Whether a child comes from a wealthy or poorer family, the collective belief is that children's future academic achievements would ensure later success in life, irrespective of their physical, social and emotional health. These have their roots in the early years of life, which prevails and serves to guide and direct assessment of young children. However, how many times do we, teachers, as the implementers of the curriculum, reflect on the mode of assessment carried out on our children's performance? How very sure could it be that we make a very well informed decision that caters for every child in our classrooms irrespective of the varying special needs? How best would one assess the performance of an armless child who cannot write owing to such a physical challenge in our Ghanaian early childhood or kindergarten context or setting? The above questions are necessary. Owing to this premise, as we presumably live in a country called Ghana where the government of the day pretends to pay teachers very well, whilst teachers also pretend to teach very well in the classrooms and suddenly, the children also pretend to learn very well. This seeming pretence in Ghana's education might have rendered all teachers to be lecturers as they lecture children from kindergarten up to the university level.

1.1 The Problem Statement

In most countries, there is a considerable gap between what is learned in the classroom and the real life context of pupils' present or future world (Anamuah-Mensah & Towse, 1995). This is particularly true of the less-developed countries where the needs of those not progressing beyond the compulsory stages of primary or junior secondary education are subservient to the perceived academic needs of those progressing further, and particularly by the small percentage proceeding to the university. Ways of assessing children's learning and development cannot be separated from features of the curriculum (for example, the degree of formality or informality that characterise it), and from views of learners and learning which are embodied in that curriculum. Kelly (1992) identifies the interrelating of curriculum and assessment as "... a highly complex and sophisticated matter" p.16).

The Ghanaian curriculum planners and the entire CRDD appear to have agreed on this very point the essential role of teachers in curriculum implementation and the very informal nature of assessment in Ghanaian kindergartens. At this stage, assessment must be as informal as possible. Teachers must avoid the temptation of subjecting children's work to formal assessment. Informal techniques such as observation, conversation, and gallery works enable children to go round to appreciate others' work (MOEYS, 2004). Even though the Ghanaian early childhood or kindergarten curriculum designers prescribe appropriate assessment practices, there is little or no evidence to show whether the implementers are following the apparently fidelity approach prescribed or not. There are few or no studies on the entire assessment practices on the Ghanaian early childhood or kindergarten curriculum and assessment.

UNICEF (2011) puts it in this way: ["... of particular importance is the limited number of studies in the Ghanaian context and available local studies focused on the entire evaluation of

Ghanaian Early Childhood Policy with a little attention given to the assessment practices in the early childhood or kindergarten curriculum implementation”] (p.67).

The big question therefore is, to what extent are the ordinary Ghanaian teacher’s involvement in the curriculum development process let alone that of kindergarten teachers who are often not well trained? It could be implied, therefore, that there is little or no knowledge at all as to how best to implement the entire early childhood curriculum with special emphasis on the assessment of the learning outcomes of these children at their formative stages in life. This above assertion could be true owing to a seeming paucity of literature on the Ghanaian early childhood curriculum implementation. This current research intends to bridge this gap in the literature regarding the subject matter of early childhood or kindergarten assessment practices by curriculum implementers being the early childhood caregivers or the kindergarten teachers, as they are often called in our local Ghanaian parlance.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and investigate the views of Ghanaian kindergarten teachers in order to understand their assessment practices as part of their instructional practices in line with their curriculum implementation processes. Specifically, the study investigates the possible differences that might exist in the teachers’ assessment practices with respect to the type of school where they were teaching (whether public or private school).

1.3 Research Questions

The central question in the current study is: What views do kindergarten teachers have about the various assessment practices regarding their capability to implement the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana?

The specific questions are:

1. What are kindergarten teachers’ views on the use of various modes of assessment?
2. What are the kindergarten teachers’ views on the reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment?

1.4 Hypothesis

It was hypothesised that:

1. There will be no significant difference among the kindergarten teachers teaching in public or private schools with respect to their:
 - (a) Views on the various modes of assessment often used,
 - (b) Reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment.

2.0 Theoretical Exposition

2.1 Social Learning Theories

The construct of teacher assessment of children learning has been investigated through two separate conceptual theories: Social learning theories posit that a major portion of human learning occurs in a social context (Schunk, 1996).

The theory of social learning suggests that the most optimal learning occurs when one is learning socially with and from others. The social learning theories that are having the most impact on current classroom assessment practices are social cognitive and social cultural. In this study, kindergarten teachers’ assessment practices are examined within the rubrics of social cognitive theory.

2.2 Social Cognitive Theory

A crucial strategy for efficacy development is in the use of social persuasion. Offering verbal and social praises; rewards and encouragements that lead learners to exert more effort are more likely to bring success than those who show less-self esteem in their own capabilities. Bandura (1988) warns teachers and efficacy builders to avoid setting unachievable levels of efficacy in learners. Instead, he recommends that assigning tasks that bring success and avoiding setting unrealistic expectations into situations where they are more likely to fail. To ensure progress in personal development, success can be measured in terms of self-improvement rather than by triumphs over others (Bandura, 1988). Competition in grades and tasks has little or no place in social-cognitive learning processes, not forgetting that children are always poor losers in such competitions.

2.3 Social-Cultural Theory

According to Vygotsky, the signs and symbols of a culture, and especially its language, dialect, and speech, are the keys to understanding complex human behaviors. Words are the key to knowing oneself (Vygotsky, 1979).

