

4.1 MEANING OF CHILD STUDY

Child study is the process of observing with the aim of learning more about a particular child or children. It is a detailed examination of a child as a single case. Child study is an attempt to find out as much as possible about a particular child by spending time with the child and learning about his/her physical, mental, character as well as personality and relevant facts about the environment in which the child is growing (Farrant 1984).

4.2 IMPORTANCE OF DOING CHILD STUDY

Child study makes the teacher to become knowledgeable in child development so as to support children's proper growth, development and learning in the following specific ways:

- Child study helps a teacher to understand different circumstances and factors that influence development and learning in children.
- It exposes teachers to acceptable ways of conducting child study.
- Gives the teacher basis for advising parents on their children behavior and needs.
- Child study guides and helps the teacher to plan his teaching task using appropriate methods to support teaching- learning process.
- Give genuine and reliable feedback in regard to child's progress.
- Through child study, problems children are addressed accordingly



Activity

1 Explain what you understand by concept of child study.

2. Write down the importance of doing child study to a child

1. Discus how parents would benefit from your child study

4.3 FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A CHILD FOR STUDY

There are various factors to consider when identifying a child for study:

- Outstanding characters: that is a child who either shows restlessness or hyperactivity, extreme curiosity, ever punctual or clean child, one who seeks attention and love or a very talkative child
- Behavioural disorders e.g. emotional imbalance, moody, anti social behavior like fighting, use of vulgar/abusive language, frequent crying for no genuine reason
- Performance in class work
- Lack of requirements i.e. ever lacking pencils or snacks
- Persistent indiscipline e.g. routine late coming to school, failure to complete class work, fighting
- Distance from home to school – the distance has implications on time and transport costs
- The type of family/attitudes of parents (as may be observed at school)



Note:

As a teacher, you should consider any other behavior or condition of the child that is unique or significantly different from that of other children.



Activity

Identify other factors that can be in your area that you can consider as you choose a child for study.

4.4 METHODS FOR COLLECTING DATA

Since child study is done in a systematic way, you need to use organized methods and tools of collecting data. Below are some of the common methods you can use to collect data:

Observation:

Observation refers to the actual or direct watching of a child continuously or at given intervals in a natural setting. Short-term observation is mainly done in a day or a week to note behavior abnormalities in children

and rectify them as soon as possible. For example, physical abnormalities which call for immediate attention; behavioural or psychological disorders which may require professional help.

Long term observation is done with the intention of following up the child for detailed information which are less obvious to detect in the short term. Long term observation often requires more intensive and prolonged observations for accurate judgment and management.

Observation can be indirect in that you work or play with the child as you observe. The child being observed will not be aware that he/she is being watched and so does not change behavior. The child behaves naturally as he/she learns, works and plays in the natural setting.

In direct observations, the person studying children has a special seat or place to do one thing of studying a child or children. He/she is clearly noticed as an observer. The advantages include; the observer will not lose any information as in the participant observation where s/he has to commit to memory everything and record later.

Disadvantages are that the observer will appear as a visitor all the time and may find it hard to develop a close relationship with the child; it is also possible for children to act or stage manage, since they are aware that they are being watched.



Activity

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of observation method of data collection.

Advantages

Disadvanges

Tools used to do observation

Anecdotal records – It is recording everything observed without interpreting the data. It collects detailed field notes with exact words spoken. It is useful in that it presents the behavior observed in a natural setting as a flash back. A researcher with short hand skills and speed can gather plenty of data.

Reflective Journal

This is where the observer tries to make meaning of each observation in relation to the situations surrounding it. It consists of interpretations and analysis of the behavior patterns observed. A reflection describes what happened, examines how the behaviour happened, what it means and suggests possible actions to take to improve the situation. Read the sample reflection below.



Activity

Make a one day reflective journal on a child's play time

This time, I wanted to follow up Trevor's eating habits. Trevor, 3 years old, had exhibited poor eating habits the last time I observed him during lunch time. Trevor, as usual, was busy with the toys. He was taken up in his play that he didn't look up even when I patted on his back. When called for food, he left everything and went to the mat on the verandah. The maid came in time to wash his hands but he was set to eat. The grace was not said. He seemed to be hungry and in need of food.

But, he didn't behave any better this time when served with rice again, he didn't wait to say the grace and behaved as though he was very hungry. His mother had to remind him to wash his hands. As he did with the peas and rice, he sorted out the pieces of chicken and left most of the rice on plate. He left the plate on the mat where he sat to eat and picked his toys to play. The maid was instructed to feed him but he screamed till he was left to do what he preferred most, playing of course.

