



Preschool Educators' preparation on Child Assessment based on Relevant Instruments according to Official Documents

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This paper examines the preparation of educators for their planned and carried forms of assessment in the classroom with children aged 5-6 years in preschool institutions and preparatory classes. Moreover, the paper argues the cooperation that educators maintain with parents to achieve the development of children and to convey information about their progress or stagnation. The purpose of this study is to understand whether educators are prepared to conduct assessment based on the needs and interests of children through various evaluation instruments, systematic monitoring and application of different methods during daily activities. The results of the study are based on the quantitative method - survey with educators (N = 150 questionnaires) and the qualitative method, 5 observations of evaluation instruments by 20 educators from different kindergartens, 6 individual interviews with educators and 2 interviews with headmasters. The results depict the views and preparation of educators in the field of early childhood assessment, as well as their approach on how to observe children and inform parents about their children's progress and stagnation.

Keywords: children's assessment, preparatory class, preschool institution, evaluation instruments, parent-educator cooperation

INTRODUCTION

According to Piaget (1963), as cited in Gullo (2005), the development of children includes early age up to 8 years old and in this period children seek specialized guidance and appropriate learning environments in order to process information, build knowledge and solve problems.

In various states such as Michigan, West Virginia, Washington and North Carolina – are built qualitative early education systems with great results, committed on achieving continuous quality improvement in education and the development of assessment systems for all children in the preschool institution (Wechsler et al., 2016).

Citation: Violeta, B., & Arbërore, B. (2022). Preschool educators' preparation on child assessment based on relevant instruments according to official documents. *International Journal of Instruction*, 15(2), 257-276. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.15215a>

Assessments are performed to identify different individual capacities, learning skills, interventions needed to monitor children's progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of educators working together with children. "Learners may be at different points in their learning and may be progressing at different rates, but every individual seems capable of further learning if motivated and provided with appropriate learning opportunities" (Masters, 2013, p. 3).

According to a study, the more professional development trainings are continuously offered to preschool level teachers, the higher the teachers' self-confidence and level of preparation for work, which also indicates the manner of the assessment (Bicaj & Buza, 2020). The literature also relates the quality of teaching with teachers' perceptions of learning, curriculum and assessment (Brown, 2004, as cited in Pastore, 2020). Teachers' perceptions are considered quite complex, therefore undifferentiated concepts of teachers for assessment have been noticed. Based on this, there is no difference between teachers who have attended a training on assessment and those who have not attended one, which means that "teacher education has had no impact on teachers' conceptions of assessment" (Pastore, 2020, p.224).

Assessment is considered as a tool that serves to identify the strengths and weaknesses of children (Gullickson, 2007, as cited in Setiawan et al., 2019), to observe the progress of children and to improve the results of learning (Pandora & Mardapi, 2017, as cited in Setiawan, 2019) Based on various documents such as Administrative Instruction no. 24/2016 on quality assurance in pre-university education, it is also mentioned in point 7.5. of the Article 4 that: "The Annual Action Plan includes the evaluation instruments which serve to assess whether the implementation is contributing towards the achievement of the set goals" (MASHT, 2016).

Even though, educators show that they manage to observe and evaluate children in all fields, this paper deals exactly with the way of evaluation by educators for children in Preschool Institutions and preparatory classes, depending on the impact of the trainings they have undergone. The trainings depending on the needs of teachers are the responsibility of the municipalities, as well as the preparation that educators have related to the evaluation of children that are defined according to Law No. 04 / L-032 on Pre-University Education in Kosovo that should define the evaluation criteria (KEEN, 2018), which aim in children's development, achievements and improvement of the activities offered to them.

It is important to link the information gathered by educators about where children are at and what change has been achieved in terms of their progress-stagnation through feedback in order to produce effective strategies for building students' self-confidence to observe the progress children are making (Masters, 2013).

The aim of the research is to evaluate children in preschool institutions based on various documents, including the document of standards and curriculum of preschool education, to understand whether educators are prepared to conduct assessment based on the needs and interests of children through various assessment instruments, systematic monitoring, and various methods during daily activities.