The social environment and cultural context, in which a learner finds him or herself is the source of both social behaviors and individual thoughts. In other words, "human mental activity is a particular case of social experience and an understanding of human mental activity rests on an understanding of the mechanisms of social experience" (Gredler, 1997, p. 239). While evidence seems to indicate that Vygotsky's claim that all learning is dependent on the culture (Geary, 1995) may be too strong, research does support that the learner's culture is important and needs to be explained in understanding learning (Schunk, 1996). In view of the above, assessment of children's learning outcomes could be effective when issues of language and the cultural setting of the learner is taken into consideration at all times. Any slight deviation from the child's culture and natural setting might not produce the needed or expected performance of the children during assessment. Assessment should be a natural part of the developmental process within classrooms, children's learning being most influenced by ongoing and continuous assessment practices (Meiers, 2000).

Vygotsky has become known for a second concept, the zone of proximal development or ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD defines the distance between a student's current level of learning and the level he or she can reach with the help of tools, people, and powerful artifacts (Brown, 1994). In the ZPD, the teacher and learner work together on tasks that the learner could not perform independently because of the difficulty level. This process captures the idea of collaborative and mentoring processes, requiring the teacher, who has and knows more skills, to share that knowledge in a culturally mediated interaction (Bruner, 1984; Daloz, 1986) with a student or a group of students working together. This concept of ZPD is a vehicle for pushing learners to heightened levels of learning competencies.

2.4 Definition of Assessment

Bowman, et al (2001) suggest that the term assessment, as applied in early childhood education and care, generally implies the intention to provide a rich picture of the ways in which children act, think and learn. Such a picture focuses on the individual's learning, is built up over time and provides evidence of learning in a number of different contexts. In relation to its importance, they argue that:

Assessment has an important role to play in revealing a child's prior knowledge, development of concepts and ways of interacting with and understanding the world so that teachers can choose a pedagogical approach and curricular materials that will support the child's further learning and development.

Conceptually assessment practice in early childhood education can be arranged into three categories: assessment of learning and development; assessment for learning and development and assessment as learning.

Assessment of learning and development is the most common form of assessment. This is assessment of a child's learning at a particular point in time, and that summarises all of the learning and development that has preceded it (Taras, 2005). This kind of assessment can be large-scale assessment in a particular field, such as the West African Examination Council, in which an entire population of children is assessed using a common assessment tool. It can also be a small scale assessment within an individual early childhood setting with the purpose of clarifying a child's learning in order to report that learning to families (Earl, 2003) – for example, Transition Learning and Development Statements.

Assessment for learning and development refers to the formative assessment that takes place in order for decisions to be made to inform the next stage of learning (Earl, 2003). As assessment for learning informs program planning decisions about individual children, assessments need to be taken on an ongoing and individual basis. Assessment for learning assists early childhood professionals to make decisions about learning programs for children every day and is identified in the literature as essential for improving outcomes for children.

Assessment as learning and development occurs when the child is involved in the assessment process. Through this process the child has the opportunity to monitor what they are learning and use feedback to make adjustments to their understandings (Earl, 2003). Assessment as learning is linked to higher levels of self-efficacy in children as they see a reward for their learning effort (OECD/ CERI, 2008).

2.5 Types of Assessment

Assessment practice can be both formal and informal. Formal assessments typically involve reliable and valid standardised testing (Brown and Rolfe, 2005). Informal assessments, on the other hand include non-standardised testing and the performance on these assessments is not compared with other children (Brown and Rolfe, 2005). They typically include interviews with children and work sampling, and observation techniques such as running records, anecdotal records, checklists, rating scales and event and time sampling (MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; NAEYC, 2009).

In early childhood years the most commonly used assessment ways include norm referenced standardized performance tests and teacher ratings. Standardized tests aim to measure children's performance differences on tasks which are considered as representing important theoretical construct (Bagnato, 2005 as cited in Downs & Strand, 2006). Standardized tests are generally conducted two or three times in a year, with limited capacity to provide continuous information supply. Another assessment technique is called as authentic assessment. In this method an individual's growth and development is evaluated by using real life events (Taylor & Nolen, 2008). Some examples of authentic (informal) assessment techniques are; observation, teacher designed measures, checklists, rating scales, rubrics, performance and portfolio assessments, interviews, directed assignments, portfolios, narrative reports and technology based assessments (Wortham, 2008). The results of assessment, regardless of the type of method used, can be used in variety of ways while planning for instruction, reporting progress or evaluating instructional program (Wortham, 2008). Assessment is to be considered as a process and each child should be followed in this process, not in a form of product.

2.6 Concerns about Assessment

Assessment is challenging! Of all the functions performed by teachers, probably none calls for more energy, time, and skill than evaluation. According to Gordon and Browne (2011) anyone involved in evaluation should avoid: unfair comparison, bias, overemphasis on norms, interpretation, too narrow of a perspective, and too wide of a range. An evaluation should be designed for a single level or age group and not cover too wide of a range. It is appropriate to measure a child's ability to print at age 6 but not at age 2. What is expected of the person or task should be taken into account and the evaluation method modified accordingly.

In view of these concerns about assessment of children, the goals for children encompass all areas of development, and one measurement will not describe every area. Doing so changes what happens in the program: 'Teachers are very likely to shape their instruction to match a test's specific focus. This phenomenon, known as 'measurement- driven instruction; {creates} a narrowing of the curriculum' (Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 2005). Using single yardstick to measure child ignores the fact that young children do not always demonstrate what they know in a 'testing'' or single situation.

Furthermore, it is critical to assess a child in a sensitive and accepting manner, to keep the time period as brief as possible, and to communicate the results in the same tone. If this is not done, the child's self-esteem may be damaged and the family trust may be equally lost. The disadvantages of these tools parallel those of standardised tests. Above all, keep the testing to a minimum, thus guarding against 'pulling up the plants to look at them before the roots take hold'' (Cryan, 1986).