The two times I observed him at meal time, Trevor eats only sauce! Most children like rice, but not Trevor. Probably rice is a daily dish and he has lost interest in it. I have to find out about the family weekly menu. It is also possible that he has low appetite. Being the only 'baby' he may lack company. Similarly, he may be served with lots of junk food frequently. I also noted that Trevor has not been trained to take keep his plate after eating. He has not mastered the routine of washing hands either. Could the mother think he is too young to learn to do simple things by himself? I shall talk to his mother about his behavior, but after observing him eating for a third time.



Activity:

Did the observer make any conclusions about Trevor's eating habits?

Give reasons to support your response.

What interventions would you suggest if you had studied Trevor?

Checklists

A checklist is a tool with pre-defined behavior/competences, which the person studying the child goes out for, as s/he observes the child. A checklist can also be a list of items or behavioural patterns/competences, expected of a child of a specified age. The observer uses the checklist to note the behavior/competences demonstrated by the child. The observer marks the behavior as **observed (O)** or **not observed (NO)**. It also has a section for comments.

Sample Checklist Physical development for a 5 year old

Behavior / Competence	Observed	Not observed	Comment on
Can stand and balance on one leg			<i>Activity, duration,</i>
Walks and runs steadily			<i>Speed, distance</i>
Holds a pencil firmly – has firm grip for objects			<i>Types of objects held</i>
Picks tiny objects with two/here fingers			<i>Name objects picked</i>
Sees and names objects an distance of one meter			<i>Describe sizes</i>
Climbs up and down the stairs easily without help			<i>No. of stairs, speed</i>
Can write within lines in a book			<i>Letter size, space</i>

In the column for comments, make simple relevant descriptions to explain some detail on the behavior observed. For example, *during a contest with peers Trevor stood on one leg for about a minute but still lacked proper balance as he kept swinging back and forth till he fell.*

Follow up Activity

1. Develop checklists for other aspects [mental, social, moral, and emotional] a 5 year old.
2. Using your knowledge of child growth and development develop simple checklists for different ages.

Diary

A diary is a book where summarized events of the day are noted. It covers the activity that happened and the time the event took place. The observations are recorded in note form or in brief descriptions. It takes note of only the key events or landmarks. The recording can be done at a given interval, for example hourly or once a day.

Documentary Review

Another way to collect information is by studying available records/documents, which give facts about the child. Such records can be categorized as follows:

- Health records: immunization, medical cards, birth certificates, growth monitoring sheet.
- Academic records: exercise books, assessment records e.g. reports, test, progress sheets.
- Attendance records: register,
- Admission records: admission forms, caregiver's ID; Gate pass

Interview

It is a face-to-face dialogue or interaction with the child to assess and also understand his/her opinion, experiences, views and perceptions on something. The advantage is that it is easy for you to sense possible loopholes, lies and read mood/attitude of the child, which may be missing in questionnaires.

An example of an interview in which Piaget questioned a 5 year child about understanding dreams:

Where do dreams come from? *I think you sleep so well so that you dream.*

Does it come from us or from outside? *From outside.*

When you're in bed and you dream, where is the dream? *In my bed, under the blanket. I don't really know. If it was in my stomach, the bones would be in the way and I shouldn't see it.*

Is the dream there when you sleep? *Yes it is the bed beside me....*

You see the dream when you're in the room, but if I were in the room, too, should I see it? No, grownups don't ever dream.

Can two people have the same dream? No, never.

When the dream is the room, is it near you? Yes, there. [pointing to 30cm in front of his eyes]

Laura (1999) pg 34 as cited in Piaget, 1926/1930 pp97-98.

You can see how Piaget used a flexible, conversational style to encourage the child to expand his ideas. Prompts are essential to give a fuller picture of the child's reasoning.

Informal Talks/Conversations

This is a relaxed means of obtaining factual information. The method is relaxed in that the participants talk freely in a natural setting without any fear of being recorded/studied. In fact, they are not aware that they are being observed/interviewed.

Questionnaire

It is a collection of written question items usually answered in the absence of the researcher. It is a tool that allows respondents to give their views openly. It can also be close ended, where the respondents select one response from multiple choices to establish the views over a large area in a short time.

A good Questionnaire

- Avoids more than one question in a question
- Tries to avoid confusing words but uses language which is familiar to the respondents
- Should have a lay out to facilitate flow of questions
- Should have clear instructions
- Should avoid lengthy questions



Activity

Develop simple sample tools for collecting data on a specified child. Differentiate among the

tools used to collect data during observations.

