ITERS-R Assessment

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It is very important to assess the environment of the classroom to know if the experience that children have in the classroom is being productive to support their growth and learning. According to Dalton (1951), “the good classroom is characterized by a relaxed atmosphere, by evidences of wholesome and purposeful activities, by displays of children’s work and by the best use of available facilities. Such a classroom may be said to possess in a real sense an atmosphere which makes itself felt in the presence of even a casual visitor” (p. 429). The ITERS-R (Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition) was designed to assess the quality of the group program for children from 0 to 30 months of age (birth to 2.5 years of age). The assessment consists of 39 items organized into 7 subscales such as space and furnishings, personal and care routines, listening and talking, activities, interaction, program structure, and parents and staff. However, research by Bisceglia, Perlaman, Schaack, and Jenkins (2009) supports that “this study evaluated the psychometric properties of the ITERS-R; a widely used scale for the measurement of child-care quality. Results from an exploratory factor analysis indicate that all items load on a single factor, suggesting that the instrument does not measure six distinct dimensions of quality (recall that data on the 7th scale ‘Parents and Staff’ were not available). The high internal consistency estimates of the full instrument and strong inter-item correlations further suggest that the scale measures a single construct” (p. 129). The purpose of this paper is to compare the two observers’ findings about the quality of the environment of a specific classroom using the ITERS-R assessment**.**

**Method**

The observation took place at the ASCDL CSU Chico. The particular room that was being observed was the Willow room. It took 2 sessions to observe the classroom and interactions to rate the scale, the first one on November 4th, 2014 from 10:40 AM to 12:50 PM, and the other on November 6th, 2014 from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM. Ten children were present during the first observation, and there were 6 staff members. Fourteen children are enrolled in the Willow classroom, but only 11 are allowed in class at one time.

The activities observed were free play, reading, breakfast and lunch time, diapering time, dramatic play at the kitchen area, nap time, outside play, and child to child interactions as well as child-adult interactions. The observation was done on television in a separate room. The observation room has two televisions that have a computer to move the cameras from one place to another place in the classroom. The observer was not present in the classroom, so the children and the staff did not know if they were observed or not. Some other observers were present during the observation. The materials used for the observer were ITERS-R assessment book, fresh copy of the 10 page score sheet, a pencil and an eraser.

The way of how the assessment is rated is on a 7-point quality scale as the table 1 shows below.

**Table 1**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Inadequate | Minimal | Good | Excellent |
| Poor Care | Custodial Care | Basic Development Care | Enhance Development Care |

Observers scoring the scale always start at inadequate and work to the right. For example, to receive 1 when any item under the section 1 is marked “yes” then it must be rated 1 for quality rating score. Observers obtain 2 when all indicators under 1 are marked “no” and half of the indicators under 3 are scored “yes” then it must be rated 2 for quality rating score. Then, to receive a 3 if all indicators under 1 are marked “no” and all indicators under 3 are scored “yes” then it must be rated 3 for quality rating score. Moreover, observers get a 4 if all indicators under 1 are marked “no”, all indicators under 3 are marked “yes”, and half of the indicators under 5 are marked “yes” then it must be rated 4 for quality of rating score. To receive a 5, if all indicators under 1 are marked “no”, all indicators under 3 are marked “yes”, and all indicators under 5 are marked “yes” then it must be rated 5 for quality rating score.To receive a 6, if all indicators under 1 are marked “no, all indicators under 3 are marked “yes”, all indicators under 5 are marked “yes”, and half are marked “yes” under 7 then it must be rated 6 for quality rating score. Finally, observers continued doing the same pattern to score the highest number if it is possible and applicable to the item observed.

**Results**

In Table 1.1, the information presented refers to the results of the scoring on each domain or subscale and the average total of both observers who observed at the same time.

**Table 1.1**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Domains** | **Observer 1** | **Observer** 2 |
| Space and Furnishings | 6.80 | 6.60 |
| Personal Care Routines | 6.50 | 6.83 |
| Listening and Talking | 7.00 | 6.66 |
| Activities | 6.67 | 6.66 |
| Interaction | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Program structure | 7.00 | 6.66 |
| Parents and Staff | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| **TOTAL** | 6.81 | 6.78 |
| **Average Total** | 6.795 | 6.795 |

The areas of most disagreement are found on the following specific domains such as personal care routines, listening and talking, and program structure.

**Discussion**

The results show a pretty close similarity, which means that the two observers agree on the quality of the environment most of the time. However, the greatest difference or disagreement was on the domain program structure with a 0.34 of difference. This domain includes 4 items. The observer two did not observe any encouragement from the adults to children to engage in group activities. This means that probably the staff members give some encouragement to children, but it was not observe at the time of observation. The scoring part is very complicated because it might include some biases of the observer. The program structure score of 6.66 means that the quality of the environment is very close to excellent, which means an enhance development care. Both of the observers have a good consistency on the domains such as activities (6.67, 6.66) and interactions (7.00, 7.00). The significance is that this data could be more reliable compared to the data with major disagreement that might have some biases. The difference on the total of each observer is 0.03, which is not a big difference meaning that the quality of the environment is almost the same for both of the observers.

In conclusion, I believe that the data provided is not very accurate for the following reasons. First of all, the data has a lot of biases from observer two because it was a really hard to be objective when you know some of the staff working there. Second, the way of how the observation was done on televisions was very hard because the observer was limited to certain areas. It was hard to hear clearly what the children were saying. In other words, the observer was very limited, and the observer did not observe the entire classroom. Some other observers were using the televisions as well, so sometimes they changed what other observer was observing. Then, most of the items were not observed on a period of only 3 hours. For example, most of the guessing score were for the domain or subscale for parents and staff because the parents and some of the staff information were not available at the moment and in the classroom. The observer two guessed the score based on the information that she already knew. What if the observer was a totally new visitor to this center, must be very complicated to score accurate what it is not available. Most of the observers were talking to each other, which invalidates the whole assessment. Finally, I honestly admit that the willow classroom deserved these scores because the quality of the environment is close to excellent, but it does not mean that it is true and accurate because it includes a lot of biases.

The knowledge that I gained from this activity was to be familiar with ITERS-R assessment and how to score it. I learned the importance to be accurate and objective when observing and scoring. I learned the importance of a good quality environment for the healthy development of a child. It was laborious activity, but I was very interesting as well.

References

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