RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES FOR CHILDCARE AT NAS SAYANG CHILDCARE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of teaching and learning approaches for infants and toddlers in Malaysian childcare centers, emphasizing child-centered practices that foster holistic development. Using library research and an online interview with an experienced childcare teacher, the findings indicate that childcare educators apply a child-centered approach consistent with Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. Activities are designed according to children's developmental stages to promote cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. The study also highlights parents' active involvement and expectations regarding transparent communication, safety, and nurturing care. Findings show that effective early childhood education depends on collaboration between educators and parents. Furthermore, the study recommends expanding play-based learning and integrating Internet of Things (IoT) technology to enhance transparency, efficiency, and engagement in childcare management. Overall, the results stress that combining developmental theories, parental engagement, and innovative strategies ensures early education remains relevant to 21st-century family needs.

Keywords: child-centered approach, early childhood education, parental engagement, play-based learning, Internet of Things (IoT)

INTRODUCTION

Education encompasses all types of learning, including formal and non-formal education, which aims to develop and nurture the mind and natural powers through a planned learning process (Mohamad Shah et al. (2020). One of the early childhood education institutions found in Malaysia is the Childcare. It is a physical place or center registered under the Child Care Center Act 1984 (Act 308) and regulated by the Social Welfare Department. It offers early care, upbringing, and education to infants and children under the age of four. Childcare is an early education institution, which educates children aged 4 to 6 years. Childcare functions

as an early childhood care and education institution in this context.

According to Tnay et al. (2022), he defined education as a process or activity that aims to improve the four most important aspects of a human being that focuses on the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of an individual with the aim of improving skills, abilities, knowledge, and experience so that each individual can provide joy, benefits, and progress in life helping and encouraging them to act in a healthier way for themselves and society. A dedicated caregiver in this situation will strive to ensure that all the needs and desires of the child are met and strive to adapt to the workplace in childcare. Furthermore, the childcare institution needs to emphasize positive interactions in order to improve caregiving skills while promoting the development of children in the childcare with educators providing sufficient attention.

To promote their holistic development, an educator needs to use appropriate teaching and learning approaches. This is said to be so because, parents today really expect good early education and care for their children. They not only emphasize safety and hygiene aspects, but they also expect learning methods that are fun, child-centered and encourage learning through play (Mat Seri, Nordin, Romarzila, & Noralina, 2020). Childcare helps parents balance modern lifestyle changes and the importance of early education (Mat Seri, Nordin, Romarzila, & Noralina, 2020). Therefore, this study looks at how Childcare can use teaching and learning approaches that meet the needs of parents in line with today's education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study was conducted with the aim of researchers understanding the implementation of teaching and learning approaches for infants and toddlers in Childcare that can meet the aspirations of today's parents. Therefore, there are several study objectives outlined as follows:

a. To Identify the teaching and learning approaches implemented for infants and toddlers in nursery schools.
b. To examine how the teaching and learning approach meets the holistic developmental needs of infants and toddlers.
c. To analyze the extent to which the implementation of approaches at Childcare meets the aspirations and hopes of today's parents.

METHOD

In producing this study, the researcher used two main methods, namely library research and online interviews with a Childcare teacher. Both methods were conducted using a qualitative approach to obtain descriptive and in-depth data that align with the study's objectives.

Library Research
The researcher used the library research method, a qualitative approach, to obtain strong material for understanding the research topic. Through a literature review involving journal articles, reports, and other related materials, this study received relevant theoretical support and secondary data. This method helped connect the findings from the interviews with existing knowledge, as well as providing a more comprehensive and balanced perspective in the writing. The researcher found that the implementation of the teaching and learning approach in Childcare for infants and toddlers can be implemented through the main theory of early development, namely the Theory of Cognitive Development by Jean Piaget (Malik & Marwaha, 2023).

