

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN CHILDCARE CENTRES (TASKA): ADDRESSING THE ASPIRATIONS OF MODERN PARENTS

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ABSTRACT

This library review examines practices of teaching and learning employed in childcare centres (TASKA) in Malaysia for infants and toddlers, with particular attention given to how they align with expectations of today's parents. Drawing on recent empirical evidence, policy analysis, and parents' perceptions, this study considers issues such as play-based learning, assessment practice, policy awareness, and quality of care. Major findings are that while numerous TASKA and ECCE schemes have adopted holistic and play-based pedagogies, significant gaps in the qualifications of teachers, parental awareness of policy, and educational quality consistency exist. The report concludes with policy suggestions for enhancement, teacher education, and stronger parent-centre partnerships to ensure early childhood care that meets the developmental needs of the child as well as the needs of parents.

Keywords: TASKA, ECCE, infants and toddlers, play-based learning, parental aspirations, early childhood education

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, early childhood care and education (ECCE) has now come to be widely recognised not just as a working family service, but also as a developmental period that shapes lifelong learning, health, and wellbeing. Childcare centres, or TASKA, serve children aged from birth up to four years old and are addressed by national ECCE policy regimes. Parents now expect ECCE centres to be contributing positively towards children's early learning, not just in terms of safety and care, but also in supporting cognitive, social, emotional, and language development. Despite this, there has been proof that parents are dissatisfied with the standard of preschool and childcare in Malaysia. Results documented in Parents' perceptions on policies of early-childhood care and education programmes in selected states of Malaysia (2022-23) revealed that the majority of parents were unaware of ECCE policy documents, and others expressed dissatisfaction that ECCE was "mostly like a playground" rather than a proper learning environment. This reflects a large mismatch between parental expectations and the perceived value of education from early childhood programmes. From this, this research aims to find out the infant and toddler teaching and learning

practices that are used in Malaysian TASKA; survey the parental expectations and perceptions; examine the extent of congruence between current practice and parental expectations; and recommend on strengthening ECCE policy, implementation, and stakeholder awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Malaysia during the last decades, particularly in addressing parents' needs for quality childcare services, has undergone many changes. According to the Malaysia National Education for All Review Report (2015), the majority of the parents were not satisfied with the education quality at preschool and felt that ECCE is a playground for their children. This perception highlights the need to investigate how teaching and learning in childcare centres can respond to current parental demands for more extensive, developmentally appropriate, and academically challenging experiences for infants and toddlers.

Learning theorists such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky emphasize that young children learn best with active learning and social interactions. Piaget's cognitive development stages suggest that infants and

toddlers learn via sensorimotor experiences, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the scaffolding function of caregivers. Responsive, play-based, and relationship-oriented pedagogy underlies these theories, which provide the foundation for pedagogy in early learning settings. In Malaysia, the creation of policy in relation to the care and education of children aged between zero to four years was also another crucial landmark for the Malaysian ECCE, where the PERMATA Negara programme was initiated and implemented in 2007. The curriculum promotes integrated development, which is physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual, through caregiver-child interaction, exploration, and play-based learning. Recent studies reveal that economic and social transformation have shifted parents' expectations from early education.

Working parents now expect childcare services that encompass academic readiness, character development, and safety. Parents desire qualified teachers who are nurturing and can design activities that integrate care and learning. TASKA providers have accommodated by embracing emergent curriculum models, Montessori-inspired practices, and project-based learning adapted for very young children. Another area that is important in ensuring quality is quality assurance in teaching and learning is required to provide improved early childhood care and education quality at the childcare centre. Childcare workers should be aware of their childcare centre's curriculum and standard operating procedures and follow the directives of the local agencies. As argued by Bendeni & Devercelli (2022), it is necessary that feedback on school operation, childcare providers' performances, and children's learning at different levels of the education system are accountability and oversight mechanisms. In total, the literature indicates that effective teaching and learning with infants and toddlers combine play, exploration, and responsiveness from caregivers. They must be coupled with parents' needs for safe, stimulating, and educational environments, and this highlights the requirement for cooperation between educators and families.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study used a qualitative library research design in order to explore the efficiency of teaching and learning approaches for infants and toddlers in childcare centres (TASKA) that

would meet the aspirations of today's parents. Relevance of information was collected from secondary sources such as journal articles, books, policy, and electronic databases such as Google Scholar and ERIC.