2.7 Best Practices of Assessment in Early Childhood

Accordingly, there are four principles that should guide the assessment practices in order for them to benefit young children, their families, and us as teaching professionals as posited by Gordon and Browne (2011):

- ✓ Standards should be in place that outlines the important and developmentally appropriate outcomes we want for the children in our care.
- ✓ Processes should be in place to develop and review the standards and our techniques for assessing children with them.
- ✓ Assessment strategies must be ethical and appropriate for young children as they work and play in our settings.
- ✓ Communication about both the standards and the observation and assessments we use must be in place that includes teachers, families, and relevant professionals.

In view of these observation and assessment of children could be done appropriately and can tell us as teacher so much about the children; we owe it to ourselves and the children we teach to use both to benefit all.

According to Wortham, (2007) due to its importance, assessment in early childhood education should have some principles. First of all, assessment should use many sources of information and learning measures. Furthermore,

it should improve learning of the child and/or it should be beneficial to the child. The third issue mentioned is about its fairness. All the techniques used should be fair for all children. The last issue mentioned on the principles of assessment is that it should involve both the child and his/her family.

Ongoing assessment is essential if teachers are to gain deep knowledge of their students (Ewing, 2006). Additionally, assessments should be based on what students can do on their own and with scaffolding by peers and adults (NAEYC, 2009a). A student's parents, families and the students themselves are all valuable contributors to the assessment process and these form a comprehensive assessment portfolio (NAEYC, 2009a).

2.8 Teachers' Roles in Assessment

In the past, teachers were not thought of as knowing a great deal about assessment other than to assign letter or number grades for work completed.

Now teachers are defining outcomes through their professional organizations and by working on different models of curriculum. Teachers today need to be clear about expectations of students work. Teachers can become masters of assessment and need to teach students to assess themselves (Stiggins, 1991).

When students begin to assess themselves, they become intrinsically motivated to do the best they can. True assessment comes when students can examine their own work and determine the level of mastery and understanding for themselves.

Teachers must choose the assessment models that best fit the actual work done in their classrooms. Teachers also must consider the assessment models that enhance the teacher, student and parent involvement while making sure goals have been met. The value of assessment depends on the teachers' ability to plan complex and meaningful tasks that challenge students to use prior knowledge, recent learning and applicable skills. Students need to solve relevant, meaningful and realistic problems that assess progress on learning outcomes (Fischer & King, 1995).

Assessment does not drive instruction, but follows naturally from particular arrangements of curriculum and teaching. Assessment is a process that must involve students and teachers from beginning to end (Graves & Sunstein, 1992; Stephen et. al, 1995). Assessment to enhance student learning must be integrated with, not separated from curriculum and instruction (Neill, 1997).

3.0 The Method

3.1 Research Design

The current research employed the use of mixed method and specifically the explanatory sequential mixed approach. In the Social Sciences, mixed methods have become increasingly popular and may be considered a legitimate, stand-alone research design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003; Creswell, 2002, 2003).

The current study employed mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2003) to study kindergarten teachers' views on assessment practices regarding the implementation of the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana. Like Russek and Weinberg (1993), the researcher believes that by using both qualitative and quantitative data, studies related to teacher assessment practices will give insights that neither type of analysis could provide alone.

In these designs, quantitative data are collected and analyzed, followed by qualitative data. Priority is usually unequal and given to the quantitative data. Qualitative data are used primarily to augment quantitative data.

3.2 Participants

The sample size for this study was 192 kindergarten student teachers at DHI College of Health and Education, Kumasi -Patsi drawn from both private and public kindergartens. Multilevel mixed method sampling was used to draw the samples for the current study.

3.3 Data Collection

A Likert-type questionnaire and interview protocols were developed to collect data. The interview protocols were used for triangulation purposes. In educational research, Likert-type scales are commonly used to measure different kinds of variables, such as teacher stress and burnout (Dworkin, 2002), self-efficacy (Cheung, 2006), school and teacher effectiveness (Bangert, 2006), school organization (Firestone & Firestone, 1984) school climate and culture (Wagner, 2006), and the likes including assessment practices. The reason is that the Likert scale empowers me to effectively operationalize the variables and then identify their relationships in order to improve our kindergarten educational system.

3.4 Interviews with Teachers

The second form of data collection was the teachers' interviews, following the successful collection and analysis of all the 192 questionnaires administered. After the analysis of the data, some of the student teachers were interviewed to validate the quantitative results. The interview focused on obtaining the student teachers' views on their assessment practices with regard to their curriculum implementation process in their kindergartens. Maiklad (2001:p. 96) posits that interviewing is the most frequently used method in qualitative research. It

generally appears in teachers' beliefs and investigations as a dominant or follow-up method. The purpose of using the interviews actively allows the teachers to revisit and reflect on what they had been doing and saying in their classroom. The question and answer exchange in the interview could disclose how the divergent and tacit interfering forces intervened in their daily assessment practices of their daily teaching pedagogy. The distribution of the teachers who responded to the interview is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.0 Background of Teachers who Participated in the Interview

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
Age	26	32	43
Type of Institution	Private	Private	Public
Highest Qualification	SSSCE	Diploma	Degree
Area of Specialization	Visual Arts	Basic Education	ECCD
Teaching Experience	5 years	4 years	8 years

3.5 Data Analysis

3.6 Questionnaire Data

Out of the 192 distributed questionnaires, all the 192 were returned and were analyzed. The responses of the participants to each questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program for windows. The resultant descriptive data from the analysis of the three research questions were organized into tables of frequencies, simple percentages, and standard deviation. Independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the possible differences in the hypothesis. The .05 alpha level was used as a criterion of statistical significance for all the statistical procedures employed

3.7 Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using content analysis. Analyzing qualitative data is not always smooth sailing and can bring some frustration and difficulties. Patton (2002) states that "analysis brings moments of terror that there is nothing there and there are times of exhilaration from the clarity of discovering ultimate truth. In between are long periods of hard work, deep thinking, and weight lifting volumes of material." (2002, p. 371). The thematic content analysis is, perhaps, the most common method of data analysis used in qualitative work. This method arose out of the approach known as grounded theory (Stewart et al., 2008). The method can be used in a range of other types of qualitative work, including ethnography and phenomenology. Indeed, Stewart et al, explained the process of thematic content analysis is often very similar in all types of qualitative research, in that the process involves analyzing transcripts, identifying themes within those data and gathering together examples of those themes from the text.