Interview
The interview method, which is also qualitative in nature, was chosen to obtain more in-depth and contextual primary data from the real experiences of a childcare teacher named Nur Qurratu Ain binti Mustafa Kamal. This interview was conducted online to allow 9 open-ended questions to be explained in more detail and to provide an opportunity for respondents to adjust the questions received. The nursery school teacher interviewed was selected based on her 5 years of experience serving at a nursery school, namely Nas Sayang Childcare, and her knowledge in the field of early childhood care and education, given that she has an education level of up to a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. This interview process was recorded to ensure the accuracy of the information collected before analysis.

DISCUSSION

Implementation of a Child-Centered Approach In this study, the researcher found that the results of the interview with a teacher showed that the Childcare used the implementation of a child-centered approach. This can be proven when the teacher's answers during the interview described how learning activities were organized according to the needs of the child's overall development, not just focusing on academic aspects. The child-centered approach emphasizes that each area of development including language, physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and creativity needs to be given balanced attention so that children can learn through experiences that are fun, meaningful,

and appropriate to their developmental level. In this context, teachers plan daily activities according to different developmental themes, which allows children to explore various skills through practical activities and play while learning.

As evidenced by the interview, the teacher stated "Friday, the most 'excited' day for children, the development of creativity and aesthetics where the crafts they made that day, can be taken home." showing that learning is not only based on theory but also provides space for self-expression, creativity, and pride in one's own work, in line with the principle of active learning. This shows that teachers understand children's interests and motivations, and provide a meaningful learning environment, which also refers to a key feature of the child-centered approach. Indirectly, this approach focuses on providing flexible, stimulating, and child-centered learning opportunities, rather than rigid teacher-oriented schedules (Bredekamp and Copple 2019).

Application of Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development in Adapting a Child-Centered Approach to the Overall Developmental Needs of Infants and Toddlers.
Based on the results of interviews with teachers who explained that infants and toddlers were divided into different age categories and each group had a specific teacher, this indicated the implementation of a teaching approach that was in line with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1952) and the principles of a child-centered approach. According to Piaget (1952), each child goes through different stages of mental development, namely sensorimotor (0–2 years), preoperational (2–7 years),

concrete-operational (7–11 years) and formal-operational (11 years and above). Therefore, the way children learn and understand the world depends on the cognitive level they are experiencing.

The division of classes according to age as explained by the teacher reflects a practice that takes into account the level of thinking and ability of the individual, not just chronological age. For example, babies aged 3 months to 1 year 5 months are in the sensorimotor stage, so their learning activities emphasize more on sensory experiences and basic movements such as grasping, shaking objects or listening to sounds. For children aged 1 year 6 months to 3 years, they begin to show early symbolic understanding through pretend play activities and introduction to language. Next, for children aged 3 to 4 years who are in the preoperational stage, the teacher provides activities that stimulate imagination, symbolic thinking and social communication. Furthermore, the presence of at least two teachers per class allows for individual observation and specific guidance to be implemented more effectively, thus meeting the needs of the child's overall development in terms of cognitive, social, emotional and physical. Overall, the teaching strategies stated by the teacher show that Piaget's theory is applied practically to support a child-centered approach in ensuring that each child learns at their own pace.

Parental Involvement and Expectations towards the Implementation of the Approach in Childcare Centers.
The implementation of a child-centered approach in Childcare not only meets the developmental needs of children, but is also in line with the aspirations and hopes of today's parents, who prioritize well-being, safety and involvement in the development of their children. In this context, the teacher emphasized that today's parents do not just hope for academic achievement, but also demand continuous two-way communication between educators and parents as well as guarantees of safety and quality care in Childcare. This is clear when the teacher mentioned that parents are now concerned about the physical condition of

Childcare including the presence of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), which shows that safety is a top priority in choosing a childcare center.

In addition, teachers' practices of sharing daily reports on children's development, recounting daily activities, as well as holding birthday celebrations and sending pictures to parents reflect Childcare's efforts to build collaborative relationships between educators and parents. According to Hadley &

Rouse, (2018), parents today expect early education approaches that are more transparent, family-friendly and oriented towards holistic development, rather than just basic care. Through this consistent communication, parents feel more confident that their children's social, emotional and cognitive development is being closely monitored by professional educators.

