

ALIGNING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING PRACTICES WITH PARENTAL ASPIRATIONS: INSIGHTS FROM A TASKA CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the application of teaching and learning strategies among infants and toddlers within Childcare Centres (TASKA) in Malaysia and how the strategies satisfy the wishes of contemporary parents. This paper will utilize teacher interviews and library studies to examine the methods and pedagogical techniques, learning strategies, and challenges faced by the teachers of early childhood learning in the process of delivering holistic and quality care to children under the age of three years. The results indicate that the majority of TASKA focus on the play-based learning, responsive caregiving, and early stimulation activities leading to cognitive, social, and emotional development. Nonetheless, high parental expectations, insufficient resources, and teacher workload continue to be among the difficulties. Some of the recommendations involve the formation of effective teacher-parent collaboration, ongoing professional development, and enhancement of curriculum directives with equal emphasis on academic and development objectives.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Parental aspirations, Play based learning, Teaching Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive, emotional, and social developments in the child take place during the first three years of that child. High-quality experiences at this stage provide a base on which life-long learning and a happy life are based. Childcare centres or Taman Asuhan Kanak-Kanak (TASKA), also make significant contributions to this development in Malaysia through childcare and early learning programs to infants and toddlers. The expectations of Malaysian parents on childcare centres have been changing over the years. In the past TASKA were perceived to be the place of working parents.

Nevertheless, due to the progress in awareness about early education and parenting patterns, it is becoming a very important issue, as many parents demand stimulating conditions, which would promote holistic development, communication abilities, and early academic preparedness (Roseli et al., 2023). This movement brings about anxiety on the part of an educator to

strike a balance between developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and current parental dreams. TASKA should incorporate the practice of nurturing with systematic learning in which curiosity, emotional safety, and elementary cognitive factors are developed. In that regard, examining the ways in which TASKA deploys instructing and studying methods that may correspond to the contemporary parental anticipations is necessary to advance the standard of childcare that is delivered in Malaysia.

PROBLEMS AND RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Although national initiatives have been made in the form of frameworks such as PERMATA Negara and JKM Guidelines, differences can still be found in the way TASKA carry out effective teaching and learning practices. Other centres either focus on rote memorisation or academic activities prematurely because of parental influence and might have untrained educators who do not know

how to implement the play-based or responsive caregiving methods (Omar et al., 2021). Simultaneously, the ambition of parents is expanding in multiple ways - they want to be exposed to another language, high morality and character. This multiplicity presents difficulties to teachers to develop flexible and high-quality programs that meet the expectation of the parenting as well as educational theory. The value of the research is that it could inform the educator, parents, and policymakers of the powerful methods that could assist the infants and toddlers in their comprehensive growth yet stay within the wishes of the modern Malaysian family. The knowledge of such practices will result in better training, curriculum improvement and overall quality of childcare in the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims of the present research are to: Determine the instructional and learning practices used in Malaysian childcare centres (TASKA) in infants and toddlers. Discuss how TASKA has worked in order to meet the expectations and aspirations of present parents. Evaluate the difficulties of the educators and childcare providers in practicing the implementation of effective practices. Offer suggestions to improve the early childhood methods of teaching which are quite balanced in terms of both developmental needs as well as parental aspirations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research was based on the qualitative design of document analysis with the use of library research. This was done to review available literature on education, policy documentation and research results on the teaching and learning methods with children of infants and toddlers in the Malaysian Childcare Centres (TASKA). This method provided a detailed insight of how the practices of early education are reacting to the expectations of modern parents.

RESEARCH DESIGN

It was an analytical descriptive research. The study did not use primary data gathered by using fieldwork or interview process, but instead used secondary data collected by use of credible written materials. The reason behind this method

is that it allows a general synthesis of the available literature and policies on the issue of early childhood education in Malaysia and any other setting. It also enables the finding out of common patterns, issues, and innovations in childcare pedagogy.