Data Collection Strategy

Secondary sources from reliable databases including Google Scholar, ERIC, and ResearchGate were systematically reviewed in order to gather data. Keywords like TASKA, play-based learning, holistic development, infant and toddler learning methodologies, and parental goals in ECCE were used in the search. To shed light on national standards and policy alignment, official Malaysian government papers such as the National Child Care Standard Guidelines and the PERMATA Curriculum (2007) were also examined.

Data Analysis

All the information was handled thematically and focused on some of the salient themes such as play-based learning, holistic and child-centred philosophies, learning through daily routines, and parents' aspirations. The analysis provided a clearer image of how TASKA practices outstanding pedagogy and learning approaches that enhance the overall development of infants and toddlers.

FINDINGS

The findings from the library study show some significant teaching and learning approaches that are practised in Malaysian childcare centres (TASKA) for infant and toddler levels. These approaches show how early childhood workers strive to reconcile their practice with the principles of development and the evolving expectations of contemporary parents. Play-based learning is one of the most significant methods discovered, which is the foundation of teaching and learning activities in TASKA. Play is a very significant ingredient in exciting sensory, cognitive, and motor development among infants and toddlers. Play is utilised by children to excite their senses, build up their fine and gross motor skills, as well as creativity and imagination. Block building, play, and sensory activities allow children to learn naturally through discovery and exploration. The approach is consistent with the philosophy of Piaget and Vygotsky, who emphasise active learning and social interaction as the foundation for early growth.

A second overarching approach observed in Malaysian TASKA is holistic and child-centred learning. This model recognises

that every child develops at his or her own pace and that teaching must be done on an individual basis according to needs, interests, and abilities. Child-centred practices encourage the caregiver to listen, respond, and plan experiences that support physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual growth altogether. This model respects the uniqueness of each child and supports overall wellness over the isolation of learning only academic skills. It also helps children build confidence, emotional control, and a sense of belonging, a set of qualities increasingly cherished by parents in the modern world.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the literature surveyed concerns the use of everyday routines for learning. Mundane activities such as eating, bathing, and sleeping are in most TASKA, transformed into enjoyable and wholesome learning experiences. For example, lesson plans can incorporate meal times to teach communication skills and self-help skills, while independence is promoted at bath time, along with sensory experiences. These rituals create predictability and consistency that support emotional security, which all infants and toddlers require to prosper. These practices illustrate that learning and teaching do not necessarily have to happen within the framework of structured classroom activities but can happen naturally within the context of everyday experience.

The research also uncovered that expectations from parents play an important role in the course of childcare services in Malaysia. Parents now generally prefer early education environments that are safe, warm, and conducive to overall development. Parents wish for TASKA to not only cover the physical needs of their children but also to induce early literacy, numeracy, communication, and social-emotional skills. Most parents also express a desire that moral, religious, and cultural values be integrated into common practices so that children may develop with good ethical foundations. The controlled use of educational technology is also preferred by some parents to complement the learning experience, as long as this is appropriate for children's levels of development.

Overall, the data indicate that the pedagogy of learning and teaching practised in Malaysian childcare centres has evolved into a more comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and family-oriented model. While play-based and holistic approaches remain

fundamental, increased parental expectations for scholastic preparation, moral values, and pedagogical modernisation have compelled TASKA to adopt more holistic and responsive pedagogy. These combined approaches represent an effort to reconcile education and caregiving, infants and toddlers' warm, affectionate experiences coordinated with developmental theory, as well as the wishes of parents today. These findings help to clarify how TASKA methods address parental needs and developmental theories, which will be critically examined in the following section.

DISCUSSION

The result of this library study is that the use of infant and toddler teaching and learning approaches for Malaysian childcare centres (TASKA) has evolved significantly over the years as a result of the demands of today's parents. Play-based learning, responsive care, and formal early learning represent an ongoing effort to reconcile developmental appropriateness with parental need. Parents now seek child care environments that are not just safe and supportive but also educationally stimulating and supportive of general development. This has influenced early childhood programme design and provision in Malaysia, where centres are now seeking to align pedagogical practice to national standards and parental aspirations as far as possible.

