Environmental Assessment Assignment Paper

Assessment of classroom environment is important in child-care centers. These assessment measure program quality which are used to predict future child outcomes. The instrument being discussed in this paper is the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Revised Edition (ECERS-R). This instrument is designed for child care settings serving children 2 ½ through 5 years of age. Its purpose is to serve classrooms in evaluating program quality divided into 7 subscales: space and furnishings, personal care routines, language-reasoning, activities, interaction, program structure, parent and staff. While the ECERS is a widely used tool in child development, the validity of its use in measuring child care quality, according to Gordon, et al., yields mixed results (2013). Nonetheless, the focus of the paper will be the assessment of a child development lab school using the ECERS-R scores.

**Method**

**Overview**

Observation of the program was conducted in the morning of a child development lab care center. Two concurrent observations were conducted with an approximate 1:3 adult/child ratio. Assessment of observations were conducted using the 43 items presented in the ECERS-R manual.

**Setting**

Observations were done in 2 morning sessions in the Associate Student Development Lab, Magnolia Room at California State University, Chico. The amount of time observed was approximately 3 hours, 1.5 hours per session. Observations took place exclusively in a one way observation booth among other college students.

**Participants**

 There were a total of 6 adults present including one head teacher and sixteen children in both sessions. 14 boys and 2 girls during the first session observed and 13 boys and 3 girls during the second session. These children range in age from 3 to 4 ½ years old with half being Caucasian and half being of another ethnicity.

**Activities**

 Activities observed included arrivals, breakfast, and self-selected play indoors. For arrivals, parents and children were all greeted by a staff member upon entering the classroom and either staff or a parent would escort the child into the wash room for health check. Following arrival the children are called to the breakfast table in which one staff member is serving breakfast. The children are given an option to eat once called to the table and if finished allowed to have free choice in activities. These self-selected activities include reading, engagement in dramatic play, and manipulatives such as puzzles and block construction.

**Results**

An examination of classroom quality was conducted by two observers using the ECERS subscales for classroom environment. The following figure features observer averages of each of the 7 subscales. Though results indicate similarities in the quality of overall classroom environment (M=5.84, observer 1; M=5.41, observer 2) there seem to be apparent differences in subscale scores for interaction, with a 1.4 difference in average score, a 1.5 difference in program structure, and 1.34 difference in parent and staff averages.

*Table 1: Observer Averages of Subscales*

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Subscales | Average Score Observer 1 | Average Score Observer 2 |
| Space and Furnishings | 7.25 | 6.13 |
| Personal Care | 5.83 | 5.50 |
| Language-Reasoning | 7.00 | 6.75 |
| Activities | 4.20 | 4.30 |
| Interaction | 5.40 | 6.80 |
| Program Structure | 5.25 | 3.75 |
| Parent and Staff | 6.67 | 5.33 |
| Total | 5.84 | 5.41 |

**Discussion**

Given the amount of time spent observing in a confined space, the quality of classroom environment is representative of the ECERS manual. My partner and I indicated basic quality to emerging high quality care in the classroom was being met.

Our results yielded high quality or excellent precautions and attention being emphasized in classroom space and furnishing as well as in language and reasoning. However, we found improvements in regards to activities in the classroom and program structure that should revaluated in the Magnolia Room. All other subscales in classroom environment met basic or emerging high quality care.

Though our overall averages in classroom quality were similar, differences in subscale observations should be taken into consideration as my partner and I generated dissimilar results. For interactions in the classrooms, I indicated the classroom to meet basic standards, while my partner, indicated it to be higher in quality. Disagreement in observation scores were also apparent in program structure, in which my partner indicated to being less than basic, where as I indicated to meet basic operational guidelines. Likewise, differences in regards to parent and staff was apparent in our evaluation, for I observed it to yield higher quality than did my partner.

 Reasons for disagreements in these areas ranged from familiarity and consideration of the assessment tool and ASCDL’s overall program to the focus of our observations. For example, in regards to interactions, my familiarity in the subscale from a previous assignment could have influenced my judgments during the observation in which I rated the area more harshly because I was more familiar with the items and more focused on it than my partner was. In terms of program structure the opposite was true as my partner was more focused on how the classroom programs were conducted. And when it comes to parent and staff measures I had more familiarity with how parents and staff were accommodated from my use of the Rainbow room which is a staff lounge and office for the Magnolia Room. In other words, my outside, individual observation added to my overall rating of this subscale that skewed my scores to be higher in quality.

 There were several limitations to our observation that may have also skewed our results. One limitation my partner and I had was the time we observed as they were nearly identical in context. And as earlier mention our observation was primarily conducted in an unideal setting which was difficult to hear and even more difficult to see, as one room, for example, was primarily blockaded from our view. Another limitation that is typically accompanied with these observations is the teacher interview portion of the ECERS assessment. These limitations have several implications as they effect and possibly skew outcomes.

According to the ECERS-R assessment, the Magnolia Room indicates above basic quality care in the classroom. Though strong in their use of space and furnishing and language and reasoning, suggestions for improvement are aimed at activities and program structure.

References

Gordon, R. A., Fujimoto, K., Kaestner, R., Korenman, S., & Abner, K. (2013). An assessment of

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Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2005). *Early childhood environment rating scale* (Rev. ed.). New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.