Furthermore, the results of these interviews show that the implementation of the approach at Childcare also meets the aspirations of 21st century parents who demand active involvement in the educational process of their children, as stated by Epstein (2019) who emphasized that the relationship between home and educational institution needs to complement each other to ensure effective learning. Therefore, the strategy of teachers at Childcare who establish continuous communication with parents and ensure the safety and happiness of children is a clear support that the implementation of the teaching approach at Childcare has comprehensively met the hopes and aspirations of today's parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Expanding the Integration of the Play-Based Learning Approach in the Childcare Curriculum

The findings show that the child-centered approach being actively used in Childcare is a good idea. However, the aspect of learning based on the play approach can also be widely applied to carry out the play approach curriculum proving that learning by playing can improve children's cognitive, social and emotional

development. The play-based learning approach is a 21st century learning strategy based on direct experience, where children learn through exploration, imagination and social interaction. In the context of modern Childcare, the implementation of this approach needs to be systematically expanded so that it is not just a side activity, but is integrated comprehensively into the daily curriculum. According to Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2020), play-based learning allows children to communicate better, improve critical thinking and

improve their problem-solving skills naturally. Therefore, Childcare must ensure that every daily activity contains directed play activities that support overall development.

Moreover, play-based learning helps improve children's cognitive, language, and socio-emotional skills through fun and meaningful activities. In addition, the integration of play-based learning can also meet the aspirations of modern parents who want their children to learn in a positive, non-pressured atmosphere, and support holistic development. Childcare can strengthen this aspect by involving parents in planning weekly activities, such as parent-child play sessions that are conducted regularly.

Integration of the Internet of Things (IoT) in Childcare Management

The integration of the Internet of Things (IoT) in Childcare management is a very important innovation given the advancement of technology and the lifestyle of modern parents who demand transparency and security. Smart sensors in Childcare monitor temperature, lighting, air quality and child safety directly through the IoT system. Through a mobile application directly connected to the system, parents can see their child's progress and increase the trust of the Childcare institution. Saeedbakhsh et al. (2025), stated that the use of IoT in early childhood education not only improves operational efficiency but also increases digital trust between teachers, parents and administrators.

IoT also plays a role in monitoring children's learning progress through smart toys or interactive educational devices that record

their activity patterns and basic skills. In line with the principle of a child-centered approach, this data can help teachers modify teaching methods according to the individual's developmental level. According to Hussain et al. (2022) also shows that the use of smart technology in early education can increase parental involvement and enhance two-way communication between home and Childacare. Therefore, the implementation of the Internet of Things system not only improves the learning environment but also makes Childcare

more flexible, transparent and effective to meet the needs of modern families.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study shows that the implementation of the teaching and learning approach in Childcare plays an important role in forming the foundation for the comprehensive development of infants and toddlers. The child-centered approach practiced by teachers proves that early education not only focuses on academic achievement, but also on the development of individual potential through fun, meaningful learning experiences that are appropriate to their developmental level. The application of Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development in the implementation of daily activities in Childcare clearly helps teachers adapt the teaching approach to the cognitive abilities as well as the emotional and social needs of each child. This shows that effective early education needs to emphasize active exploration, social interaction and experiential learning. In addition, the results of the study also prove that the implementation of this approach is in line with the aspirations of today's parents who demand a safe, transparent and family-friendly educational environment. Collaborative relationships between educators and parents build trust and increase parental involvement in the children's learning process. In the modern era, proposals such as the expansion of the play-based learning approach and the integration of Internet of Things (IoT) technology are seen as progressive steps to strengthen the quality of Childcare management. The integration of digital innovation with a pedagogical approach based on child development theory can ensure that early education in Malaysia continues to be relevant, safe and effective in producing a young generation that is balanced in terms of cognitive, emotional and social aspects.

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