Research Data Sources

The data utilized in the current study were acquired in terms of the library and online database research. Sources published after 2019 and before 2025 were only considered because it is assumed that the sources are very recent and relevant. The central data of this study was comprised of the following materials:

Government and Institutional Repository. PERMATA Negara Curriculum Framework (KSPK 0-4 years old). Act 308: Child Care Centre Act 1984 and other associated JKM guidelines. Ministry of Education (MOE) and department of social welfare (JKM) policy statements. Scholarly Articles and academic Journals. Peer-reviewed articles pertaining to: The method of teaching and play-based learning on TASKA (Roseli et al., 2023). The attitudes of parents towards the quality of childcare (Mat Seri et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2021). Professional issues and wellbeing of teachers (Tham et al., 2025). The early exposure to literacy, numeracy, and the exposure to two languages (Ghazali et al., 2022). Books, Conference Papers and Internet Materials.

Early childhood Pedagogy and developmentally appropriate practices relevant books on educational theory. Papers found in Researchgate and ERIC database on the development of early childhood programs in Malaysia and ASEAN. All the data sources have undergone the process of screening to be academically valid, credible and within the objectives of the study. The non-academic sources (e.g. blogs or non-peer-reviewed material) were not included.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was employed in the analysis of the collected data and it aims at the identification and interpretation of the recurring themes, concepts, and trends in documents. The steps involved in the analysis process were the following:

Data Familiarization Reading through all the

chosen materials to gain insights into their central points and the context. Coding and Categorization-Using meaningful information and classifying it into thematic categories that include: TASKA methods of teaching and learning,

Meeting parental aspirations strategies, and Difficulties encountered by teachers. Interpretation and Synthesis-Comparison of findings across sources that would be used to determine patterns, similarities and gaps in implementation. Validation - Checking data consistency through the reviews of various studies in different years and situations to be reliably sure that data is valid. This approach enabled the researcher to come up with balanced results without having the short-cut of one site observation or prejudice by the participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the review of policy-related documents, academic journals and research papers reported in 2019-2025, there are three broad themes of the implementation process of infants and toddler teaching and learning in Malaysian Childcare Centres (TASKA): (1) pedagogical approaches adopted, (2) strategies that can match parental hopes, and (3) the struggle of educators and institutions.

Approaches Used in Nursery

The analysis of documentation findings indicates that Malaysian TASKA often embrace holistic and play-based and child-centered methods that focus on care and education. The PERMATA Negara Curriculum Framework promotes the incorporation of nurturing routines and the early stimulation activities to facilitate the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development (Mat Seri et al., 2020).

Play-Based Learning

In line with the international best practices of child upbringing, play is believed to be the most viable channel of learning among children below three years of age. Sensory play, singing, dancing, and light motor games are some examples of activities that can enable the child to discover its surroundings on its own, develop coordination, and communication skills (Roseli et al., 2023).

Caring Intuition and Responsiveness. As noted in the literature, infants and toddlers have a prosperous growth on the condition of their

caregivers being responsive to their needs, cues, and emotions (Omar et al., 2021). This style enhances attachment, trust and self- regulation that are the pillars of subsequent learning. Routine-Based Learning and Emergent Learning.

Learning activities are incorporated into the everyday life process e.g. feeding or sleeping and this makes a difference in bringing predictability and familiarity. In the meantime, curiosity and exploration are supported by emergent learning, in which the teacher prepares activities according to the interests of observed children (Abdul Malik and Mohd Rujhan, 2025). In general, the document analysis indicates that Malaysian childcare practices have been slowly transformed into the developmentally appropriate model of care through the transition of custodial care model to developmentally appropriate education model with particular focus to early stimulation, security and the emotional connection.

Strategies applied in order to cope with parents aspirations.

Parents in the present generation are particularly in the urban centers who may want to have early childhood programs that are not only safe but also academically equipped and at the same time emotionally healthy. According to the literature, there are a number of strategies that TASKA uses to fulfill these changing expectations: Parent-Teacher Communication Enhanced. The studies indicate that two-way communication between parents and teachers at all times develops trust and transparency (Ghazali et al., 2022).

Digital platforms now are being utilized by many TASKA to notify parents about the activity, meals and progress of their child - using WhatsApp, mobile apps, and digital portfolios. Exposure to Early Literacy and numeracy. Even though academic learning does not take center stage when dealing with infants and toddlers, most TASKA incorporate simple pre-literacy and pre-numeracy activities by reading and singing stories and playing blocks. The activities would fit the interests of the parents that want to experience an early academic background without making it inappropriate to developmental levels.

Ethical and Personality Growth.