The main objectives include: a) theoretical analysis regarding the importance and clarity of the assessment, b) reflection by educators on their preparation about ways of assessment in early childhood and sharing information with parents, c) identification of assessment instruments in relation to official documents, d) importance of assessment regarding the improvement of results and meeting the needs of children in all curricular areas. Based on the purpose of the research, the following questions arise from this study:

1. What is the perception of educators about personal competencies related to the planning and implementation of the assessment for children through relevant instruments according to official documents?
2. Is there an important link between educators' perceptions of children's progress and stagnation and the exchange of information with parents and children?
3. Does the information collected by the educators serve to improve the results in meeting the needs of children in all curricular areas?
4. How ready and prepared are the educators for the application of different and advanced ways of assessing children in preschool institutions?

Literature Review

The importance of assessment for the sustainable development of children

Various authors emphasise that the evaluation of children, focuses on the child and raising the quality of learning, and means not only measuring knowledge but also their motivation (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002).

In one study, it is considered that educators understand the purpose of classroom assessment in several different contexts, in order to: a) improve teaching and learning, b) school accountability, c) students' responsibility to learn, and d) of the potential irrelevance they face often being ignored by teachers (Brown, 2004).

Almost all assessments by educators involve gathering information to look at children's development by describing in detail how much the children know and can accomplish, therefore we say that educators evaluate small children's behaviour, skills, competencies, preferences and interactions, by saying that children are not valued as individuals but their achievements in all fields (Slentz et al., 2008). Alternatively, the authors Chappuis & Stiggins (2002) emphasize the importance of the classroom assessment a process of children's involvement, which affects the motivation as well and not only the evaluation of knowledge. At the same time, educators consider that continuous assessment has a tremendous effect on student achievement. Continuous assessment carried out by the educator in different ways aims to achieve a sustainable quality of care and education for children by determining the level of skills, knowledge and their habits through defining their strengths and weaknesses in all fields (Cekani, 2010). According to the practice of applying formative assessment, it is necessary to systematically collect the information based on the knowledge and needs of the individual (Anderson & Palm, 2018).

The authors Wortham & Hardin (2001) address these assessment techniques and instruments in the classroom: observation, checklist - through assessment scales and rubrics, performance-based strategies, forms of evaluation designed by the teacher, portfolio evaluation, etc. The observation should be carried out systematically in cooperation with parents, starting with determining the hypothesis, objectives, age, tools, materials and procedures to be followed in order to collect, reflect and share other information about the behaviour and development of children (Balduzzi & Pironi, 2019). In addition, the author Gullo (2005) emphasizes that checklists are instruments used by educators to record data on children about their behaviours and skills. If well formulated, they are directly related to educational or developmental goals so that educators can plan and accomplish what is needed for the next steps. Furthermore, by keeping notes for each child individually, communication and cooperation is achieved with parents about the progress or stagnation of their children in various fields (Gullo, 2005). Measurement leads us towards cooperation between parents and field professionals who enable interventions and progress of children through monitoring and reporting on current achievements (Bagnato, 2007). We can say that it is important to combine evaluation forms by implementing them systematically in order to motivate students to reduce mistakes, train them and motivate them in shaping the habits for quality learning" (Buza, 2015). Children's results depend and improve depending on the commitment of educators how competent they are in their field to receive more information about children's progress. Therefore, various studies emphasise that the influence of the way educators prepare from various trainings for professional development on children's achievement is a more apparent factor than the social or economic status of children (Hammond, 2000).

Child assessment form and importance based on official documents

The importance of child assessment is based on the Administrative Instruction number 08/2016 on Student Assessment according to the Pre-University Education Curriculum Framework of the Republic of Kosovo. According to article 3 paragraph 3.7.1 the evaluation is implemented by the teachers by keeping continuous notes during the school year in the personal diary, paragraph 3.7.2 students belonging to the preschool class are not evaluated with a numerical grade but are evaluated with standardized constructive comments. For preschool students according to article 4 paragraph 4.9 the final evaluation is carried descriptively, i.e. in words. According to Article 13 paragraph 13.1 preschool children assessment is carried in order to measure the development of children to achieve learning outcomes for competencies and curricular areas, while paragraph 20.9 shows that parents are obliged to monitor the commitment and progress of their children, provide assistance to teachers in the learning process and have the right to be informed by the teachers about the commitment and success of their children (MASHT, 2016). The document clearly indicates the work and commitment of educators in preschool institutions for the successful planning and implementation of child assessment through verbal description in order to achieve learning outcomes for competencies and curricular areas.