- Checklist
- Interview guide
- Simple questionnaire

4.5 PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING CHILD STUDY

Identifying the child

Identify the child that you need to consider for the child study. You can consider the factors above to use when selecting a child for the child study.

Permission

Obtain permission to carry out child study from relevant authorities. This can be the parents of the child, the school where the child is studying or any other relevant authorization as may be dictated in the area. Develop and share the observation timetable with the school i.e. concerned teachers, head teacher and parents. Discuss it and make necessary changes to fit in their programmes.

Planning

Plan appropriately for the child study. Get to know what you want to study so as to design a better strategy to get the right information. Consider the following:

- Problem identification (what is the issue that is making me start the study?)
- Statement of purpose (Why do I want to observe the child?)
- What do I want to find out?
- How do I want to do it? What do I want to use? Who will be useful in providing data?
- What tools and resources do I need?
- When shall I do the study (duration/dates)

Doing Child Study (observing and recording data)

After selecting the child, design an appropriate way to start studying the child. The best way to develop understanding of young children is through a combination of interacting with the child, interacting with the

child's Parents/ caregiver, reading about them, and observing their involvement with other persons and actively interacting with them.

Select an appropriate place where to study the children. The aspect to study will determine the place where the child will be studied. For example:

- During play – to see habits and behavior, choices of games and materials, interests, frequently visited centres, what s/he does in the centre
- In the classroom to see interactions, concentration, and involvement in class work, interests, speed at which s/he accomplishes tasks, or works out things, favorite corner and punctuality.
- Dining hall to see eating habits, sharing, types of food packed and appetite
- In the compound to see level of physical development, movement patterns, speed, balance, gross and finer muscles development, definite movements, purposeful movement, language used and interpersonal relationships, development of social skills.
- At home to see bonding with parents, activities done, sleeping patterns, likes and dislikes, language used, self administration, initiative making.

Keeping records

Keep a record of your observations

Find time, each day to read, reflect on and interpret (make meaning of) your observations

Analysis

Analyze the information collected to get meaning out of them. Use the following questions to guide you.

- In brief, what exactly did I find out about this child?
- What meaning can I make from my findings?
- What does the data say or suggest?
- What conclusion can I draw about the child's development in various aspects? Judge or compare the child's development against standardized patterns given by research. Avoid drawing hasty conclusions on the child's behavior/character or conduct. In case of uncertainty, make follow up visits to find out more information or to clarify issues. Use more than one source of information, especially in case of doubt

Suggestions and Recommendations

From your conclusion, you should be able to come up with suggestions and recommendations that you have a basis. As you make the suggestions, consider specifically:

- What will I do to help the child develop and learn better?
- Who is concerned and what can they do?

Intervention and Sharing Findings

The suggestions and recommendations that you make should be acted upon by you and any other person you have identified as having capacity to help the child. Plan and implement interventions to support the child and family e.g. planting vegetables, demonstrating proper cooking methods, developing menus for normal and sick children. Note that interventions will vary depending on the nature of the problems or challenges you will find out in each family or with each child. It is important that as you implement your recommendations, you also do the following:

- Note the progress being made by the child
- Check to see if more action needed
- Share your concerns with parents or colleagues who handle the same child

Ethical Issues during Child Study

Ethical issues refer to elements of discipline in child study. Like all professions have a code to guide their conduct, teachers also have to be disciplined while doing child study.

- Respect the rights of respondents and stakeholders you may meet in the study
- Seek permission in a formal way from the potential institutions or organizations
- Seeking individual consent to participate in the study (any individual reserves the right to decline from participating in the study).
- Keep all data confidential and not share with persons not concerned.
- Share the findings to help the stakeholders or participants improve their performance or for their addition input on the findings (for consultancy research, the donors may challenge certain things).
- Giving feedback is crucial if the findings are to be used in supporting (not causing trouble or shame or guilt to) the respondents
- Avoid treating individuals with contempt because you have known them a little more in terms of weaknesses and strengths.

- Treat the data fairly by interpreting accurately (do not exaggerate)

4.6 FORMAT FOR CHILD STUDY – REPORT WRITING

TITLE/COVER PAGE (Name, course, year, topic, date of submission- month & year, where)

Dedication (give special tribute to people you treasure for their support, care or love)

Acknowledgement (outline personalities, organizations and state ways in which they have supported you in doing your child study e.g. family members, colleagues, lecturers, school teachers, parents etc.)