Islamic and secular childcare centres believe in value-based learning. As an example, TASKA Islam involves the elements of doa recitation,

empathy-oriented things, and discipline with the usage of routine; secular centres focus on sharing and patience, teamwork, as another reflections of the wants of parents who wish their children to be holistic characters. Bilingual Multisensory Exposure. According to new research, not all TASKA avoid language bilingualism (Bahasa Melayu and English) in response to parental needs to have global communication skills (Omar et al., 2021). The use of materials which are rich in senses, songs, and story telling in the two languages improve memory and understanding. Target Health, Nutrition and Safety.

Health and safety standards are stressed in government documents provided by the Child Care Centre Act 1984 and JKM Guidelines. The teachers are taught to be hygienic, safe with food, and secure, which is one of the priorities of contemporary parents after the pandemic (Tham et al., 2025). These strategies depict that TASKA is not just manipulating themselves to demands of parents, but modernize their teaching models to meet the modern family expectation and value.

Challenges Faced

Nevertheless, literature and policy analysis indicate that there are still a number of challenges encountered by childcare centres to enforce the high-quality teaching and learning practices:

High Parental Expectations

Instead of focusing on the developmental requirements of children, parents tend to equate quality and the lack of academic success when early, making teachers create structured learning opportunities despite their developmental needs (Mat Seri et al., 2020). This may bring in the clash between educational theory and demand of parents. Inadequate Resources and Facilities. The most common challenge faced by TASKA, especially community or rural centres, is poor infrastructure, few teaching resources and insufficient funds to invest in professional growth (Roseli et al., 2023). This has an influence on the quality and regularity of the learning experience.

Teacher Education and Preparation. Quite a number of childcare employees have not been trained to carry out the early childhood pedagogy, even though they deal with infants and toddlers on a day-to-day basis. A continuous professional growth is necessary to enhance the knowledge

about child development and responsive caregiving (Tham et al., 2025). Workload and Retention of the Staff. Educators tend to have various roles including teacher, caregiver, cleaner and communicator that makes them feel fatigued and have high rates of turnover. This has an impact on continuity within child-teacher relationships, which are necessary during early years (Omar et al., 2021).

Policy Implementation Gaps. Some TASKA does not successfully adopt the standards because of resource limitation or absence of monitoring despite the existence of national theories like PERMATA. This produces discrepancies in quality in centres (Abdul Malik & Mohd Rujhan, 2025). These results show that although the early childhood system is improving in Malaysia, there is a need to establish ways of improving this institutional system that are more sustainable, that is, with clear policies and parental involvement.

CONCLUSION

The review of the latest literature and policy reports shows that Malaysian TASKA are transforming into complex early learning centers that help to satisfy the requirements of contemporary parents. Nevertheless, the more monotonous excellence requires more investment in the training of the teacher, and the development of the curriculum and cooperation with parents. TASKA is capable of becoming the core of the process of lifelong education and building human capital on a national level by balancing parental aspirations with good educational practice.

RECOMMENDATION

In references to document and literature analysis, the following recommendations are suggested to enhance improvement in the field of teaching and learning strategies in TASKA and make sure that the approaches align with the dreams of modern parents: Improve the Work Experience. They should be obliged to have continuous training programs on infant-toddler pedagogy, emotional intelligence as well as developmental milestones.

The training should have both theoretical and practical modules, which should be facilitated by the Department of Social Welfare and higher education. Empower Parent Education Programs. Parent workshops or online awareness should be

conducted on a regular basis to teach parents the real expectations of child development. This will decrease teacher load and facilitate a mutual learning of the benefits of play-based learning (Ghazali et al., 2022).

Curriculum Content Review and Enrichment. The PERMATA Negara Curriculum Framework is supposed to be revised periodically and include new aspects like socio-emotional learning, online safety, and sustainable early education principles (Omar et al., 2021). Enhance Government and Community Backing. One of the ways of doing this through public-private partnership is to upgrade TASKA facilities, avail of quality teaching facilities and increase the wages of the teachers. Best practices can be promoted by incentives to comply with national standards which would in more centres adopt them. Develop a holistic culture of learning. TASKA must maintain the need to foster the use of balanced solutions that combine care, play, and early education. The primary focus on the emotional aspect of the upbringing (namely, love, respect and curiosity) as the pillars of all the routines will assist in the development of children, which will be emotionally stable and motivated to study.

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