The assessment focused on preschool education standards and core curriculum

Early childhood development and learning standards are interrelated and are part of the core curriculum, aiming to achieve the outcomes of the main competencies of the Kosovo Curriculum Framework (MASHT, 2018). In the document ‘*General standards of pre-school education in Kosovo (3-6 years old)*’, point 2 explains the aspect of the assessment of preschool children. The assessment is related to the organization of activities based on the needs and interests of children. At the same time, the evaluation is done according to the systematic observation of the educator, according to the information exchanged with the parents and taking into account the file of children’s work. Through a general observation, preschool children are evaluated based on daily activities, by gathering information about the children’s progress through various methods. The standards decisively deny the evaluation of preschool children through tests (MASHT, 2006). While not denying that assessment is applied to track and provide information on each child’s progress, the ‘*Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education 0-5 years old*’ specifies the importance of applying assessment on fairly planning the work with children, in what knowledge and skills they have acquired, in passing information to parents about skills, progress - stagnation of their children in curricular fields. All this is achieved by engaging children in activities, using different materials and forms to create, talk and collaborate towards the overall development of the child (MASHT, 2018). Diagnostic-formative-summative assessment focuses on understanding children’s prior skills, the level they reach, in order to provide assistance with appropriate information that enables the necessary changes in their development (Marsh, 2009).

‘*The core curriculum for the preparatory class and primary education of Kosovo (Grades 0, I, II, III, IV and V)*’, presents the guidelines for the assessment of children, based on curricular fields, towards achieving the competencies for the first and second degree of curriculum (MASHT, 2016). The evaluation of children is not carried through grades but through other forms and instruments, and they can be evaluated with motivational expressions, symbolic appraisals such as star, heart, sun, etc. in order to develop creativity by encouraging the achievement of results for classroom learning topics, and scale results (MASHT, 2018).

METHOD

The paper is based on a quantitative approach through a questionnaire related to practical work in preschool institutions. Simultaneously, in order to have a higher credibility with the main research issues, a qualitative approach has been applied, through interviews with headmasters and educators and through the analysis of assessment instruments which are applied in the classroom provided by educators while working with children (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

The Sampling techniques

The research results were based on data collection through the quantitative method, where the survey technique was applied, and the data was obtained through 150

questionnaires (consisting of 15 questions) completed by educators in 20 preschool institutions and preparatory classes where assessment instruments were collected. Qualitative methods were also applied (N = 20 analysis of assessment instruments by 20 educators from different kindergartens, N = 6 individual interviews with educators and N = 2 interviews with headmasters). Both interview protocols consisted of 7 questions. Only questions relevant to the purpose of the research were analysed. The population included in the interviews are educators of 6 preschool institutions in the municipalities of Prishtina and Gjakova and 2 headmasters, while the selected sample was random for the purpose of fulfilling the research.

The research was conducted with headmasters and educators in preschool institutions, with a special focus on educators working in groups of 5-6 years old in order to analyze the application of assessment of children of this age by educators of preschool institutions, and of the qualitative method. The qualitative method was performed without numerical operations by analyzing verbally the obtained data, while the quantitative data were collected and analyzed as numerical data (Vogrinic & Saqipi, 2020).

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

Table 1
Reliability statistics for the educator questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.750	.737	21

Using Cronbach's alpha as a means of measuring the internal consistency of the questionnaire used for educators, we can conclude that there is an acceptable reliability score ($\alpha = 0.737$) (Papilaya et al., 2019).

