Instrument Development and Validation for Quality Early Childhood Curriculum in the Malaysian Context

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Abstract : The early childhood care and education (ECCE) in Malaysia aspire to develop children who are intellectually, emotionally, physically and spiritually balanced. This aspiration can only materialise if the early childhood program developed comprehensive and is of high quality comparable to international standards. As such, there is a pressing need to assess the quality of the program in an all-encompassing manner. The overall research project aims at developing a comprehensive and integrated model of high-quality Malaysian ECCE. One of the major objectives of this project is to assess and evaluate the scope and quality of the existing ECCE programs in Malaysia. To this end, a specific aspect of this objective is to develop and validate an instrument to assess and evaluate the ECCE curriculum of the country. Thus this paper describes the development and validation of an instrument to explore the quality of early childhood care and education curriculum currently implemented in the country's ECCE centres. The generation of the constructs and items were based on a set of criteria mapped against existing ECCE practice, document analyses, expert interviews and panel discussions. The items went through expert validation and were field tested on 597 ECCE teachers. The data obtained went through an exploratory factor analysis to validate the constructs of the instrument followed by reliability studies on internal consistency based on the Cronbach Alpha values. The final set of items for the ECCE curriculum instrument, earmarked for the main study, consists of four constructs namely philosophy and core values, curriculum content, curriculum review and unique features. Each construct consists of between 21 to 3 items with a total of 36 items in all. The reliability coefficients for each construct range from 0.65 to 0.961. These values are within the acceptable limits for a reliable instrument to be used in the main study.
Keywords : early childhood and care education, instrument development, reliability studies, validity studies
Conference Title : ICECET 2017 : International Conference on Early Childhood Education and Technology
Conference Location : Venice, Italy
Conference Dates : August 14-15, 2017