

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## A STUDY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES FOR CHILDREN AT TASKA SAN LORENZO CYBERJAYA: INTERVIEW STUDIES

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of a learning approach in a nursery school that uses Montessori principles for infants and children under four years of age. The objective of the study is to identify teaching approaches, teacher challenges, and effective strategies in implementing learning. Findings show that a child-centered approach and ongoing communication with parents through annual meetings and the “Communication Link” book help children’s holistic development. Teachers face behavioral management challenges but use strategies for repeating instructions and activities tailored to individual observations. The study also emphasizes the importance of safety and hygiene in the learning environment. Recommendations include the use of technology to strengthen communication and continuity of activities at home. This study contributes to improving the quality of early education based on Montessori principles in nursery schools.

**Keywords:** *Montessori principles, child-centered approach, challenges, communication, management, safety*

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Early childhood education in Malaysia is education at the initial stage for children aged 0 to 6 years. In Malaysia, there are two levels of early childhood education. The first level is Nursery for children aged under 4 years. The second level is Preschool or Kindergarten for children aged 4 to 6 years. Children aged under 4 years are subject to the Nursery Act 1984 (308). According to The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) it refers to an educational program that provides care, nurturing, and guidance to children up to the age of 8 years. The concept of Early Childhood Education is very important for the overall development of children's brains. This is said because 90% of children's brain development occurs optimally before they reach the age of 5 years, while cognitive development develops rapidly when they are 2 to 6 years old.

### ISSUES AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study is that the teaching and learning approach implemented in TASKA can inspire and fulfill the aspirations of parents in today's era who demand comprehensive early childhood education centered on holistic child development. This study shows that teaching is not based solely on theory but is practical, responsive and comprehensive for the developmental needs of children. This study can provide guidance to teachers, TASKA managers and TASKA themselves to continuously improve and enhance the quality of early childhood education in Malaysia

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to:

1. Identify teaching and learning approaches in TASKA for infants and children under 4

years old

2. Identify strategies that have an impact in implementing teaching and learning approaches towards children
3. Review the challenges faced by TASKA teachers when implementing teaching and learning approaches towards children

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used two methods, namely interviewing a TASKA teacher with one year of experience and a library study that referred to articles and journals related to the implementation of learning and teaching approaches in TASKA for children. The interview was conducted online to obtain information and 7 questions were given to the teacher to assess practical experience on the implementation of teaching and learning approaches in TASKA. In addition, questions related to strategies and challenges were also asked during the implementation of teaching and learning approaches in TASKA. The library method aimed to study the theory, guidelines and context of early childhood education in Malaysia.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Approaches Used in Nursery

According to early childhood learning theory, it emphasizes a holistic development-based approach that includes cognitive, emotional, social and physical aspects. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), child development occurs through dynamic interactions between individuals and various layers of the child's environment that influence their development. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory divides the environment into five main systems. First, the microsystem, which is the immediate environment between family and teachers. Second, the mesosystem, which is the relationship between microsystems. Third, the exosystem, which is the indirect environment that affects children. Fourth, the macrosystem, which is culture and social systems. Fifth, the chronosystem, which changes over time. This theory emphasizes that child development is influenced by continuous interactions between children, families, teachers, society and the surrounding culture. TASKA San Lorenzo also practices the 5 Montessori principles, namely respect for children, the absorbing mind, sensitive periods, a

prepared environment and self-education. The Montessori approach practiced at TASKA San Lorenzo Cyberjaya is in line with Vygotsky's developmental theory which emphasizes learning through direct experience adapted to the child's zone of proximal development. Children can learn effectively when they receive good support in doing activities that challenge the child's own abilities but can still reach their goals with the help of parents or teachers. This approach can foster self-skills, intrinsic motivation and child-centered learning which are important for the development process of infants and children. In addition, Piaget's (1952) theory of cognitive development also explains that children aged 3 to 4 years are in the preoperational stage where they begin to develop in terms of language skills, symbolic thinking and active social interaction.

According to Professor Puan Sri Rohaty Mohd Majzub from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Montessori education applied to children is more flexible because it gives children the opportunity to fully explore in a fun environment without depending on a daily schedule or strict rules and restricting their movement. Authentic materials are used to highlight the concept of life skills that are important during children's development. According to an interview with a teacher at TASKA San Lorenzo Cyberjaya, the teacher stated that the Montessori approach is used through the insect drawing technique to assess the child's pencil grip and dominant hand. This is said to be so because it gives children the opportunity to learn based on their own ability without the pressure of a schedule. In the interview process with teachers, it was stated that parental involvement through annual meetings has helped establish two-way communication between parents and teachers. This is a good thing to ensure that parents are aware of the development of children in the nursery and that teachers provide comments on the development of children based on the implementation of learning and teaching approaches that have an impact on the development of children through teacher observation and assessment in the nursery. Parents are always informed about the progress of children and are also involved in the learning process of their children. Teachers provide feedback to parents about the development and needs of children while parents

support and understand the approach and learning of children at home. This has shown that parental involvement has a positive impact. For example, the National PERMATA Curriculum which requires the cooperation of parents and teachers as a continuation of learning in the nursery and at home, which at the same time fulfills the aspirations of parents for a comprehensive quality early education.