Findings and Analysis of Research Data

Quantitative Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through the SPSS program which was applied for data processing where the required answers were obtained. Based on the way the questionnaire was designed and applied, some of the questions were analyzed through descriptive analysis and Pearson's correlation.

Table 2
Demographic characteristics of the study sample for the age and work experience of educators

Demographics	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Age		
25-28	20	13.3
30-40 years	67	44.4
41-50 years	39	26.0
51-65 years	24	16.0
Experience as an educator		
0-3 years	30	20
4-6 years	34	22.7
7-10 years	23	15.3
10+ years	63	42

From the gathered data it can be noticed that the age of educators working with children is mainly older seeing that 42% of educators are over the age of 41 which is linked to the data that the largest percentage of educators 42% working in preschool institutions have more than 10 years of working experience, furthermore 15% of them also have over 7-10 years of work experience which means that their education was completed many years ago and may negatively affect the evaluation of children since they have not received information about the evaluation systematically.

Table 3
The trainings that educators have attended concerning the assessment of children
9. Which of the trainings you have attended are aimed at assessing preschool children?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Adapting the child to the kindergarten	6	4.0	4.0	4.0
Inclusion	4	2.7	2.7	6.7
Preschool education curriculum	75	50.0	50.0	56.7
Education for children's rights	3	2.0	2.0	58.7
Any	35	23.3	23.3	82.0
Step by step	4	2.7	2.7	84.7
Standards in early childhood	6	4.0	4.0	88.7
All	10	6.7	6.7	95.3
Formative assessment	4	2.7	2.7	98.0
Hyperactivity management	1	.7	.7	98.7
Observational techniques and their use in assessing children	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

From the gathered data we understand that educators have not conducted training related to the assessment of children in preschool institutions as 50% of educators indicate that they have completed the training for the Preschool Education Curriculum which includes the assessment of children as well, while only 2.7% of educators have indicated that they have completed training on Formative Assessment and 1.3% of educators indicated that they have completed training on Observational Techniques and their implementation in child assessment. A large percentage of educators do not have knowledge about child assessment as 50% have not even completed the training for the Preschool Education Curriculum.

Table 4
The forms of assessment that educators apply in the classroom

12.3 Formative and summative evaluation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Apply	111	74.0	74.0	74.0
	It does not get applied	39	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0	

In the answers regarding the application of assessment in the classroom, 74% of educators indicate that they apply formative and summative assessment. Although in the other answers we understood that the educators have not completed the training for formative assessment, they show that they apply this form of assessment in the classroom with children.

Table 5
How is the evaluation of children in the classroom carried out by the educators

14.1 Class observation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Apply	138	92.0	92.0	92.0
	It does not get applied	12	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0	

When asked how educators carry out the assessment of children in the classroom, we get the answer that 92% of educators manage to carry out the assessment in the classroom through observation. It is considered a very high percentage of educators who monitor the children during the implementation of activities in various fields.

Table 6
How is the evaluation of children in the classroom carried out by the educators

14.5 The writing of the comments on worksheets completed by the children					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Apply	61	40.7	40.7	40.7
	It does not get applied	89	59.3	59.3	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0	

According to the data, it is understood that 40.7% of educators write comments, while a very large percentage 59.3% of the educators do not write comments on the worksheets completed by children. Writing comments or presenting colourful pictures to show children where they have made mistakes or successfully completed the task should be applied as part of formative assessment. The answers contradict the answers to question 12.3 where educators have shown that they apply formative assessment in the classroom. Hence if children are observed and commented on their achievements it is an indication that formative assessment is applied.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The research was also conducted through a qualitative approach and was analyzed through thematic analysis, with the transfer of unprocessed data, processing the data based on relevance to the research topic and the identification of categories involved in another level of conceptualization. The steps followed consisted of achieving a clear interpretation of the findings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013).