This analysis involved discovering themes in the interview transcripts and attempting to verify, confirm and qualify them by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify further themes and categories. In order to do this, once the interviews have been transcribed verbatim, I read each transcript and made notes in the margins of words, theories or short phrases that sum up what is being said in the text. This is usually known as open coding. The aim, however, was to offer a summary statement or word for each element that is discussed in the transcript. The initial coding framework used in the data generated from an actual interview with the three teachers in a qualitative assessment study, exploring their views on the mode of assessment used, the reasons for using them and the impact of performance assessment on the teacher's professional development. In the second stage, I collected together all of the words and phrases from all of the interview transcripts onto a clean set of pages. These were worked through and all duplications crossed out. This was to reduce the effect of the numbers of 'categories' quite considerably.

Once this second, shorter list of categories had been compiled, I went a step further to look for overlapping or similar categories. Informed by the analytical and theoretical ideas developed during the research, these categories were further refined and reduced in numbers by grouping them together. This reduced the list formed the final category system that can be used to divide up all of the interviews. The next stage was to allocate each of the categories its own coloured marking pen and then each transcript was worked through and data that fit under a particular category was marked with the corresponding colour. Finally, all of the sections of data under each of the categories (and thus assigned a particular colour) was cut out and pasted onto the A4 sheets. Subject dividers were labeled with each category label and the corresponding coloured snippets, on each of the pages,

were filed in a lever arch file. I therefore achieved an organised dataset filed in one folder. It is from this folder that the report of the findings was written.

4.0 The Results and Discussion

4.1 Six items on a 4-point Likert scale were used to measure kindergarten teachers' views on the use of various modes of assessment in their instructional practices during their curriculum implementation obligation. Each response category on the scale was assigned a value ranging from 1 to 4 for the positive statements with 1 representing 'strongly disagree', 2= 'disagree', 3= 'Agree', and 4= 'strongly agree'. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 4.2: Mode of Assessment Used by Kindergarten Teachers

Various modes of assessment	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	STD
Building portfolio on the learning outcomes.	56(29.2%)	50(26.0)%	64(33.3)	22(11.5%)	192(100%)	2.27	1.008
Using standardised test.	55(28.6%)	55(28.6%)	44(22.9%)	38(19.8%)	192(100%)	2.34	1.095
Interviewing to assess learning outcomes.	55(28.6%)	44(22.9)%	56(29.2%)	37(19.3%)	192(100%)	2.39	1.097
Assessing learning outcomes through children's' performance of task.	49(25.5%)	46(24.0)%	60(31.2%)	37(19.3%)	192(100%)	2.44	1.072
Observation of learning outcomes.	29(15.1%)	65(32.8)%	76(38.4%)	22(11.5%)	192(100%)	2.47	.886
Testing (pencil and paper test).	39(20.3%)	38(19.8)%	87(45.3%)	28(14.6)%	192(100%)	2.54	.975
Total						2.40	1.022

Table 4.2 shows a summary of respondents' views on the use of the various mode of assessment. Table 4.0 reveals that among all the modes of assessments, respondents appear to agree to the use of only testing (paper and pencil teacher made test) which recorded a higher mean value of 2.54 (SD= .975) in an answer to the question; 'What is your level of agreement to the use of testing (pencil and paper teacher made test)?' This clearly shows teachers' 'disagreement to the use of all other modes of assessments with the exception of the pencil and paper teacher made test which is their preferred choice in their implementation of the kindergarten curriculum with regards to their assessment practices.

This finding is quite expected as in the case of our Ghanaian setting where rote learning and memorisation appear to be the teachers' main pedagogical strategies irrespective of one's educational training and qualification. This also featured prominently during the interview session or the qualitative phase of the current study. The following interactions during the interview phase with the teachers collaborates what emerged from the questionnaire data:

I really make use of paper- and- pencil test made by my good self (T1)...

I have almost always relied on paper –and- pencil test (T2)...

I do not want to deviate from the norm in this school and so I often use paper –and- pencil test even though I sometimes observe the children's learning outcomes. I only observe their learning outcomes to see their trends of progression in learning but I do not use observation to promote or repeat a child in class. How can I be observing individual children numbering over 60 in class? (T3)...

The teachers further explained that much as they were aware of other forms of assessments probably learnt at the various teacher training institutions, they still hold on to this testing which obviously conforms to their instructional strategies. This finding is further supported by a position statement by local educational authorities in GES (2012) reports that curriculum delivery is largely based on rote learning methods relating to letters and numbers. Practice is neither child-centred nor activity-based. This document further states that an average class size of 64 children in the Ghanaian public kindergartens make it very difficult to effectively assess the progress of each individual child.

It is, however, heart-warming to learn that GES, in association with UNICEF, has developed a Pupil Assessment Toolkit for KG teachers, which have been distributed to some few schools on a pilot basis. However, not all teachers have access to it or have been trained to use it. This clearly shows that teachers still prefer being in their comfort zones with regard to the instructional and the corresponding assessment practices in the classrooms. By implication, if nothing is done about the instruction and assessment practices, then the educational authorities might never achieve their desired aim of making the pedagogy at that level in a much more child oriented and activities based hovering around play as captured in all the Ghana education policies on kindergarten in the country. There has not been any study on this phenomenon at least on early childhood in the Ghanaian context to the best of my knowledge but there are such studies on the international stage which can be used to corroborate this finding.

