

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THEORY, PRACTICE, AND PARENTAL ASPIRATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN MALAYSIAN CHILDCARE CENTRES (TASKA)

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the teaching and learning approaches used in Malaysian Childcare Centres (TASKA) to determine their effectiveness in meeting the increasingly high expectations of modern parents regarding children aged 0 to 4. Drawing on established developmental frameworks, the research employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize findings on core strategies, including Learning Through Play and Positive Parenting Styles. Results confirm a strong conceptual alignment between TASKA principles and parental demands for character development and early cognitive preparation. However, implementation is hindered by two critical gaps: a persistent educator competency deficit in applying diverse methods like the Thematic Approach, and a pervasive parental involvement gap caused by busy modern lifestyles. The study concludes that addressing these barriers through continuous training and digital collaboration is essential for optimizing TASKA quality.

Keywords: *Alignment, Competency, Early Childhood Education, Parental Aspirations, TASKA*

INTRODUCTION

Childcare Centres (TASKA) have evolved to become critical educational institutions, moving beyond just basic care. They provide a safe and stimulating environment for children between 0 and 4 years old (Norfaezah et al., 2024). In Malaysia, the National PERMATA Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (KAPN) is the main guide to ensure holistic development during these fast-paced years. However, the dynamics of modern society have significantly increased parent expectations. Their demands now go far beyond physical care, focusing strongly on their child's character development, social-emotional skills, and early cognitive preparation (Qibthiyyah & Rahman, 2020). Given this background, this library research aims to analyze the teaching and learning approaches used in TASKA and to assess how well these methods align with and meet the aspirations of today's parents. The research seeks to identify how developmental theories and core pedagogical strategies are applied and pinpoint implementation challenges

that inhibit the realization of parental expectations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

1. Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Theory posits that infants in the Sensorimotor Stage (0–2 years) learn best through physical interaction and their senses (Piaget, 1972). Consequently, TASKA environments must be active, practical, and allow children to manipulate objects to build their basic understanding. Toddlers, entering the Pre-Operational Stage, need a well-organized and stimulating environment, as the physical structure of the TASKA setting significantly impacts their sensory-motor and cognitive development (Rusmailani et al., 2017).

2. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

Erik Erikson's theory states that the early years are marked by social conflicts that must be resolved for healthy identity formation. For infants (0–18 months), the struggle is Trust versus Mistrust, which requires consistent,

responsive, and affectionate care from TASKA educators (Santrock, 2019). Later, toddlers (18 months–3 years) face the stage of Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt, where teaching and learning activities should provide safe opportunities for children to be independent and make simple choices (Halodoc, 2022).

3. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Development Theory

Lev Vygotsky's theory emphasizes that learning happens through social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Educators must act as facilitators by gently guiding children through tasks that are slightly beyond their ability to complete independently. Vygotsky also highlighted the importance of language; therefore, educators should use rich and interactive dialogue to help toddlers understand concepts and social rules through collaboration with more knowledgeable peers and adults. Describe the research design. Authors are also expected to justify their decision in choosing a particular design by adapting it to the research objectives/hypotheses/questions.

METHODS

Participants

This study employs a qualitative research design using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, consistent with library research methodologies. The design is chosen to synthesize and analyze existing scholarly knowledge regarding teaching and learning approaches in Malaysian Childcare Centres (TASKA) and their alignment with modern parental aspirations. This approach is justified as the objective is to interpret and integrate findings from multiple primary and current sources to establish knowledge gaps and contributions.

Data Collection Strategy

The data collection involved a systematic search of literature related to early childhood care and education (PAKK) in Malaysia. Keywords: Search terms used included "TASKA," "Malaysian Early Childhood Education," "parental aspirations," "teaching and learning approaches," "PERMATA Curriculum," and "educator competency." Databases: Databases and search engines used included Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and university repository platforms to ensure retrieval of

relevant primary and current sources. Inclusion Criteria: Sources were selected based on relevance, focusing specifically on: (a) studies related to TASKA (ages 0-4), (b) analyses of the PERMATA Curriculum or specific teaching and learning approaches (e.g., play, thematic), and (c) discussions of parental expectations or involvement in the Malaysian context.