Table 7
Interpretation of data from interviews with six educators in preparatory classes

Preliminary Topic	Linking professional development with child assessment	Trainings that have assisted educators in assessing children	Is the assessment checklist readymade or is it planned as needed for the assessment of the children
INT1	Assessments are in a correlation with professional development. The reason for the correlation is that they are indicators of the learning outcomes achieved in children.	Formative Assessment (continuous)	Through the Checklist control protocol
INT2	I see the connection between evaluation and professional development in attending the trainings related to evaluation and professional development, taking into account the achievements of science in the twentieth century. 21. I have personally benefited from various trainings and my professional experience.	Formative and summative evaluation where I practice the 'traffic light' technique and mutual evaluation.	During the activities I use different forms of evaluation such as: describing of the mimics of the emotional face, etc.
INT3	We did not attend any relevant training for child assessment for the preparatory class.	"Assessment for learning" but it was not relevant for the assessment of preschool children.	We do not have a ready- made child assessment checklist, we have compiled it ourselves based on the learning outcomes.
INT4	During the evaluation we see where we currently stand and where we want to go; it greatly affects the professional development of the educator. All relevant child information should be recorded; assessment should be an ongoing process. Training affects professional development and has certainly changed my approach evaluating the children.	Up to date we didn't have any training only for preschool children; we have only completed training for general assessment.	We have prepared the lists based on the needs of the children.
INT5	Professional development aims to improve teachers' knowledge, their skills for raising the quality of professional work. Using professional knowledge and skills, the teacher monitors, observes, and uses various forms of evaluation of the children.	New core curriculum	We have compiled the checklist based on the child's needs
INT6	Professional development aims to prepare and train teachers to apply reforms in practice in their classrooms. Receiving new information continuously has a positive effect on the professional development of the teachers, while children are provided with a warm and comfortable environment by including them in learning activities to achieve learning outcomes. The attended trainings had a positive impact on working with children, on observing them, checklists, and other forms of assessment. I received information from various administrative instructions and documents.	"Assessment for learning" but there were no relevant examples for the assessment of preschool children.	The observation protocol is planned and implemented through the implementation of activities based on the needs of the child. The checklist is planned to be implemented based on the age of the children for all the fields. The opinion of the paediatrician and the educator is prescribed on the child's development regarding language, cognitive, motor, and social-emotional development. Parents are also required to reflect on their children's observation and evaluation.

This table helps us analyze the data gathered from six educators in six different preparatory classes in the municipalities of Gjakova and Prishtina. We note that the trainings that educators have participated have a positive impact in their professional development and increase the quality of work that correlates with changing the assessment approach to the results achieved with children.

* Educators with codes INT1, INT2, INT3, INT4 and INT6 show that they have completed the training “Assessment for learning”, a training which includes planning and implementation of formative assessment and summative assessment, but it is about the assessment of children in all grades and there is no particular segment about the preparatory classes. Whereas, the educator with code INT5 confirms the participation in the training “New core curriculum” a training that includes planning and implementation of assessment for the preparatory class in all curricular areas.

* Concerning the application of the evaluation tools in the classroom, the interviewee with the code INT1 indicates that she uses checklists but does not give any explanation on how she plans them. From the interview with code INT2 the educator uses descriptive words and faces where emotions are expressed but does not indicate a proper assessment planning. From INT3, INT4, INT5 and INT6 we understand that educators plan their own checklists for assessing children based on their needs, since they do not have any suitable ready-made form of evaluation tool.

* Through data obtained from INT6 we understand that the educator has information for planning and implementing various forms of assessment for child development including observation, completing checklists, children’s portfolio. She manages to cooperate with the paediatrician who describes his opinion on the child’s language, cognitive, motor, and social-emotional development. The information is also forwarded to parents and requires from them to reflect (if they agree or have any additional requirement) regarding the assessment made by the educator.

The analysis of 5 checklists as evaluation tools applied by the educators in institutions
5 different checklists taken by 20 educators are presented and analyzed (since within 20 checklists there are similarities in the forms of assessment with grades, words, signs and letters, therefore only 5 of them were analyzed).

summative assessment are written in horizontal form. We can notice a difference between the evaluation with signs e.g. in the numbers of children in the evaluation checklist 1, 2, 3, the evaluation with signs is the same for all three children, while the summative evaluation of children varies: number 1 - satisfactory achievement, number 2 - complete achievement, number 3 - medium achievement. If the sign assessment is the same then the question remains: where is the educator based for a different summative assessment among children?