A number of studies conducted in Turkey related to assessment and evaluation techniques used by teachers. The results revealed that the teachers were faced with problems in implementing new assessment and evaluation techniques in their classrooms (Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007). These problems might emerge due to teachers' lack of knowledge about the implementation of these new constructivist assessment techniques. As a result of their lack of knowledge, they mostly prefer to use the most familiar assessment technique for them as teacher made test as in the case of the current study in Ghana. For instance, in the study conducted with elementary school students, researchers investigated assessment strategies used by primary school teachers (Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007). Teachers stated that they mostly prefer to use traditional assessment techniques while assessing their students' progress, the least likely used method is students' self-evaluation as in the case of authentic assessments.

The implication of this subsection of the current study indicates that preschool teachers used assessment methods which they believed might be suitable for preschool children but also convenient for them. By extension, if kindergarten teachers in Ghana are solely employing the use of teacher made *paper-and-pencil test*, then the possible danger is that majority of those needed domains of the child's learning will go unevaluated relating the problem of validity and reliability.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

There will be no significant difference among the kindergarten teachers teaching in public or private schools with respect to their:

- (a) Views on the various modes of assessment often used,

This hypothesis was designed to find out whether or not there were significant differences in the mode of assessment between public and private kindergarten teachers.

Table 4.3 Independent Samples t-test on the Use of the Various Modes of Assessment of Public and Private Kindergarten Teachers

Teachers' views on the use of the various modes of assessment	DF	MD	t	P-value
Testing (paper-and-pencil test)	190	-0.254	-1.813	0.71
Observation of learning outcomes	190	0.013	0.98	0.92
Using standardised test	190	-0.264	-1.704	0.090
Building portfolio on the learning outcomes	190	-0.064	-0.441	0.660
Interviewing to assess learning outcomes	190	0.187	-1.179	0.240
Assessing learning outcomes through children's' performance assessment of task	190	0.120	0.771	0.441

*Significant at $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed)

Table 4.3 shows that the results of the independent samples t-test on the use of the various modes of assessment between the public and private kindergarten teachers appeared not to be significant at 5% level of probability with the following specifics: "testing (pencil and paper test recorded" ($t(190)=-1.813$; $p=.71$), "Observation of learning outcomes ($t(190)=.98$; $p=.92$), "Using standardised test" ($t(190)=-1.704$; $p=.090$), "Building portfolio on the learning outcomes" ($t(190)=-.441$; $p=.660$), "Interviewing to assess learning outcomes" ($t(190)=-1.179$; $p=.240$), "Assessing learning outcomes through children's performance assessment task" ($t(190)=.770$; $p=.441$).

All the six modes of assessments appear not to differ so far as institutional placement (public or private) of respondents is concerned. Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. The meaning of this is that the modes of assessment as part of the instructional practices among public and private kindergarten teachers did not differ significantly. This result is extremely surprising because one would have simply thought that there might be a significant difference in the modes of assessment as part of their instructional practices between public and private kindergarten teachers in Ghana owing to differences in teacher certification and qualification as they also found themselves in different working environments.

There appears to be no empirical research findings in the Ghanaian context on this subject matter of kindergarten teachers' assessment practices at least to the best of my knowledge, comparison therefore cannot be made in the local context. However, several international studies have examined how teaching practices including assessment are similar or different in public and private schools. While some results have been mixed (Chandler, 1999), most have found that private schools tend to have teachers who use more traditional methods.

In a study of 115 Catholic and Public elementary schools in Pittsburg, Catholic school principals more often reported that direct instruction was used while public school principals reported more self-directed student learning (Chandler, 1998). The same study found that students in private schools more often expressed traditional beliefs about the nature of mathematics than students of similar backgrounds in public schools such as a belief that there is only one way to solve a Mathematics problem and that learning Mathematics mostly involves memorizing facts. Multiple studies using the ECLS-K kindergarten data have also confirmed that private school teachers report using more traditional methods such as using worksheets and textbooks to practice computation, while public school teachers more often reported using mixed-achievement grouping, problem solving and manipulative activities (Hausken & Rathbun, 2004, Carbonaro, 2006; Guarino, et al., 2006).

Lee et al. (1993) argued for Catholic school superiority. They conceded that instruction in the Catholic high schools they visited was largely textbook-driven with many lectures, and state that efforts are needed to improve teachers' pedagogical skill (p.309). Given the promising findings surrounding many aspects of reform-oriented Mathematics teaching practices, it seems possible that the greater use of these practices in public schools could help explain why public school Mathematics achievement is higher than Mathematics achievement in demographically similar Catholic schools.

Parallel to the above study, Liaquat (2009) found in her study that quality of teaching is better in private schools as compared to public schools and the teachers of private schools prepared lesson plans before teaching as compared to public schools. Shim and Herwig (1997) examined the beliefs and practices of Korean early childhood teachers in public and private programs. The results revealed that the majority of public kindergarten teachers had higher levels of education and more teaching experience than teachers in private kindergartens or child care centres. Public kindergarten teachers also reported more frequent use of developmentally appropriate activities including assessment in their classrooms than other teachers. In contrast, child care teachers had the least teaching experience and showed less expectation and use of appropriate activities in their classrooms. Overall, Korean child care, private kindergarten, and public kindergarten teachers demonstrated a high desire toward DAP, but low developmentally appropriate teaching.

It can therefore be concluded that the finding from this current study on the subscale on the various modes of assessment often used by teachers could be either rejected or supported by other international studies as there has not been any conclusive finding which shows that there should always be differences or not in the kindergarten assessment practices regarding their institutional placement of either being in the public or private.

Firstly, the possibility of the finding in the current study could be that over time, one school type, being public or private, has become more or less effective in teaching various subjects due to shifts in structure, culture, or the school's philosophy and or teaching practices.