Data analysis

The research employed Thematic Content Analysis to systematically structure and interpret the findings from the selected articles. The process involved: (1) Categorization: Grouping the extracted information into distinct analytical themes: Theoretical Frameworks, Teaching and Learning Approaches, Parental Aspirations, and Alignment and Implementation Gaps. (2) Synthesis: Comparing and contrasting the findings from different sources to establish points of alignment and divergence. (3) Interpretation: Critically analyzing the recurring patterns to identify the implementation challenges (the educator competency gap and parental involvement gap) that form the core discussion and conclusion of this manuscript.

RESULTS

The systematic literature review identified three main themes that describe the current state of TASKA practices in relation to modern parental aspirations. These themes summarize the key findings on teaching and learning approaches, parental expectations, and challenges in implementation.

- Core Teaching and Learning Approaches in TASKA

The analysis shows the main teaching and learning strategies used in TASKA and their developmental goals. Learning Through Play Approach: Play-based learning remains the foundation of teaching and learning in TASKA. This approach is vital because it supports children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development simultaneously (Norfaezah et al., 2024). Research also shows that the use of specific learning tools, such as the Busy Box Game, helps strengthen fine motor skills among toddler (Che Nazi & Jamil, 2023), contributing to their early readiness for school.

- Integrated Approaches: The TASKA

curriculum combines multiple approaches rather than relying on a single method. Among these are the Thematic Approach and the 3E Approach (Explore, Experiment, Experience), both designed to make learning meaningful, relevant, and consistent with Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP). Through the 3E Approach, children are encouraged to explore their surroundings, build understanding through direct experiences, and apply new knowledge through active engagement.

- **Positive Parenting Styles:** In addition to structured curriculum methods, TASKA practices emphasize the educator's role as a nurturing caregiver who applies a positive parenting style. This involves providing consistent and loving care, practicing positive discipline, and integrating moral values into daily routines (Qibthiyyah & Rahman, 2020). This reflects TASKA's evolution from a caregiving role to an educational institution that fosters character development and socio-emotional intelligence.

Findings on Alignment and Implementation Gaps

While the theoretical and policy framework of TASKA aligns strongly with parental expectations, significant gaps remain in practical implementation, preventing the full realization of quality outcomes.

Conceptual Alignment: There is a clear consistency between TASKA's main teaching and learning approaches and the expectations of modern parents. Core methods such as play-based learning and positive parenting align well with parents' hopes for their children's emotional, social, and early cognitive growth (Qibthiyyah & Rahman, 2020; Che Nazi & Jamil, 2023). This demonstrates that the TASKA model is theoretically sound and effectively addresses the goal of holistic development rather than focusing solely on academic readiness.

Educator Competency Deficit: One major internal challenge lies in the limited practical skills of TASKA educators. The issue is not a lack of theoretical understanding but rather the inability to implement diverse and integrated approaches effectively, particularly the Thematic Approach (Ibrahim et al., 2024). This lack of

competency restricts the range and depth of children's learning experiences, limiting the stimulation necessary for optimal growth.

Parental Involvement Gap: Parental participation in TASKA programs was found to be moderate (mean = 3.234), primarily due to time constraints faced by modern working parents (Raof et al., 2020). This reduced level of engagement weakens collaboration between home and centre, disrupting learning continuity. Without consistent reinforcement at home, the overall impact of TASKA's educational efforts is diminished (Gosman et al., 2020). This gap represents one of the most significant external barriers to achieving the desired developmental outcomes for children.