One of the most significant issues of controversy is the relationship between play and academic readiness. While the PERMATA Curriculum encourages balanced development through play, inquiry, and socialization, there are also parents who prefer systematic academic preparation in early childhood. This tension situates teachers as mediators of theory and practice, straddling the developmental needs of young children with parents' expectations for early literacy and numeracy introduction. The integration of playful learning activities that intrinsically encompass academic content, such as music, crafting stories, and game counting, can satisfy developmental tenets as well as parental needs.

Another essential key is educator professionalism. Childcare service quality also depends heavily on the training and experience of educators and caregivers. Educators with an infant-toddler pedagogy are capable of establishing emotionally secure and cognitively challenging learning environments. Professional development, reflective practice, and training

funded by the government are essential in providing high-quality care, which means investing heavily in ongoing training, characterizing professional learning communities in schools, and promoting self-directed investigation and peer observation by teachers. Also, consistent implementation of standards through the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia ensures consistency and quality assurance TASKA-wide.

Equally critical is the parent–educator partnership. Modern parents are more participatory and value transparency in how their children are being looked after and educated. Transparent communication, reportback, and parent engagement activities anchor families' trust in centres. The partnership relationship not only raises satisfaction but also enables better child developmental outcomes. By both being held responsible for children's learning, open communication helps bridge the gap between expected outcomes and pedagogy on the ground. Parent involvement allows early childhood teachers to expand the curriculum emphasis planning beyond a TASKA learning setting. Good collaborations also support parents to be more engaged in their children's TASKA experience while creating an open line of communication between the parents and the teacher. Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that the mesosystem is strengthened by the quality and frequency of interactions between the microsystems. Based on these findings, childcare centres should actively involve parenting knowledge in their communication strategies for improving collaboration among providers and parents. Current approaches, like interpersonal communication and online platforms, should be utilised to share parenting tips, evidence-based recommendations, and interactive resources.

Finally, the discussion reveals that policy implementation and quality assurance are important in sustaining effective early childhood programmes. While Malaysia has accomplished much through policies such as the National PERMATA Curriculum, it lacks regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Childcare centres should regularly monitor not only children's developmental progress, but also the quality of teaching, the learning environment, and parental satisfaction. Feedback mechanisms between policymakers, parents, and teachers can be incorporated in TASKA to render it more responsive and accountable to changing education contexts.

In brief, the paper highlights that successful early education in TASKA requires a balance of care and education, which is supported by trained teachers and responsive interaction with families. The balance is important in addressing both infants' and toddlers' developmental needs and evolving expectations of Malaysian parents today.

CONCLUSION

This library research opines that implementing teaching and learning approaches for infants and toddlers in childcare centres (TASKA) must be led by child development theory and parental expectations. This study indicates that Malaysian childcare centres are currently adopting child-centred and play-based learning approaches in alignment with the PERMATA Curriculum, emphasizing integrated development through play, inquiry, and caregiving relationships. But with more enlightened parents placing greater emphasis on early academic exposure, most TASKA are trying to adapt systematic learning components without sacrificing developmentally appropriate practices. The success or otherwise of their efforts will depend significantly on educators professionalism, effective parent–educator relations, and continued government incentives for upholding quality levels. To guarantee TASKA remain responsive to children's and family needs, the following recommendations are proposed. Firstly, ongoing professional training of childcare educators in infant and toddler pedagogy, classroom management, and family engagement needs to be offered.

Secondly, TASKA needs to have effective communication systems with parents through regular reports, feedback sessions, and participation programmes that allow families to have input in children's learning processes. Thirdly, the national curriculum and policy framework should be regularly reviewed to remain sensitive to contemporary family forms, cultural diversity, and social transformation. Finally, tighter government regulation and financing are needed so that all the childcare centres meet uniform standards of care and education. Curriculum policies should be revised to permit increased flexibility, offer explicit direction for personalized instruction, and align evaluation standards relative to general child development rather than standardized outcomes. In addition, assessment systems must move away from output-based measures to formative,

process-focused tests that mirror children's evolving competencies. Finally, quality early childhood education and care is a shared responsibility of parents, policymakers, and educators. Through the combination of play, exploration, and intentional teaching, TASKA can provide nutritious early learning experiences which produce confident, curious, and emotionally secure young children today's parents' deepest desires and serving the country's long-term education goals.

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DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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