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*Assessment of Children
in Early Childhood Centres*

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*Assessment of Children
in Early Childhood Centres*

**Report to the
Ministry of Education**

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Project Co-ordinator
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Assessment of Children in Early Childhood Centres.
Contract between Palmerston North College of Education and Ministry
of Education.

Abstract

This study examined the procedures and methods of assessment of children used in kindergartens and childcare centres throughout New Zealand.

Through the use of questionnaires to 269 centres followed by structured interviews at 24 centres, and an observation exercise at 12 centres, information was gathered on:

- the aim or purpose of assessing children in early childhood centres
- the types of procedures used for assessing children
- the areas of development covered by the various methods of assessment; and
- the use to which the assessment information was put once it had been collected.

Staff in centres were also asked about their perceived current needs for carrying out assessment of children.

The study found that a diversity of approaches were used for assessing children. While 41% of centres had written assessment of all children, the remainder either did not have any written assessment or only assessed some children. Observations were the main form of assessment used and this was usually supplemented by other assessment procedures. Some children were more likely to be observed than others. Those children who had a special need or were a concern for some reason featured more in observations than the quieter or busy children.

The main purposes for assessing children were for record keeping (accountability) and to help plan a programme. Respondents to the questionnaire said their assessment information was used for planning programmes to cater for individual needs and working on or filling gaps

in the development of children. In structured interviews, staff reported that assessment information was used mostly 'to plan a programme' or 'to work with parents'.

Assessment information was shared with a variety of other people but mostly other staff and parents. The questionnaire and interview data showed that staff believed that physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language development were the areas of development that they covered most, with less emphasis on aesthetic/creative and cultural development. The observation exercise showed that social, emotional and socio-emotional development were observed more than the other areas of development.

Many centres saw the value in assessment however some were quite worried about how it could be practically carried out.

Comments specifically about the assessment of children were found in the charter of 46% of centres interviewed.

The frequency of assessment ranged from daily to yearly.

Information from the study was used in conjunction with the literature review to critically evaluate what was happening in the area of assessment of children in kindergartens and childcare centres in New Zealand.

The components needed in order for assessment to be beneficial to children, teachers, parents/whanau and the community were highlighted.

Recommendations were made and guidelines formulated on the principles that need to be present if worthwhile assessment of children is to be carried out in early childhood centres.

Preface and Acknowledgements

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