Secondly, it is possible that test questions on recent assessments have shifted to reflect the *Standards* (GES Assessment Tools, 2012), and public school teachers, who are more often held accountable through high stakes testing, have altered their curriculum and instructional methods to match these changing assessments practices.

Thirdly, it could also probably mean that since Ghana operates a centralised curriculum, all teachers are trying to conform to ensure alignment and uniformity, hence all of them want to rely on the much more traditional and well known assessment mode which is the paper and pencil teacher made test.

Moreover, there can equally be as many as possible other explanations for the no difference in the use of the various modes of assessment between public and private kindergarten schools in Ghana. Differences in school and class sizes, teacher characteristics, school climate, parental involvement, teacher autonomy, and teaching practices are among the possible explanations for why there appear to be no such difference. Another possibility is that recent kindergarten piloting assessment tools in Ghana has shifted the focus on the content or types of learning (e.g., conceptual understanding versus procedures) they test for, and these assessments more closely match what is currently taught in public schools.

It could, however, be concluded that probably the teacher training institutions did not prepare the teachers specifically for the various challenges and obstacles that confront an early childhood teacher (NAEYC & NAECES/SDE, 2002). For this reason, public and private kindergarten teachers in the current study reported no significant difference in their use of various modes of assessment in line with their instructional practices.

Table 4.4 Respondents' Reasons for Selecting a Particular Mode of Assessment

Reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	STD
I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet parents' expectations.	81(42.2)	77(40.1)	27(14.1)	7(3.5)	192(100%)	1.79	.818
I use a particular mode of assessment that meets the DAP in assessment.	65(33.9)	53(27.3)	44(22.9)	30(15.6)	192(100%)	2.20	1.076
I use a particular mode of assessment to reduce test anxiety.	58(30.2)	65(33.9)	39(20.3)	30(15.6)	192(100%)	2.21	1.044
I use a particular mode of assessment to make children respect and like me as a teacher.	52(27.1)	61(31.8)	45(23.4)	34(17.7)	192(100%)	2.32	1.058
I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of educational leaders.	56(29.2)	60(31.2)	31(16.1)	45(23.4)	192(100%)	2.34	1.133
I use a particular mode of assessment that reflects my teaching philosophy.	52(27.1)	60(31.2)	40(20.8)	40(20.8)	192(100%)	2.35	1.092
To really understand each child, I use more than one mode of assessment.	52(27.1)	62(32.3)	35(18.2)	43(22.4)	192(100%)	2.36	1.107
I use a particular mode of assessment to force children to learn.	46(24.0)	67(34.9)	43(22.4)	36(18.8)	192(100%)	2.36	1.044
I use a particular mode of assessment to improve my instructional practices.	41(21.4)	61(31.8)	66(34.4)	24(12.5)	192(100%)	2.38	.958
I use a particular mode of assessment to make children scared and afraid of teachers.	43(22.4)	67(34.9)	47(24.5)	35(18.2)	192(100%)	2.39	1.027
I use a particular mode of assessment to punish children.	41(22.9)	72(37.5)	49(25.5)	27(14.1)	192(100%)	2.46	2.421

Reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	STD
I use a particular mode of assessment that religiously conforms to the curriculum guidelines.	28(14.6)	45(23.4)	46(24.0)	73(38.0)	192(100%)	2.85	1.088
I use a particular mode of assessment to be able to compare children easily.	17(8.9)	43(22.4)	70(36.5)	62(32.3)	192(100%)	2.92	.948
Total						2.38	1.139

*N=number of respondents; SD= standard deviation

4.4 Teachers' Reasons for Selecting a Particular Mode of Assessment

Table 4.4 displays a summary of respondents' reasons for selecting the various mode of assessment. Table 4.8 reveals that, among all the negative statements in this category, the respondents appear to agree to all of them with the exception of this statement; 'I use a particular mode of assessment to punish children', which recorded a mean value of 2.46 (SD= 2.421). This mean value is approximately 3.0 which tilt more to their disagreement to this particular item. Respondents in the study tendered to select a particular mode of assessment owing to the seemingly public accountability issues emanating from parents, politicians, and school authorities and not purposely based on the teachers' professional sound judgment which is reliant on their knowledge about learning theories, and curriculum alignment with assessment and instruction. Teachers also further tried to use tests and exams to stamp their authority on the little kids. This trend does not augur well for Ghana's early childhood future development and growth. This assertion is based on the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data. The following positions taken by the respondents during the interview confirmed this assertion:

Hmmmm, these head teachers even give much pressure than the parents, as they demand of us as teachers to submit our end of term exam questions to them even before the start of the exams so that they can monitor our teaching coverage. The head teachers always want to satisfy the parents and all other stakeholders with a very good children test scores (T1)...

Honestly, I don't want the head teacher to disgrace me or sack me for noncompliance with regards to children's assessment so I am always the first to send my end of term exam questions to him for vetting (T2)...

I was hired by the head teacher and so therefore I must obey his set of instruction of testing the children several times to proof to him that indeed am teaching (T3)...

Aside teachers conforming to social accountability and public pressure on assessment, they themselves appear to be using the tests as a way to instill discipline and gain authority and positive regards from the children. Samples of such indications from the teachers are seen in this interaction when they were asked to assign some other reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment:

You see, in this school, we no longer use cane on the children, so the only way to put fear in the children is to use the threat of exams to let children respect and conform to me (T1)...

Honestly, the fear of my exam puts children in order ad they obey my instructions (T2)...

I was hired by the head teacher and so therefore I must obey his set of instruction of There will no difference between me and their parents if not my exam questions they will be writing. They respect you because your end of term exam questions (T3)...

