

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Level of Understanding Among Parents and Teacher for The National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK)

Muhammad Nazri Bin Abdul Rahman<sup>1\*</sup>, Nurul Hidayah Binti Norhamidi<sup>1</sup>

[\\*mohdnazri\\_ar@um.edu.my](mailto:mohdnazri_ar@um.edu.my)

<sup>[1]</sup> Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to know the perception of teachers towards the level of understanding of The National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) among teachers and parents. The data was collected through in-depth interviews by two preschool teachers from a private and government preschool. The interviews were documented through email that covers the level of teachers understanding, teaching practice and the perception of teachers on parents understanding. Then, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis by manually organizing and analyzing data for accurate monitoring. Studies show that both preschool teachers understand the KSPK 2017 but for parents, there are only a few parents who understand the KSPK and still prioritizing on academic matters only.

**Keywords:** *Preschool; National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK); Perception*

### INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, preschool education began in the 1970s with what were called kindergartens. These were run by the government which is called “KEMAS”, non-government organizations (NGOs), and private individuals (Rahman & Noor, 2018). As time goes by, there are many revised guidelines, law act, government efforts have been done by the Curriculum Development Centre to make sure the preschool education emphasizing a student-centered learning approach that aligns with global aspirations for balanced and holistic child development, aimed at cultivating a generation of advanced thinkers (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017). The latest exertion used in Malaysia is called The National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK). KSPK was changed in 2010 and 2017 to keep up with the times and follow the Education Development Plan 2013–2025 (Rahman & Noor, 2018). The KPSK is applied in Malaysian preschools, offers early educational opportunities for children aged four to six years (Shafie et al., 2021).

The curriculum has been implemented in all preschools run by the Ministry of Education (MOE) since 2017. The KSPK (2017) is a standard paper that all preschool managers and operators must follow as reference materials (Ghani & Nor, 2020). KPSK tells teachers what they need to teach and what the base level of learning is that needs to happen in preschool. It establishes educational standards, material, and minimal learning requirements for kindergarten. The National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2017 has six learning pillars: (1) Communication, (2) Humanity, (3) Physical and Aesthetic Development, (4) Spiritual, Attitudes, and Values, (5) Science and Technology, and (6) Self-Skills. The preschool education process attempts to develop children aged 4 to 6 fully and integratedly.

However, to accomplish a successful learning condition are mainly from the teacher responsibility. Quality Interweaving Committee's Special Inspection Report on Preschool Education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013) found that preschool teachers still failed to execute the

National Preschool Standard Curriculum, 2010. This is because earlier research has looked at how well preschool teachers teach (Berahim Hassan, Md. Nasir Ibrahim, Moh Zaihidee Arshad & Jamilah Omar, 2003), how willing teachers are to follow the curriculum (Nooraini Abdul Rahim & Abdul Halim Abdullah, 2017); how much teachers know and care about following the curriculum (Kang Mu Hui & Lim Hooi Lian, 2015); and how teachers actually follow the curriculum. Hence, this study objective is to find whether the teachers from the public and private preschool really understand the KSPK curriculum in the teaching methods.

Other than that, according to Ginsburg et al. (2012) assert that most parents rarely prioritize on education due to their lack of understanding regarding the application of teaching abilities at home. They lack the knowledge to create a conducive learning environment for learning and to implement suitable activities for developing the children's skills (Lin & Mohamed, 2023). Therefore, this study will present the perception of teachers towards the parent's understanding according to KSPK.

Consequently, to achieve the aim of the study, the research question is formulated in the following manner:

“Does the understanding of KSPK curriculum in Malaysia parallel with teachers and parents?”

## METHOD

### *Research Design*

The research design used in this study is ethnography research design with a qualitative approach to examine the relationship between independent variables (understanding of teachers) and dependent variables (understanding of parents) towards KSPK based on teacher perspective. The primary objective of this design is to obtain a comprehensive grasp of teachers' perceptions regarding parents' comprehension of KSPK in Malaysia.

### *Participants*

This study uses purposeful sampling, where teachers are chosen quickly to understand the main feature of the study. The participants are two preschool teachers one from private school and the other from government schools in Selangor, Malaysia to know the understanding between two different preschools. Hence, it presents diverse viewpoints. Guru A is from private preschool while Guru B is from government school. The teachers are female from 28 to 38 years old with bachelor graduates' education level with more than 2 years' experience.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The data was collected through in-depth interviews. The interview and notes were emailed to participants following the transcript to guarantee uniformity and accountability. The interviews were verbatim transcribed to cover the level of teachers understanding, teaching practice and the perception of teachers on parents understanding. Individual participant files were created and transcripts documented.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis by manually organizing and analyzing data for accurate monitoring.