#### Strategies Used

The strategy used by teacher Adriana at TASKA San Lorenzo is to repeat instructions to 3-year-old children who have difficulty sitting still. Among the sentences often used by the teacher are "cannot put materials on the floor", "pick up and play on your table", "cannot run 3 years old" and "go back to your place". This is said because the teacher tells the children to learn the rules in the class slowly. Teachers can train children to understand instructions and be disciplined without putting excessive pressure on children who are at an early stage of development. Another strategy used by teachers is to practice careful observation for each child according to their needs and development. Activities are tailored to align with the principles of the absorbing mind and sensitive periods. This approach is in line with the principle of child-centered learning. Teachers can provide challenging activities that are still within the child's ability. These challenging activities will increase children's interest and excitement in their learning sessions. For example, simple science activities such as exploring fruit textures, fruit shapes and fruit flavors. These are activities that create direct experiences for children. In this approach, teachers observe and guide children to let them explore in their own way. In other activities, teachers give children the freedom to choose games that they are interested in to develop children's interests and potential. Apart from that, for the pencil grip for the dominant hand, the teacher lets the child hold the pencil according to comfort such as fisted grip, digital pronated grip, 4 finger grip, static tripod grip and dynamic tripod grip. Another activity to see children's independent abilities is the "pink tower" where children will see examples of teachers arranging and doing things without the teacher's help. The next strategy, teachers use the "Communication Link" book. Parents can read the teacher's notes and find out about their children's achievements. Parents can also follow their children's learning progress to provide support

at home. This book also opens up a space for parents to give feedback or convey any needs of their children to teachers easily. This method is in line with the principle of parental involvement in the learning process which ensures effective two-way communication between parents and teachers. This "Communication Link" book increases transparency in early education and even encourages cooperation and deep understanding in meeting the needs of children. Last but not least, teachers implement strict safety and hygiene measures to ensure that that environment is always safe and conducive for children. Teachers will ensure that the use of dangerous tools such as scissors will be controlled to prevent any injuries to children. In addition, teachers ensure that children wash their hands before eating, after eating, before going to the toilet and after going to the toilet. Teachers will also sanitize the playground before children use it to prevent infectious diseases such as HFMD. The learning environment also meets safety standards such as table arrangement, easy-access doors, and so on.

#### Challenges Faced

The challenge faced by teacher Adriana Suhaimi when managing a daycare center is controlling three-year-old children who cannot sit still in one place for a long time. As we all know, three-year-old children are in an active phase and try everything around them and have a short attention span. This is said to be a challenge because teachers need to have a lot of patience and use a consistent approach to train children to be disciplined without disrupting the learning environment. The second challenge faced by teacher Adriana is adapting learning activities according to the development and needs of the children. This is said to be because this preparation requires close observation and understanding for each child at TASKA San Lorenzo. The teacher adapts the activities according to the abilities of the children under her care. The teacher also ensures that the activities are not too difficult and do not put pressure on the children. This is important to ensure that the children are always having fun and excited to learn new things every day. The third challenge faced by teacher Adriana is managing classes that vary according to the children's developmental levels. Teachers also need to ensure the safety of each child

throughout the care time to prevent injuries and that the children's welfare is met throughout the learning process. Teachers need to constantly monitor every movement of children such as when playing in the park and when going to the toilet. This requires special observation so that children are not exposed to bacteria that are harmful to their health. Last but not least, teachers need to always be smart in controlling emotions such as always being enthusiastic, smart in controlling the atmosphere, not panicking and always being enthusiastic. Teachers always hold discussions between teachers to plan good teaching strategies. The teacher said that the support of colleagues is also important for her who is still new to the job by providing moral strength and professionalism when caring for children at the TASKA.

### RECOMMENDATION

The first suggestion is the use of a digital communication platform that is more interactive and easily accessible by parents. For example, mobile applications and portals for parents. This is said to be so because children's development information can be accessed by parents only via smartphones. With this, the information is delivered faster and more continuously. Parents can also provide immediate feedback, ask about their child's condition and share information regardless of time and location easily. The portal also allows teachers to share videos of children's development at TASKA or pictures for parents to see. This approach will teach teachers to use technology effectively and create more holistic learning.

The second suggestion is that the NURSERY create continuous activities to show support from parents in children's learning. For example, the teacher suggests reading activities with parents to encourage parents to spend time with their children while building a positive emotional bond between parents and children. The second example is a simple counting game such as parents teaching children to count objects at home such as chairs at the dining table or steps while walking. Finally, parents can also chat with their children to ask about the activities done at school that day to hone children's language development and stimulate children's social skills. Last but not least, TASKA makes a long-term assessment record for children. This is said to be so

because the development of children can be monitored up to primary school to ensure that the child's development is normal and in line with the appropriate developmental stage. Teachers can also evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning approaches used for children. Teachers can also use successful approaches for the development of children in TASKA.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of the approach and learning used by teachers at TASKA San Lorenzo Cyberjaya has a positive impact on children who meet the aspirations of today's parents through flexible and child-centered Montessori principles. This is said to be so because teachers can follow the developmental level and needs of children. The strategies used by teachers allow children to explore and learn actively in a fun environment and develop their skills. Parental involvement implemented through the "Communication link" book and annual meetings can ensure two-way communication between teachers and parents. Next, from the aspect of classroom management, teachers can handle challenges well with moral support and the approach implemented. Overall, the approach used by teachers can ensure that children develop well, meet parents' expectations and have a strong and comprehensive learning foundation.

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