The implication for this situation is that the teachers are rather not following the numerous emerging theories and principles governing childhood assessment practices in line with developmentally appropriate practices. This possible effect is that it will result in misuse of assessment on these children and as such it will result in poor curriculum implementation and alignment in the Ghanaian kindergartens. Common examples of the several effects of misuse of assessment borne out of empirical research are numerous on the international stage in these situations below:

Single scores are typically reported for accountability purposes. While this satisfies criteria such as clarity and ease of understanding, single scores that characterize complicated achievements by students are misleading. For this reason, a score profile—a set of scores linked to content and knowledge—offers an alternative of more information that is possibly diagnostic (Wood & Schmidt, 2002).

We might ask whether the present system is working well. Carnoy and Loeb (2003) provide evidence that in states with high-stakes large-scale testing programmes, scores on the National Assessment of Educational

Progress are higher than in states without such testing systems. However, there is also evidence that large-scale testing has unintended consequences. Curricular shifts follow high-stakes testing and lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, a focus on superficial factual knowledge and basic skills, practice not on subject matter but on test taking skills, and cheating on the test (ARG, 2002; Shepard, 2003)

It was a result of such misuse of assessment in America which led to the revolution in assessment nationwide in the late 1980s. Increased testing and misuse of testing were well documented phenomena in the 1980s and extended well beyond the confines of the early childhood years (Office of Technology Assessment, 1992). Inappropriate curriculum and instructional practices were closely tied to inappropriate testing practices. Therefore, it was impossible to address one without addressing the other. This seeming misuse of assessment in Ghana is confirmed by Gordon and Browne (2011) that anyone involved in evaluation should avoid the following misuse or concerns about assessment in early childhood: unfair comparison, bias, and overemphasis on norms, interpretation, too narrow of a perspective, too little or too much time and probably forcing children to learn.

Similarly, NAECs/SDE (1987) issued a statement against Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement, and that same month, the NAEYC adopted its position statement on standardized testing. NAECs/SDE argued against denying school entrance to age-eligible children or segregating children into extra-year classes because such practices denied opportunities for cognitive growth through social interaction to children who most needed to be in school, labeled children as failures, and assigned the burden of responsibility (for readiness) to the child, rather than the school program.

It is therefore not too late for Ghana, a third world country, to begin looking into the seeming looming danger on the misuse of assessment in the kindergartens, even if America of all nations only had its revolution in that area only in the late 1980. A comprehensive policy assessment covering all areas of assessment and seeing to its fullest implementation is capable to reversing this worrying trend.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

There will be no significant difference among the kindergarten teachers teaching in public or private schools with respect to their:

(b) Reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment and

This hypothesis was designed to find out whether or not there were significant differences in the mode of assessment between public and private kindergarten teachers.

Independent Samples t-test on the Reasons for Selecting a Particular Mode of Assessment of Public and Private Kindergarten Teachers

Reason for selecting a particular mode of assessment	DF	MD	t	P-value
I use a particular mode of assessment that reflects my teaching philosophy.	190	0.13	0.870	0.385
I use a particular mode of assessment that religiously conforms to the curriculum guidelines.	190	0.325	2.088	0.38
I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet parents' expectations.	190	0.268	2.293	0.023
I use a particular mode of assessment to improve my instructional practices.	190	-0.084	-0.605	0.546
I use a particular mode of assessment to punish children.	190	-0.216	-617	0.0538
I use a particular mode of assessment to force children to learn.	190	0.419	2.282	0.005
I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of educational leaders.	190	0.087	0.528	0.598
I use a particular mode of assessment to reduce test anxiety.	190	0.306	2.043	0.42
I use a particular mode of assessment to make children scared and afraid of teachers.	190	0.573	0.402	0.00
I use a particular mode of assessment to be able to compare children easily.	190	0.121	0.885	0.377
I use a particular mode of assessment to make children respect and like me as a teacher.	190	0.464	3.014	0.002
I use a particular mode of assessment that meets the DAP in assessment.	190	0.390	2.545	0.12
To really understand each child, I use more than one mode of assessment.	190	0.273	1.713	0.088

*Significant at $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed)

Table 4.5 shows that the results of the independent samples t-test on the following nine out of a total of thirteen reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment between the public and private kindergarten teachers appeared not to be significant at 5% level: "I use a particular mode of assessment that reflects my teaching philosophy" ($t(190) = .870$; $p = .204$), "I use a particular mode of assessment that religiously conforms to the curriculum guidelines" ($t(190) = .325$; $p = .38$), "I use a particular mode of assessment to improve my instructional practices" ($t(190) = -.605$; $p = .546$), "I use a particular mode of assessment to punish children" ($t(190) = -.216$; $p = .0538$), "I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of educational leaders" ($t(190) = .528$; $p = .598$), "I use a particular mode of assessment to reduce test anxiety" ($t(190) = 2.043$; $p = .42$), "I use a particular mode of assessment to be able to compare children easily" ($t(190) = .885$; $p = .377$), "I use a particular mode of assessment that meets the DAP in assessment" ($t(190) = 2.545$; $p = .12$), "To really understand each child, I use more than one mode of assessment" ($t(190) = 1.713$; $p = .088$).

However, there appeared to be a significant difference in the following four reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment between public and private kindergarten student teachers; 'I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet parent's expectations' ($t(190) = 2.29$; $p = .023$), 'I use a particular mode of assessment to scarce children and make them afraid of teachers' ($t(190) = .402$; $p = .001$), 'I use a particular mode of assessment

to force children to learn'' ($t(190) = .419; p = .05$) and 'I use a particular mode of assessment to make children respect and like me as a teacher' ($t(190) = 3.014; p = .002$). The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.542$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) conversion for medium size effect.

This result clearly means that the student teachers views on teachers reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment in the current study with respect to their institutional placement (public and private kindergartens) did not differ significantly on nine items but differed significantly on only four items as reported earlier.

