

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN TASKA: A LITERATURE REVIEW RESPONDING TO CONTEMPORARY

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ABSTRACT

This study, using a literature review method (kajian perpustakaan), aims to explore the teaching methods used by TASKAs (childcare centers) in Malaysia for infants and toddlers and how they address the educational expectations of contemporary parents. The study summarizes several commonly used teaching methods in TASKAs, including play-based learning, responsive caregiving, sensory learning, individualized learning, and parent-center collaboration. The study found that these methods not only align with the laws of children's physical and mental development but also, in most cases, meet parents' triple educational needs of safety, inspiration, and emotional connection. Finally, the paper recommends that TASKAs continue to enhance the professionalism of their teachers, improve their curriculum, and strengthen collaboration with families and community resources to comprehensively improve the quality of infant and toddler education.

Keywords: *TASKA, teaching methods, infants and toddlers, parental expectations*

INTRODUCTION

With the accelerating pace of society and the increasing proportion of dual-income families, childcare has become an indispensable part of modern society. TASKA (Taman Asuhan Kanak-kanak) in Malaysia, which provides care and early education for children aged 0 to 3, is increasingly recognized for its educational role and importance. Infancy and toddlerhood are the most critical growth stages in a person's life, during which the nervous system rapidly develops, and sensory, language, emotional, and social development gradually take shape. As Berk (2020) points out, early experiences have a decisive influence on the shaping of brain connections and personality development. Therefore, TASKA's educational philosophy and teaching methods not only affect children's short-term learning performance but also have a profound impact on their lifelong learning potential.

Contemporary parents' expectations of TASKA go beyond basic caregiving. They hope that their children can develop language expression, social interaction, and self-exploration through systematic learning in a safe and warm environment. Many parents are particularly concerned about whether early learning can lay a solid foundation for their children's entry into kindergarten and school. The Ministry of Education Malaysia (2022) stated in its Early Childhood Education Policy Framework that TASKA's core mission is to provide children with comprehensive, balanced, and personalized learning experiences to promote their physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual development. Therefore, TASKA must balance the two functions of "care" and "education" in its teaching design, so that teaching activities are both inspiring and in line with the physical and mental characteristics of infants and young children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental Expectations and the development trend of early childhood education

Parents' educational expectations are an important driving force for TASKA's teaching innovation. Research shows that contemporary parents are most concerned about three core elements: children's safety and health, the scientific nature and richness of early learning experiences, and the stability of teacher-child interaction (Copple & Bredekamp, 2019). Parents hope that TASKA can not only "take good care of their children" but also "teach their children well." This means that TASKA needs to integrate cognitive enlightenment, language development, and social-emotional education into its curriculum. Parents' emphasis on "holistic education" requires teachers to take into account both intellectual education and moral education and emotional companionship in their teaching.

Play-Based Learning

Play is the most natural way for infants and young children to learn. Gonzalez- Mena (2018) believes that play is not only a form of entertainment, but also a core way for children's cognitive, emotional and language development. Through activities such as building blocks, music rhythm, role-playing, and outdoor exploration, infants and young children can "learn by doing" and "think by playing", thereby experiencing the meaning of rules, cooperation and creativity. In TASKA practice, teachers often integrate learning goals into daily game activities through guided play strategies. For example, teachers develop children's visual recognition and language expression through color classification games; in music rhythm, teachers promote children's physical coordination and emotional expression through rhythm guidance. Research shows that play-based learning not only significantly improves infants and young children's learning motivation, but also promotes their social initiative (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2021). Therefore, gamified learning can effectively respond to parents' expectations of "happy learning" and contribute to

the comprehensive development of children's physical and mental health.

Responsive Caregiving

Responsive caregiving emphasizes teachers' keen awareness and positive response to children's needs and emotional changes. For infants and toddlers aged 0 to 3, secure attachment is the core of their social and emotional development. Shonkoff and Phillips (2021) pointed out that children develop a sense of trust in the world and a sense of self-worth through safe interactions with their primary caregivers (including teachers). In the TASKA environment, responsive caregiving is usually reflected in teachers' timely response to children's crying, interests, and emotional changes. For example, when a child feels anxious, the teacher hugs and comforts him or her; when a child shows curiosity, the teacher guides him or her to explore further. Such emotional interactions not only help children build trust, but also strengthen parents' trust in TASKA, ensuring that children grow up healthily in a warm environment.