Declaration (the candidate makes a statement to affirm that s/he has done the child study personally and has not copied or reproduced somebody else’s work. For example:

I [name] hereby declare that this child study report is my original piece of work and that I have not duplicated anybody’s work. I am presenting it for marking for the first time.

Approval page (Put name of Supervisor and provide space for signature and date with these words:

This is to certify that the child study by[Name of student] has been done under my supervision and is now ready for submission for marking. Append the name and signature of supervisors

List of abbreviations used (List acronyms and their full forms e.g. LES - Low Economic Status)

Introduction: The introduction gives a general picture about the child study plan. It states the overall aim or importance of conducting child study – why is important for a teacher to study children or a child at any given time.

A statement of Purpose: State your general intention e.g. The purpose of studying ...[not real name of child] is to gather essential information about her/his development patterns, problems and school progress so as to promote his/her development.

Objectives: state in specific terms what you intend to do – steps towards realizing the purpose)

Definition of key Terms – tell what the different terms will mean as per your child study e.g. the term **child** here will be used to mean the children in the age bracket 3-6 years, **caregivers** are all people who are

responsible for supporting the child in different ways; they are directly concerned about the proper development of the child e.g. teachers, doctors, policemen, spiritual leaders etc)

METHODOLOGY – (Describe the area of study –setting i.e. institution [home, school, orphanage, daycare centre]; Procedure – here narrate or explain how you approached the Child Study process from identifying child, seeking permission and collecting data, Duration – state the period of data collection). Methods used to collect data including the number of times you have observed the child, the specific places where you observed the child e.g. community / school play field, on the road, in class at task – individual or group work, snack time;

BACKGROUND (General information about the child, family)

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS (Findings should reflect the key aspects relating to child development and discussed against the ‘normal’ developmental patterns and characteristics. This should be in relation to the challenge that is making you carry out the child study. Mention outstanding features, strengths, weaknesses, and ‘would be’ or established causes. It is important to support all claims with evidence. Possible subheadings include:

- (i) Physical development (Include sub-section on general health)
- (ii) Mental development
- (iii) Social development including Interests, likes and dislikes
- (iv) Emotional development
- (v) Moral/Spiritual
- (vi) Psychological needs identified
- (vii) Problems that might hinder proper development and school progress

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on your observations, what is your conclusion? From the conclusion, suggest what various stakeholders could do to support the child you have studied in specific weak areas. **Do not generalize.**

REFLECTION ON CHILD STUDY PROCESS (Think over the journey of doing child study and state your successes and the challenges you faced in carrying out child study, insights and suggestions)

NB. You are free to incorporate other ideas into this format, provided they are relevant.



END OF UNIT ASSIGNMENT

1. In your own words, explain what you understand by the term child study.

2. Why should teachers carry out child study?

3. Explain the factors to be considered when carrying out child study

4. Differentiate between reflective journal and a diary

5. Explain one tool that can be used to collect child study information

6. Why should you disseminate child study information to different stakeholders

7. Explain why child study is considered a systematic study

8. Discuss the type of information that is kept as child study records

9. Explain the ethics one should follow when conducting child study

10. Discuss the importance of getting permission before conducting child study

UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit, you have looked at the meaning of child study and the importance of carrying out child study. You have also learnt that you must consider a number of factors so as to select a child to study. The study must also be done following the right procedure. You have also learnt the methods for data collection and the format to follow.



RECOMMENDED READING

Development Centre (2007). *The Learning Framework for Early Childhood Development (3-6years)*.

Kampala: National Curriculum Development Centre.

National Curriculum Development Centre (2009). *Caregiver's Training Manual for Early Childhood Development, Kampala*: National Curriculum Development Centre.

Laura E. B (1999). *Infants and children: prenatal through middle childhood*. 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Ba



LEARNING COMPETENCE

You have now completed this unit. The learning competences are listed below. Tick the column that reflects how much you have learnt in each competence.

Learning Competence	Not Sure	Satisfactory
Explain what Child study means		
Explain the importance of carrying out child study		
Identify different factors to consider while choosing a child for study		
Follow proper procedures for conducting child study		
Apply different methods and tools for data collection		
Write a child study report		
Disseminate child study findings		

In case you find that you are not sure whether you really have any of the above competences, go back and review the specific sub-topic and do the activities therein. Also, find a friend or one of your facilitators/tutor and discuss with him/her some of your challenges in that topic. You will make it. If in case you feel confident, then I would like to take the pleasure of congratulating you for this achievement. Well done!

Move on to the next unit.

Congratulations