

RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN CHILDCARE CENTERS (TASKA): A RESEARCH COMPARING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN TASKA WITH MODERN PARENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores teaching approaches in Malaysian childcare centres (TASKA) and compares them with modern parental expectations. TASKA mainly uses play-based learning, motor skill development, language enhancement, and value-based activities, promoting holistic growth. Teachers find play-based methods effective but face challenges like limited resources and diverse children's behaviors. Parents prioritize safety, moral education, communication skills, and early technology exposure. While TASKA meets most expectations, there is a gap in incorporating modern digital learning tools to equip children with 21st-century skills. The study recommends improving teacher training, strengthening parent collaboration, and introducing innovative, age-appropriate technology in early education.

Keywords: *age-appropriate technology, parental expectation, teacher perspective, TASKA*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education serves as the essential foundation for holistic development in children. In Malaysia, childcare centres (TASKA) are dedicated not only to ensuring children's safety but also to fostering cognitive, emotional, social, and physical growth. Modern parents expect TASKA to provide a secure, nurturing environment that embraces global educational trends. They also hope their children actively learn and develop while they pursue their careers, making TASKA an indispensable support for both child development and working families.

Problem Statement

Although various teaching and learning approaches have been introduced in early childhood settings, questions persist about whether they truly meet the diverse aspirations of modern parents. Some parents prioritize intellectual growth and academic

readiness, while others emphasize moral values, skills, or assurance of safety. This diversity of expectations creates challenges for childcare centres (TASKA) in balancing and delivering a comprehensive early education experience that satisfies all parental hopes and needs.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To identify the teaching and learning approaches implemented in TASKA for children.
2. To hear about teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of these approaches.
3. To explore parents' aspirations regarding early childhood education.
4. To compare TASKA practices with parents' expectations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early childhood education plays a vital role in

shaping children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Piaget's theory highlights that children learn through concrete experiences, so they need to have as much early experience about the real world. While Vygotsky emphasises the importance of social interaction and scaffolding. Montessori promotes independence, exploration, and the use of learning materials tailored to children's developmental stages. Those clearly mean that children need to be exposed to social interaction to build their development.

Past studies indicate that modern parents expect childcare centres to:

- Provide safe and stimulating environments.
- Support early language and communication skills.
- Instil moral values and basic religious practices.
- Incorporate 21st-century skills, including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) exposure.
- Strengthen children's emotional regulation and social interaction through structured play.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method approach through teacher and parent interviews and also library research. I gathered some parents and teachers as respondents to conduct interviews with them. The purpose of these interviews was to listen to their perspectives and collect more data about teaching and learning in their TASKA. Through these sessions all the experiences and opinions were analyzed to provide an understanding between this comparison. I also do some library research to complete this research. Some studies that have been conducted before help to get more information based on guidelines of early childhood education in Malaysia.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews with 1 teacher and 2 parents. Review of academic journals and government guidelines on early childhood education.

FINDING

Teaching and Learning Approaches in TASKA
Play-based learning involves structured play activities that stimulate problem-solving and encourage exploration, fostering cognitive development in children. Motor stimulation includes both gross and fine motor activities, such as exercise, block building, and arts and crafts, which help develop coordination and physical skills. Language activities like storytelling, singing, and picture book reading promote communication and literacy. Value-based activities, including simple prayers, greetings, and practicing good manners, nurture social and emotional growth, helping children develop respect and kindness in their interactions with others. Basically in TASKA those children have been exposed to early education appropriate to their age and current understanding.

Teachers' Perspective

Teachers consider play-based learning the most effective approach for infants and toddlers, as it supports natural development and engagement. However, they face several challenges, including high child-to-teacher ratios, limited facilities, and tight time constraints, which can hinder the implementation of this method. Teachers also emphasize the critical role of parental involvement at home, as it significantly impacts children's overall development. A common difficulty is managing children's varying energy levels and attention spans; some children tire quickly or become easily distracted, while others are more active and find it hard to follow structured activities. To address these challenges, teachers must be creative, patient, and flexible, adapting activities to suit each child's mood and developmental stage. This tailored approach helps maintain children's interest and supports their learning effectively, despite the constraints and behavioral differences in the classroom environment.