DISCUSSION

The literature review shows that teaching and learning approaches in TASKA are generally well aligned with the aspirations of modern parents, especially in terms of holistic development, emotional well-being, and character formation. However, there are still noticeable gaps in how these ideas are put into practice, particularly when it comes to the skills of educators and the level of parental involvement. These findings suggest that while the foundation and philosophy of the TASKA curriculum are strong, the practical implementation still needs improvement to ensure consistent and high-quality outcomes for children.

Alignment of Principles and Character Development

The review confirms that there is a strong match between the main principles of the TASKA curriculum and what parents today expect from early education. Learning approaches that emphasize play-based experiences and positive parenting practices are directly connected to parents' hopes for their children to develop emotional intelligence, moral values, and social skills. Learning through play creates a natural environment where children can interact, share, and show empathy toward others. According to Qibthiyyah and Rahman (2020), when positive and affectionate parenting styles are included in everyday routines, they help children build a strong sense of morality and emotional stability. This alignment between practice and expectation reflects the Ministry of

Education's goal of fostering value-based and character-driven learning.

Besides emotional and social growth, the TASKA curriculum also focuses on cognitive readiness. Structured play that strengthens fine motor skills supports parents' desire to prepare their children for preschool. Che Nazi and Jamil (2023) highlighted that learning tools such as the Busy Box Game are particularly effective in developing fine motor coordination, which later contributes to better writing and problem-solving abilities. This combination of emotional and cognitive development shows that TASKA provides a balanced and meaningful foundation for early learning.

The Educator Competency Gap

Despite the solid theoretical basis of the TASKA curriculum, one major challenge lies in the limited teaching skills of some educators. Many of them depend mainly on play-based learning and find it difficult to use other creative and integrated approaches, such as thematic or experiential

methods. This overreliance on a single approach limits the variety and depth of children's learning experiences. Ibrahim et al. (2024) reported that certain educators are less confident in planning and conducting theme-based lessons because they lack proper training and hands-on practice.

To overcome this issue, more professional development programs should be offered to TASKA educators. Continuous training, mentorship, and peer collaboration can help teachers apply theory more effectively in real classrooms. Practical workshops focusing on lesson design, child observation, and differentiated instruction would also help strengthen teaching quality. Without such efforts, learning activities risk becoming repetitive and less meaningful, which may fail to meet parents' expectations for quality early education.

Challenges in Closing the Parental Involvement Gap

Another challenge highlighted in the review is the moderate level of parental involvement in TASKA programs. While most parents express a desire to take part in their children's learning journey, time constraints and demanding work schedules often limit their participation. Raof et al. (2020) found that the

level of parental involvement remains at a moderate mean of 3.234, primarily due to limited time for communication and engagement with educators.

This lack of consistent interaction between home and childcare settings can affect the continuity of children's learning. Gosman et al. (2020) emphasized that children perform better when their home environment supports what they learn at school or childcare centres. Regular communication between parents and educators helps create consistency and reinforces positive learning habits. TASKA can explore innovative ways to strengthen this partnership, such as using mobile applications, brief video updates, and digital reports to keep parents informed. Virtual workshops or online discussions could also provide more flexibility for parents with busy schedules.

In conclusion, the findings and discussion reveal that although TASKA's curriculum principles are closely aligned with parental aspirations, two major gaps still affect its full potential, namely the competency of educators and the level of parental involvement. Addressing these issues through continuous training and stronger collaboration between home and centre will help TASKA further enhance the quality and effectiveness of early childhood education in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

The findings confirm that the theoretical and curricular framework guiding TASKA is robust and strongly aligned with modern parental aspirations for safety, character building, and holistic development. However, achieving the quality demanded by parents is currently hampered by two critical implementation barriers: the educator competency deficit and the parental involvement gap. It is recommended that TASKA address these barriers through mandatory, continuous professional training focused on integrating diverse teaching and learning methodologies. Furthermore, TASKA must adopt innovative, flexible, and digitally-based communication and partnership strategies to successfully bridge the distance between home and centre. Addressing these two gaps is essential to ensure that the quality of early childhood education is optimized and remains relevant to the evolving needs of the community.

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DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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