## RESULTS

The data about the understanding of KSPK curriculum and the implementation of KSPK in lesson learning was documented. The research shared elements in pedagogical approaches improves children's academic performance.

### **General KSPK**

In the interview, the teacher was asked about their understanding on the main element of KSPK which are (1) concept, (2) philosophy, (3) mission and vision, (4) objective, (5) strategy, (6) design, and (7) form of assessment and all was understood by all teachers. According to KSPK (2017) curriculum prioritizes the establishment of a supportive atmosphere that appreciates play-based learning and offers significant experiences to equip

children for their educational progression. As stated by the interviewed teachers,

*“It is a guide for the learning of children aged 4-6 years for teachers at the pre-school level”*  
(Guru A: T1)

*“The National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) is a curriculum set by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) for preschool education in the country. KSPK aims to provide a solid foundation for the development of children aged 4 to 6 years, emphasizing cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects. This curriculum was introduced to ensure that preschool learning in Malaysia is systematic and can meet the needs of children’s development holistically.”*  
(Guru B: T2)

### **KSPK Activity Implementation**

#### *Music and Dance Activities*

Music and dance activities were used in both teachers. Hannon and Johnson (2017) say music improves memory, attention, and language, while dance helps children regulate emotions and gain self-confidence. The essential elements of music and dance activities in KSPK 2017 encompass Exploring Sounds and Rhythm, Singing Songs and Nursery Rhymes, and Basic Dance Movements.

*“Every subject in my kindergarten has singing and dancing activities that stimulate self-expression and motor coordination”*  
(Guru A: T1)

*“Music and Dance activities: Organize a music session where children can play simple musical instruments (such as tamborine or marakas) and dance to the rhythm. This stimulates their senses, fosters self-expression, and improves gross motor coordination”*  
(Guru B: T2)

These activities help kids express themselves, hone their motor skills, and develop a respect of the arts.

#### *Physical Activities*

The KSPK 2017 curriculum emphasizes the importance of physical activities in fostering the comprehensive development of preschool children. The goals of physical activities are to improve coordination, motor skills, health, and a good social emotion. (Ibrahim and Wong, 2020).

*“Physical activity (gym class) early in the morning once a week and also outdoor games to improve physical fitness”*  
(Guru A: T1)

*“We always have activities to water the trees and fruit and vegetable crops in the garden where it can connect children with the natural environment”*  
(Guru A: T1)

#### *Storytelling Activities*

According to Mohd Noor and Yusof (2019), engaging children in activities that involve storytelling is intended to foster the development of their language skills, imagination, and social-emotional abilities. The art of storytelling is an essential component of early childhood education because it helps children develop their capacity for communication and awareness of different cultures, as well as their ability to listen and their creative potential.

*“Use pictures or storybooks to tell stories to children and ask them to retell the story. This helps them in their oral language skills, understanding stories, as well as developing their vocabulary”*  
(Guru B: T2)

The goal of the storytelling activities in the KSPK 2017 curriculum is to make learning more pleasurable while also fostering the development of foundational skills in language, empathy, and self-expression. These skills are crucial for future literacy and emotional development.

*Basic Mathematic Activities*

Children will be able to acquire foundational mathematical concepts through playful discovery and real-life applications if they participate in the basic mathematics activities that are included in the KSPK 2017 curriculum. These activities are created. This set of exercises is designed to foster a sense of self-assurance and curiosity in children with regard to numbers, patterns, and logical reasoning.

*“Using objects such as stones, blocks, or number cards to teach basic math concepts such as recognizing numbers, counting, and the concept of more or less.” (Guru B: T2)*

**Parents Understanding on KSPK based on teachers' perceptions.**

It is crucial for parents to have a solid understanding of the KSPK 2017 curriculum in order to provide support for their children's early learning journey and to cultivate a strong interaction between the home and the school. Parents are in a better position to effectively support and reinforce their children's progress at home when they are aware of the objectives, activities, and developmental focus of the KSPK (2017) curriculum.

*“Only 5% of parents know about KSPK. The 5% is the parents with the title of teacher understand the KSPK curriculum” (Guru A: T1)*

*“Most parents have already been exposed to the content of KSPK. However, most parents in rural areas only prioritize the skills of reading, counting, and writing without realizing that limiting activities according to the child's development will cause them to be unable to think more critically in the future. This is coupled with the challenge of using gadgets which are more popular and fun because they do not have the freedom to explore their own learning activities which are limited by traditional methods and must comply with the wishes of their parents.” (Guru B: T2)*

Although it is essential for parents to have a solid understanding of the KSPK 2017 curriculum, there are a few obstacles that can prevent effective parental support. Some of the most common causes of these difficulties are a lack of awareness, a limited level of engagement, or misunderstandings regarding the goal and techniques of the curriculum. Hence, a proper suggestion needs to arise in order to solve the problem.