Sensory Learning and Multisensory Teaching

Infants and young children explore the world through their senses, and their learning mainly relies on multiple stimuli such as vision, hearing, touch, smell, and movement. According to Buchanan (2020), multisensory teaching can stimulate children's cognitive potential and promote the development of language and thinking. In TASKA teaching, teachers help children accumulate sensory experience and develop perception and expression skills through activities such as tactile boards, natural object exploration, sound identification, and taste experience. For example, in the theme activity "Knowing Fruits", children not only learn about the appearance of apples through pictures, but also learn in all aspects through multiple sensory experiences such as touching, smelling, and tasting. Sensory learning concretizes abstract concepts and can meet parents' educational vision of "more experience and more hands-on" for their children.

Parent-Centre Collaboration

Modern early childhood education concepts emphasize the importance of home-school collaboration. Active interaction between parents and TASKA teachers can ensure the consistency and continuity of children's education (Buchanan, 2020). Research indicates that good communication between parents and teachers not only enhances consistency in family education, reduces behavioral confusion and emotional anxiety, but also helps TASKA better tailor its teaching strategies to family needs. In practice, TASKA maintains close contact with parents through regular parent meetings, sharing of growth profiles, and parent-child activities. This allows parents to better understand their children's learning progress and provide valuable feedback to teachers, further improving the quality of education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Increasing Diversity and Integration of Teaching Methods

TASKA's teaching methods are becoming increasingly diverse and integrated. In the past, teachers primarily focused on caregiving, but now the integration of educational activities into daily life has become mainstream. For example, during feeding and diaper changing, teachers not only address children's physical needs but also provide language stimulation through interaction. This "living as learning" approach allows children to receive education in a natural environment, aligning with their physical and mental development. Research has shown that this stress-free learning approach effectively promotes the development of children's diverse abilities and meets parents' expectations for a seamless learning experience.

Teacher Professionalism Determines Teaching Quality

Teacher professionalism is a key factor influencing teaching quality. Gonzalez- Mena (2018) noted that teachers with specialized knowledge are better able to understand children's needs, design personalized teaching plans, and thus provide high-quality educational support.

Research shows that teachers with backgrounds in psychology, child development, and early childhood education are more effective in utilizing strategies such as gamified learning and responsive care to promote children's holistic development. Conversely, teachers lacking relevant professional backgrounds can lead to delayed teaching effectiveness and even impact children's long-term development.

Parental Expectations Drive Educational Innovation

Parental expectations have, to a certain extent, driven innovation in TASKA's teaching methods. As parents' understanding of early childhood education grows, they are increasingly concerned about scientifically sound, personalized education, and its promotion of children's holistic development. Copple and Bredekamp (2019) noted that parents not only want their children to grow up in a safe and healthy environment but also expect education to cultivate their children's language skills, social skills, and innovative abilities. TASKA has therefore introduced innovative concepts such as the Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches, which emphasize independent learning, artistic expression, and exploratory learning, further addressing parents' expectations for a holistic education.

Key Challenges

- 1) Despite progress in its teaching methods, TASKA still faces multiple challenges in implementation:
- 2) Insufficient Teacher Training: Teachers, particularly in remote areas, lack adequate professional training, resulting in uneven educational quality.
- 3) Uneven Curriculum Resources: TASKA educational resources vary significantly across regions, with some areas unable to fully utilize innovative approaches such as multisensory learning.
- 4) Different Parent Expectations: Parents have varying expectations for early childhood education, with some prioritizing academic achievement while others prioritize

emotional and social development.

- 5) High Student-Teacher Ratios: Due to insufficient teacher resources, some TASKAs have high student-teacher ratios, hindering teachers' ability to provide individualized support and attention to each child.
- 6) Over-Pursuit of Early Childhood Education Results: Some parents and institutions overemphasize academic achievement and neglect children's emotional and social development.

Directions for Continuous Improvement

To address these challenges, TASKA should address the following areas:

- 1) Strengthen teacher professional development: Provide regular training to teachers to enhance their skills in child psychology, emotional support, language development, and other areas.
- 2) Optimize curriculum design: TASKA should design a curriculum centered on children's physical and mental development, ensuring that the content is not only educational but also fosters children's emotional and social adaptability.
- 3) Strengthen parent-teacher collaboration: TASKA should enhance parent-teacher interaction and collaboration through parent meetings and family activities to improve parent satisfaction.
- 4) Policy and resource support: The government should increase its support for early childhood education and ensure that each TASKA receives adequate resources and regulatory support, especially in resource-limited areas.

CONCLUSION

Through the literature review, this study found that TASKA generally utilizes play- based learning, responsive care, sensory experiences, and parent-teacher collaboration in its teaching of infants and toddlers. These approaches effectively promote

children's holistic development and meet parents' diverse expectations for educational quality. In order to further improve the quality of education, it is recommended that TASKA strengthen teacher professional development, optimize curriculum design, deepen home-school cooperation, and strive for policy and resource support to improve the quality of infant and toddler education.

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