DK3: *Third document* - presents the formative assessment for children while the summative assessment is fulfilled for all subjects, but it is not understood where the educator is based to achieve the final evaluation.

DK4: *The fourth document* - shows the assessment made by the educator for the field - the subject of mathematics, where the children must meet certain criteria to be assessed whether they achieve them fully, moderately or not at all. It is noticed that there is a lack of assessment in many activities that have to be carried with children in the classroom for them to develop in the specific field - the subject of mathematics, there is also a lack of summative assessment.

DK5: *The fifth document* - shows that the educator has fulfilled in a descriptive manner every detail about the child's personality, communication and interaction with other children and their achievements in all the fields and subjects. Moreover, through a descriptive grade - full achievement - is achieved the summative assessment of the child; we notice that the educator makes a good assessment of the children and it is clearly understood the child's achievement for all curricular fields- subjects, this assessment is clear also for the parents in understanding the achievements or shortcomings of their child. However, the formative or continuous assessment is lacking in order to understand on how the final evaluation was reached.

Table 8
Data interpretation from the interviews with two headmasters of the preschool institutions

Data source	In which document are the educators based to plan the way of evaluation	How do the educators plan the classroom assessment?	How do the educators evaluate children in the classroom?	How do educators convey information to parents about child assessment?
INTD1	<p>a. Educators working with children aged 0-5 are based on the document - Standards of preschool education.</p> <p>b. Educators working with children aged 5-6 years are based on the document - Preschool Education Curriculum (2016)</p>	<p>a. Educators who work with children aged 0-3 years implement - Planning for a week,</p> <p>b. Educators working with children aged 5-6 implement Planning for a day</p>	<p>a. Class assessment ,</p> <p>b. Children's portfolio,</p> <p>c. Peer review,</p> <p>d. Mutual evaluation among children,</p> <p>e. Writing comments on worksheets fulfilled by children,</p> <p>f. Placing signs on activity sheets fulfilled by children,</p> <p>g. Reflect on each implemented unit (how the planning and realization of activities went, what needs to be completed for other following units)</p> <p>Complete the Observation Protocol for each child, and currently the observation instrument made now by 'Save the Children' (necessary for child observation 2 times a year)</p>	<p>a. Daily meetings,</p> <p>b. Communicating by telephone</p> <p>c. Completing assessment sheets on a weekly basis</p> <p>d. Completing assessment sheets for the semester</p> <p>e. Upon completion of the observation protocol, it is then communicated to parents to fill in any shortcomings</p>
INTD2	<p>a. Educators are based on curriculum</p> <p>b. Evaluation is not based on standards.</p> <p>Assessment is carried by observation by setting some criteria based on the age and development of the child.</p>	<p>a. Planning for a day - educators evaluate them 4 times a day - during the morning meeting, activity, discussion and free game.</p> <p>b. One week planning - educators forward the assessment to the parents as a weekly report</p> <p>c. I try (as a headmaster) to get information for evaluation. I have obtained some standardized questionnaires and translated them from English to Albanian and they are fulfilled 3 times a year - for the children's body measures and weight, biological and cognitive development. It is fulfilled by the educator, psychologist and headmaster.</p>	<p>a. Class assessment ,</p> <p>b. Children's portfolio,</p> <p>c. Peer review,- it is not done</p> <p>d. Mutual evaluation among children,</p> <p>e. Writing comments on worksheets fulfilled by children,</p> <p>f. Placing signs on activity sheets fulfilled by children,</p> <p>g. Reflect on each implemented unit (how the planning and realization of activities went, what needs to be completed for other following units)</p> <p>Preschool children have special assessments - they are assessed every day, while the assessments are forwarded to parents every week. Each child has a file with tests. The last month of the year, preschool children are evaluated with 15-20 tests to evaluate if they are prepared for the first grade. The tests are handed over to the parents at the end.</p>	<p>a. Daily meetings,</p> <p>b. Communicating by telephone</p> <p>c. Completing assessment sheets on a weekly basis</p> <p>d. Completing assessment sheets for the semester</p> <p>e. The communication with parents is done in organized meetings in order for them to fill in potential shortcomings</p>