Parents' Aspirations

Parents want their children to develop confidence in communication and strong social skills, while placing a significant emphasis on instilling moral

and religious values. They are also highly concerned about the safety, hygiene, and nutrition standards at TASKA. Basically they want their children to learn basic skills at an early age. Additionally, many parents expect TASKA to incorporate early exposure to technology and foster creativity, ensuring a well-rounded, secure, and value-driven learning environment for their children. Apart from that, parents also find it highly valuable when their children feel comfortable, happy, and eager to attend the TASKA. They appreciate it when the environment fosters a sense of belonging and enjoyment, making children look forward to their daily experiences, which contributes positively to their emotional well-being and smooth adjustment in the early learning setting.

Comparison Between Teacher's Perspective And Parent's Aspirations

TASKA's current practices generally meet the fundamental expectations of parents, focusing strongly on ensuring safety, promoting play-based learning, and instilling moral values, which are crucial for early childhood development. These elements create a nurturing and secure environment that supports children's growth and well-being. However, there is still some gap when it comes to innovation, especially in integrating technology based activities and cultivating future ready skills. Parents increasingly expect early childhood education to include exposure to digital tools and creative technological experiences that prepare children for a rapidly evolving world. Addressing this gap by incorporating more technology in learning opportunities and fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity would better align TASKA with modern educational demands and parental aspirations, ensuring children are equipped with relevant skills for the future while maintaining a strong foundation in traditional values and holistic development.

SKRIP RESPONDEN

PARENT 1

PARENTS NAME: EFFA FAZRIZA BINTI CHE AHMAD

CHILDREN NAME: MUHAMMAD FIRASH NAUFAL BIN MUHAMMAD SHAHRIZAD
CHILDREN AGE: 4 YEARS OLD

SCHOOL NAME: TASKA KEDA PASIR PUTIH

1. What is your main expectation when sending your child to the childcare centre (TASKA)?

- The hope is that my child will gain as much knowledge as possible, learn quickly, and not be left behind in the future.

2. In your opinion, what are the most significant benefits that your children get from being in a care center (TASKA)?

- they can learn how to control their emotional
- help them to increase their development
- help improve their physical health

3. Are you satisfied with the way teachers handle teaching and learning activities at TASKA?

- yes very satisfied because not arrogant and always united with the parents

4. What improvements would you like to see in the teaching and learning approach at TASKA?

- Providing balanced and nutritious food to help children grow and develop and practice a healthy lifestyle

5. Overall, to what extent do you think the TASKA meets your expectations as a parent?

- When my child starts to feel comfortable and doesn't have to worry about waking up to go to school, I feel very grateful because he knows when to go to school and wakes up on his own.

PARENT 2

PARENTS NAME: MOHD ZAMRUL BIN AWANG

CHILDREN NAME: HAURA NURZHAFIRA BINTI MOHD ZAMRUL CHILDREN AGE: 4 TAHUN

SCHOOL NAME: PASTI AN NUR SG ULAR

1. What is your main expectation when sending your child to the childcare centre (TASKA)?

- Children can master the 3Ms, reading, writing and counting,

2. In your opinion, what are the most significant benefits that your children get from being in a care center (TASKA)?

- Children can follow all activities and learning processes at school. More disciplined.

3. Are you satisfied with the way teachers handle teaching and learning activities at TASKA?

- Very satisfied because every learning process is continuously practiced by the child. Parents can also evaluate every child's learning progress with the activities carried out.

4. What improvements would you like to see in the teaching and learning approach at TASKA?

- There are many activities that have teaching materials that interest children so that they are more enthusiastic about each activity.

TEACHER 1

TEACHER NAME: NUR AIN BINTI ABD. HAMID

SCHOOL NAME : AL-FATEH SINAR GENIUS

1. Can you explain the main teaching and learning approaches used for babies and toddlers at this nursery?

- For babies and toddlers, the main approach used is learning through play that is adapted to their age. For babies, activities are more about sensory stimulation. For example, touch, sound, color, and toys that are safe to hold and chew. For toddlers, activities are more about fine and gross motor skills, basic language, and small group play. These activities are so that they learn at their own developmental level.