It is quite not surprising to arrive at this finding of a fairly no significant difference between public and private kindergarten teachers' reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment. The possible reasons for no difference could be as follows; teacher quality and teaching practices, but research has also been inconclusive regarding other factors as well, including school and class size, climate, parental involvement, teacher education, curriculum implementation model and teacher autonomy. The researcher draws this conclusion knowing that children and teachers in public and private kindergartens in Ghana do not differ so much demographically.

However, the finding in the current study on the four reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment, where they differ slightly, much as such as there appears to be no empirical research findings in the Ghanaian context to juxtapose it with, a countless number of international findings can be compared with. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Ohanian (2009) on refocusing on assessment in children; "the 4 and 5 year-old students are finding the tests bewildering. "They're scared as they are forced to learn by their teachers. They just don't understand you're supposed to bubble in next to the answer."

Similarly, a study conducted by Ohanian (2009) on refocusing on assessment confirms the finding from the current study; which states that "administering the exams is a complete headache, teachers said". They don't know how to hold pencils," said a Bronx kindergarten teacher whose class recently took the Pearson exam. "They don't know letters, and you have answers that say A, B, C or D and you're asking them to bubble in . . . They break down; they cry." At the same time, officials defended the use of multiple choices as an easy way for even kindergarten teachers to learn how much their students know at the beginning of the year. Out of this frustration teachers go through in test administration, it might have resulted in this jovial statement "Sharing is not caring anymore; developmentally, it's not the right thing to do," said one Queens teacher, whose pupils kept trying to help one another on the Mathematics test she gave for the first time this fall. The young students are not being allowed to help each other with the tests, even though they keep trying to do so as cited in a study conducted by Ohanian (2009).

The possible reasons accounting for this slight significant difference in those four items between both private and public kindergarten teachers in the current study in their reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment could include but not limited to the following as opined by Kutlu, (2006):

First, teaching practice courses in which students encounter the complexity of learning environments may lead them to acquire enough repertoires of classroom management skills.

Another reason of the slight differences on those three reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment between public and private kindergarten teachers may be the crowded classrooms. Class size might also have an effect on public kindergarten teachers' reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment. Kindergarten teachers in the public school have large classes than their counterparts in the private schools. Large class size is a central problem for the implementation of interactive strategies since forming groups, involving all the students, gaining cooperation, maintaining appropriate behaviours and using the time efficiently are more difficult in large classes than small classes. Researchers have investigated the relationship between class size and classroom management attitudes of teachers and found out as the class size increases, the level of teacher control increases especially in terms of behaviour and people management strategies (Kutlu, 2006; Erol, 2006).

Moreover, teachers' qualification between public and private kindergartens could also be the main reason for such a slight significant difference between public and private kindergarten teachers. This is because all things being equal, a well-trained early childhood practitioner ought not to select a mode of assessment just to force children to learn, just to let children like teachers and also making children scared of teachers. Research have shown that there is consensus in the literature that staff need to be well educated and professional, with

qualifications directly relevant to early childhood education in order to deliver better outcomes and services that focus on the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development and learning of children attending formal early childhood services (Barnett, 2003; Berk, 2006).

Similarly, although the level of benchmark qualifications and proportion of qualified staff in early childhood centres vary from country to country (Munton et al., 2002; Dalli et al., 2010), the research literature confirms that qualified teachers result in an improved quality learning environment and positive outcomes for children (Munton et al., 2002).

The implication of this finding based on the reasons which guide teachers in selecting a particular mode of assessment in public and private kindergartens showing no significant difference in nine out of a total of 13 items, is quite alarming one for both policy and practice in the Ghanaian schools. It has the potentiality of resulting in poor curriculum implementation and instruction, unfair assessment practices such as unhealthy comparison among children, labelling children as failures by emphasising on norm, test anxiety among the children and a possible wrong interpretation of assessment results.

Similarly, traditionally, Ghanaians have valued the products over the process of learning. The major stake holders involved in education, students, teachers and parents, have not been involved in the assessment process at all. As Stiggins believes, “We are a nation of assessment illiterates. We are a society that has come to care very much about high standards of achievement but we are a society that is incapable of understanding whether those standards are being met” (Stiggins, 2007, 2002, 2001, p. 535).

These implications could clearly be summed up as; “too many school systems expecting children to conform to an inappropriate curriculum and finding large numbers of ‘unready’ children react to the problem by raising the entrance age for kindergarten and or labelling the children as failures” (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003). The implications of such testing may further degrade the curriculum when teachers, wishing to conform to would be test, may alter or change instructional practices to what is to be tested. They may then start teaching children to learn the “correct” answers rather than to engage in active, critical thinking. Rather, the teachers’ accountability, “the overuse (and misuse) of standardised testing has led to the adoption of inappropriate teaching practices as well as admission and retention policies that are not in the best interest of individual children or the nation as a whole” (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003).

Conclusion/Recommendation

From the present study, the following conclusions can be made:

1. The kindergarten teachers solely employ the use of teacher made paper and pencil test in their assessment drive in the classroom. The teachers in this study are not using developmentally assessment practices in assessing children learning outcome. Teachers, therefore, do not have the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively assess the children learning outcomes appropriately. They seem to be working within their comfort zone by relying on a traditional mode of assessment.
2. The teachers’ reasons for assessing children are not supported by any known learning and assessment theories among children.
3. The teachers lack the requisite knowledge on the use and practices involved on the impact of performance assessment on their own professional development.
4. The teachers’ current assessment practices cannot help them to effectively implement the curriculum developmentally as the developers of the curriculum prescribed.

Workshops and in-service education and training are therefore recommended for all the stakeholders including the parents, educational leaders and teachers on the use of developmentally appropriate assessment practices in a much more interactive manner.

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