INTD 1: From the first interview it is understood that educators working with children aged 0 - 5 plan the assessment method “based on the document - Standards of preschool education”, while educators working with children aged 5 - 6 are “based on the document Curriculum of preschool education 2016”. The headmaster shows that planning is carried based on the age of the children – “with children aged 0-3 they carry-Planning for a week”, while “for children aged 5-6 they carry Planning for a day”, where no evaluation plan is emphasized but only the general work plan and the age of 3-5 years is not included. The various forms of assessment and the communication with the parents that are said to be planned – find within table 8. INTD 2: From the second interview it is understood that in order to plan the way of assessment, “educators are based on the curriculum”, a document which is planned to be implemented only for the ages of 5-6 years where “educators evaluate them 4 times a day - during the morning meeting, activity, discussion and free play”. The planning which is carried out by the educators for the evaluation of the children as a “Planning for a week - educators forward the assessment to the parents as a weekly report”. The headmaster says that she gets the information by herself for some standardized questionnaires and translates them from English to Albanian and they are administered 3 times a year - for children’s body measures and weight, and their biological and cognitive development. It is completed by the educator, psychologist and the headmaster. The various forms of assessment that are said to be planned and carried out by educators - find within table 8.

DISCUSSIONS

The systematically collected information serve in informing children themselves and parents in order to understand where they have succeeded or where they have stalled during development in different fields (see document of general standards) (MASHT, 2006). The best way to avoid failure is to monitor children closely to understand their progress and development (Drummond, 2011). Therefore, the teachers use experience to challenge and improve themselves on the way of carrying the assessment. Simultaneously, they can thus identify their need for personal development and this consists at the same time with the criteria of formative evaluation (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Based on the theoretical aspect, it is recommended that assessment in early childhood should be based on the application of useful methods for collecting information through checklists, children’s portfolios (Slentz, 2008); educators should systematically monitor to follow the child development (MASHT, 2009). Therefore, educators need to plan different forms of child assessment because due to the intended observation they manage to identify the strengths and weaknesses of children in order to be able to reflect on the commitment and change they can carry in collaboration with parents (Balduzzi & Pironi, 2019).

1. Perception of educators about personal competencies related to the planning and implementation of children's assessment through relevant instruments in line with official documents

The data gathered through the quantitative method show that 42% of the educators are over the age of 41 and have more than 10 years of work experience. It is implied that during their schooling the educators did not receive enough information regarding the assessment that they have to carry out while working with children. Furthermore, educators have not attended adequate training related to the assessment of children in preschool institutions, since a sole training which includes general data and only 50% of trained educators is insufficient to alter and supplement the necessary information for educators for them to carry the proper assessment of children for all the activities in every field of work. Through theoretical and quantitative data, we come to understand that the lack of educators' professional development negatively affects their perception regarding the planning and implementation of assessment for children through relevant instruments in line with official documents. The educator from INT4 explains that "So far we have never had training for preschool children only, we have only attended trainings for general assessment", therefore we conclude that obtaining information through systematic adequate trainings has a positive effect on preparing educators in fulfilling children's needs. Based on the data obtained from the documents, it is understood that the educators' lack of professional development affects their perception about personal competencies related to the planning and implementation of assessment for children through various instruments in line with official documents. According to the author Andersson (2015), it is concluded that teachers had changed the form of assessment for students after being professionally trained in the application of formative assessment and applying novel forms of formative assessment in meeting students' learning needs in the best way.