2. How do teachers balance play activities with more structured learning activities?

- Usually, it is divided according to routine. There is a special time for free play and there are also more planned sessions, for example doing dotting line tracing or art & craft. We try to keep the activities short and interesting so that the children don't get bored and still have fun learning.

3. What challenges do teachers face in implementing this approach?

- The challenge is usually that children get tired quickly or their focus is easily diverted. Sometimes, there are children who are more active and have difficulty following the set activities. So teachers have to be creative and patient to adapt the activities to the child's mood and level.

4. In the teacher's opinion, how effective is this approach in supporting children's development?

- This play-while-learning approach is very effective. Children learn faster in terms of social skills, language, and fine motor skills because they learn through their own experiences. They also enjoy coming to daycare more because the activities are interesting.

5. How do teachers collaborate with parents in supporting children's learning and development?

- We are constantly in touch with parents through daily reports, which are through our own application and also WhatsApp or small meetings. Parents are given tips to continue supporting their child's development at home, for example how to play while learning or simple activities to practice certain skills. This communication is important so that learning at nursery and at home is consistent.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that TASKA's educational and care approaches largely align with established developmental theories and fundamental parental expectations. Based on methodology play-based and holistic learning strategies, which continue to prove effective in promoting early childhood growth across cognitive, social, and emotional domains. These approaches foster a nurturing environment that supports children's natural curiosity and development in ways that parents appreciate and trust. However, there is a clear and growing disparity between these current practices and the evolving demands of modern parents, who increasingly seek innovation, particularly in

equipping children with 21st- century skills.

Parents nowadays tend to be more aware, informed, and expecting more than basic care and traditional teaching. They want TASKA to actively prepare their children with foundational skills in communication, technology, and social adaptability, recognizing these as critical for future academic and life success. In this context, innovation becomes vital not only by incorporating technology and creative learning tools but also fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving from an early age. To remain relevant and responsive, TASKA must balance its respected traditional methods with these new expectations, ensuring children receive a well- rounded foundation that supports both moral values and future readiness. This integration will better satisfy modern parental demands and expectations.

CONLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATION

This study concludes that TASKA has effectively implemented key approaches such as play-based learning, motor stimulation, language development, and value-based activities, all of which contribute positively to the growth of infants and toddlers. These methods support children's development in essential areas and align well with most parental expectations, especially concerning safety, communication skills, and morals. Parents feel reassured knowing that their children are cared for in an environment that prioritizes both physical and emotional well- being while fostering important foundational skills.

Despite these strengths, there are opportunities for TASKA to enhance its offerings further in response to evolving parental demands and educational trends. To strengthen its role as a nurturing and forward-thinking early childhood center, several recommendations are proposed. First, professional training for teachers should be ongoing, with a focus on integrating technology into early childhood education. Technology can help children develop future ready skills, making learning more engaging and relevant. These will help teachers to enhance their teaching and learning skills in line with current developments.

Second, strengthening collaboration between TASKA and parents is vital. This can be achieved through workshops and effective communication platforms, enabling parents to become active partners in their children's learning and development. Such involvement enhances consistency between home and nursery environments. Beside that, by encouraging parental involvement in every activity organized by the TASKA will help them feel comfortable to exchange any opinions about their children. Third, TASKA should innovate its activities by introducing age- appropriate digital learning tools alongside creative exploration activities. This blend will support cognitive growth, creativity, and adaptability in a balanced manner. It also can help teachers to control each student's focus for longer and encourage curiosity in children.

Finally, TASKA must continue to emphasize a holistic approach to development, ensuring equal attention to cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual growth. By maintaining this balance, TASKA nurtures well-rounded children who are prepared for both present and future challenges. The children also feel more confident and help their development become more positive and mature. In summary, TASKA has laid a strong foundation by meeting core parental expectations through established learning methods in their current lesson plan. By those suggestions and recommendations, TASKA can further enhance its educational environment, preparing children not only for early development but also for success in this new world.

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