**DISCUSSION****KSPK Understanding**

It is important for both teachers and parents to understand the KSPK 2017 program in order to help young children in Malaysia grow and learn. Teachers are in charge of following the curriculum in the school, but parents are very important when it comes to helping kids learn at home. Researchers have found different parts of what teachers and parents know about the curriculum, as well as the problems they face and the need for better balance between the two groups.

A lot of teachers find it hard to switch to the play-based learning method that SPK 2017 supports. Studies have shown that teachers in Malaysia are more used to standard methods that focus on the teacher. For example, Ibrahim and Hassan (2019) say that teachers often find it hard to mix the creative and exploratory play activities that are at the heart of KSPK with structured learning. They might not be ready to switch to a more child-centered, play-based approach.

However, for parents also Children in Malaysia are often put under a lot of pressure to do well in school from a very young age. Ahmad et al. (2018) found that many parents still put more value on measurable academic results, like reading, writing, and math skills, than on the all around development that KSPK promotes. This can make the home and school environments do not match up, which can cause kids to feel confused or at odds with each other.

### Implication

Therefore, the resolution of these challenges requires an increase in communication and collaboration between schools and parents, the provision of clear information regarding the objectives of the curriculum, and the provision of guidance on supportive activities that can be implemented at home. As a result of increased comprehension, parents have the potential to become more effective collaborators in the process of reinforcing the goals of KSPK 2017 for the holistic development of their children.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teachers and parents must comprehend the KSPK 2017 curriculum to achieve its holistic child development goals in Malaysia. A thorough teacher understanding of KSPK 2017 helps instructors execute its play-based, child-centered learning practices that emphasise academic, social, emotional, and physical growth while for parents helps to intergrate home and school routines and reinforce curriculum values, skills, and development goals. However, misconceptions regarding play-based learning, academic emphasis, and low participation suggest more resources, workshops, and better communication are needed. Schools, policymakers, and educators must collaborate to give teachers and parents resources, training, and guidance on KSPK 2017. Therefore, an experimental study of giving initiative for better communication to create understanding between parents and teachers can be done as future study. With better communication and collaboration, teachers and parents can help Malaysia's young learners grow, thrive, and succeed.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks to the Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya.

### REFERENCE

- Ahmad, R., Ishak, A., & Low, L. (2018). *Parental Views on Play-Based Learning in Malaysian Preschools*. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*.
- Ghani, R. B. A., & Nor, M. M. (2020). *Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Peranan Guru Dalam Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan (KSPK) Di Malaysia*. *Jurnal Kurikulum & Pengajaran Asia Pasifik*, 8(4), 35–49.
- Hannon, P., & Johnson, R. (2017). *The Role of Music and Movement in Early Childhood Cognitive and Emotional Development*. *Early Childhood Research Journal*.
- Ibrahim, S., & Hassan, R. (2019). *Play-Based Learning Challenges in Malaysian Early Childhood Education: A Case Study*. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*.
- Ibrahim, S., & Wong, H. (2020). *Physical Activity and Social-Emotional Development in Early Childhood Education*. *Early Childhood Education Journal*.
- Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2017). *Buku Penerangan Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan (KSPK) (Semakan 2017)*.
- Lin, K. H., & Mohamed, S. (2023). Relationship between Parents' Beliefs in Early Mathematics and Learning Environment Provision at Home. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(1), 377–392. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.1.21>

- Mohd Noor, F., & Yusof, N. (2019). *The Cognitive Benefits of Storytelling in Early Childhood Education*. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*.
- Nachiappan, S., & Makhtar, N. (2014). Analysis of cognition application in teaching and learning for early childhood by physical and aesthetic elements in National Standard Preschool Curriculum (KSPK). *Journal of Research, Policy & Practice of Teachers & Teacher Education*, 4(2), 24–31.
- Rahman, M. N. A., & Noor, W. N. B. W. M. (2018). *Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan Semakan 2017: Retrospeksi Guru*. *Jurnal Kepimpinan Pendidikan*, 5(3), 59–71.
- Shafie, O., Ab Rahim, F., & Shaik Abdullah, S. (2021). *Pre-School Curriculum: Implementation Challenges*. *Practitioner Research*, 3, 121–139. <https://doi.org/10.32890/pr2021.3.6>