2. The link between educators' perceptions of children's progress/ stagnation and the exchange of information towards children and parents

Based on the questionnaire results, the educators show that 74% apply formative assessment in the classroom with children. On the other hand, the writing of comments on the worksheets that children fill in during the activities is carried by 40.7% of the educators only, while 59.3% do not write comments or put signs for children and parents to understand whether they have or have not completed successfully the activities. According to INT6: "The observation protocol is planned and implemented through the realization of activities based on the needs of the child", the cooperation is achieved with the paediatrician in order to describe the opinion about the child's achievement in terms of language, cognitive, motor, social-emotional development, parents are also required to reflect on their children's observation and evaluation. Therefore, it is related to the theoretical side that there should be a cooperation agreement between the educator and the parent who jointly set common objectives for the growth, education and development of the child (Crema, 2011). The main focus should be on pedagogical issues to improve teaching and learning as schools and teachers themselves are

responsible for providing quality education to children and reporting to parents on the progress of their children (KEEN, 2018).

3. The information gathered by educators to improve outcomes in meeting the needs of children in all curricular fields

It is considered that there is a high percentage of educators who show that they observe children during the implementation of activities in various curricular fields, where 92% of them explain that they manage to achieve assessment in the classroom through observation. This contradicts the data of the other answer where it is understood that 59.3% of educators do not write comments or set coloured pictures to show children if they have or have not successfully completed the task as part of the formative assessment. If we refer to the literature, the educators need to be clear when commenting in order to improve their work; in order for the children to understand where they stand and how should they proceed (Havens et al., 2012). From the data presented in the documents, it is understood that educators try to collect information on children, except the documents do not correspond to the relevant educational documents that serve in achieving success and improve children's outcomes in all curricular fields.

4. The educators' readiness in applying various ways of assessing children in preschool institutions

The analysis of the questionnaire provides an answer to the fourth research question "How ready and prepared are the educators in applying various and advanced ways of assessing children in preschool institutions?" Educators are not ready or sufficiently prepared to apply various and advanced ways of assessing children (based on official documents) and fail to plan observation instruments to collect and interpret sufficient data on children's development, due to their lack of knowledge. Based on the data obtained from the documents that educators plan and apply for the assessment of children in preschool institutions, it is noticed that there are various assessments carried incorrectly by the educators.

If we try to support these findings in theory, for example in a survey which measured the perceptions of teachers for their level of preparation on student assessment from the teacher development programs, 85% of the respondents reported that they were not well prepared. But when they were asked for the current level of preparation, they replied that they are well prepared for the assessment. This indicates that teachers think they develop skills while working but not in training environments (Mertler, 1999, as cited in Mertler, 2009).

Therefore, we can conclude that if the educator does not carry out assessment through relevant document-based instruments, we cannot directly link it only to the lack of training. It can be linked also to their personal perception of assessment, with their low awareness of the importance of assessment in early childhood, as well as with the lack of cooperation with colleagues (low functioning of mentoring within the institution).

On the other hand, since the assessment instruments are not designed according to a standard based on official documents, educators will not show readiness, willingness

and competence for their proper use. This is because educators do not have information on how to design assessment instruments, through which they would collect information, registration and reporting. Lack of relevant training leads to doubt in the low quality of training, inadequate training, low knowledge of trainers and the way of training providers selection.

CONCLUSIONS

The results from the research show that the lack of adequate education (training) for assessment affects the perception of educators about personal competencies related to the planning and implementation of the assessment for children. According to this, educators think that they have not been offered relevant training and therefore, they lack sufficient assessment skills. There is an incorrect applicability of assessment instruments, as they do not comply with official documents (due to the low information of educators) and thus, make it impossible to achieve results and success with children. In addition, it is found that there is a link between educators' perception of children's progress and stagnation, and the exchange of information with parents and children, through the exchange of some assessment instruments observing the development of children. Educators do not collect information about children when observing them, so we cannot determine any impact of this information on improving the results in meeting the needs of children in all curricular areas.

The results of the research provide opportunities of recognizing the importance of preparing educators for work with children in early childhood, through their individual perception on how to evaluate children at the most sensitive age, when their personalities are being shaped. Also, the aspect of cooperation with parents is included to identify the progress and stagnation of children in order to intervene on time in any circumstance. On the other hand, the results serve to recognize the importance of using official documents so that during planning of the assessment, the children results will be in accordance with their needs in all curricular areas.

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