

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN CHILDCARE CENTRES (TASKA) ALIGNED WITH PARENTAL ASPIRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of teaching and learning approaches for infants and toddlers in Malaysian childcare centres (TASKA) and examines their alignment with the evolving aspirations of modern parents. As parental expectations shift towards holistic child development encompassing cognitive, emotional, and moral growth TASKA centres face increasing pressure to adopt pedagogically sound and developmentally appropriate practices. Employing a qualitative library research design, this study synthesises findings from academic literature, policy documents, and government reports published within the last decade. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns in pedagogical strategies, parental priorities, and policy frameworks. Findings reveal that while many TASKA centres have embraced play-based and thematic learning approaches, disparities in educator training, resource allocation, and policy enforcement contribute to inconsistent quality. The study highlights the need for standardised teacher training, a unified curriculum for children under four, and stronger collaboration between parents and educators. These recommendations aim to enhance the quality and consistency of early childhood education in Malaysia, ensuring that TASKA centres meet both developmental needs and parental aspirations.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education (ECE), TASKA (Taman Asuhan Kanak-Kanak), Teaching and Learning Approaches, Parental Aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, early childhood education (ECE) is mainly divided into two age groups. Children under the age of 4 are typically placed in nurseries or childcare centres, also known as TASKA, while those above the age of 5 attend preschools. TASKA or Taman Asuhan Kanak Kanak serves as a crucial component of early childhood care in Malaysia. This system is regulated by the Department of Social Welfare, distinguishing it from preschools, which the Ministry of Education oversees. According to data from the Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Masyarakat dan Keluarga, as of 2021, there were 5,326 TASKA, which were listed under the Department of Social Welfare (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2021).

The evolving socio-economic landscape in Malaysia has significantly influenced parental aspirations, particularly in the context of early childhood education. Most of the parents today are increasingly informed, career-oriented, and highly invested in their children's holistic development. Many of them try to find a childcare centre that provides not only safety and hygiene but also promotes early learning, emotional well-being, and cultural values. This shift has placed pressure on TASKA operators to implement teaching and learning approaches that are developmentally appropriate, evidence based, and aligned with parental expectations.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how TASKA centres in Malaysia implement teaching and learning strategies for infants and

toddlers, and to what extent these approaches align with the aspirations of modern parents. By conducting library research, this study synthesises current pedagogical practices, theoretical frameworks, and policy guidelines

to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of early childhood education in TASKA settings.

By synthesising theoretical insights and practical applications, this study aims to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities in current TASKA practices.

METHOD

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify current teaching and learning approaches used in TASKA
2. To evaluate how these approaches address the developmental needs of infants and toddlers.
3. To assess alignment with parental expectations in contemporary Malaysian society.

CONCEPT

With an emphasis on how these methods align with the evolving goals of modern parents, this study examines the application of teaching and learning strategies for infants and toddlers in Malaysian Childcare Centres (TASKA). TASKA centres are required to offer not only secure and caring surroundings but also pedagogically sound programming that promotes holistic child development, as early childhood becomes increasingly important in national development agendas.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative library research design, which involves a systematic review and synthesis of secondary sources such as journal articles, policy documents, and government reports related to early childhood education in Malaysia.

All the data collected was from a range of reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, government publications (e.g., Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat), and institutional reports from universities and ECCE councils. All

the sources were selected based on relevance to TASKA teaching approaches, parental expectations, and Malaysian ECCE policy. Only publications from the last 10 years were included to ensure currency.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns in pedagogical strategies, parental aspirations, and policy alignment. Themes were coded manually and categorised into developmental domains (cognitive, emotional, and social). As this study is non empirical and based on publicly available data, no ethical approval was required. However, care was taken to ensure accurate representation of cited sources.

DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Current Teaching Approaches in TASKA

The teaching and learning approaches currently implemented in Malaysia TASKA centres reflect a growing awareness of the importance of holistic child development. Many centres adopt play-based learning, thematic instruction, and experiential activities that support cognitive, emotional and social growth. These methods are consistent with early childhood education best practices, which emphasise developmentally appropriate and child-centred pedagogy. However, the effectiveness of these approaches varies significantly across centres due to differences in staff qualifications, available resources, and institutional support.

Studies such as Mamat et al. (2020) highlight that while some TASKA educators use structured assessment tools like checklists and portfolios, others rely on informal observations, which may not fully capture developmental progress. This inconsistency suggests a need for a standardised training and assessment framework to ensure quality across all centres.

Alignment with Parental Aspirations

Modern Malaysian parents increasingly seek a childcare environment that goes beyond basic care and safety. They expect TASKA centres to nurture emotional intelligence, foster early academic skills, and instil cultural and moral values.

Research by Abd Aziz et al. (2025) shows that parents value qualified educators, transparent communication, and structured learning experiences. This shift in expectations has placed pressure on TASKA operators to

align their pedagogical practices with parental goals.

While some centres have successfully integrated parental feedback into curriculum planning, others struggle due to limited engagement mechanisms or a lack of awareness of evolving parental priorities. Bridging this gap requires stronger collaborations between parents and educators, including regular feedback sessions, parent-teacher meetings, and shared developmental goals.

Challenges Faced by TASKA Educators

TASKA educators face several challenges in implementing effective teaching strategies. These include limited access to professional development, high child-to-teacher ratios, and inadequate infrastructure. The dual role of providing care and education, especially for infants and toddlers, demands specialised training that many educators have not received. The PERMATA certification program has made strides in improving teacher competencies, but uptake remains uneven across regions (Taha et al., 2022).

Additionally, the lack of a unified national curriculum for children under four years old contributes to variability in teaching quality. Educators often rely on personal experience or ad-hoc materials, which may not align with evidence-based practices.

Policy and Curriculum Gaps

Although Malaysia has made significant progress in early childhood education policy, gaps remain in implementation and oversight. The division of responsibility between the Ministry of Education and the Department of Social Welfare creates fragmentation in standards and monitoring. The ECCE curriculum emphasises holistic development, but its application in TASKA centres is inconsistent due to limited enforcement and support.

Efforts such as the National Education Blueprint and PERMATA initiatives aim to address these issues, but more targeted policies are needed to support TASKA-specific

challenges. Clear guidelines, funding for infrastructure, and incentives for teacher training could enhance the quality and consistency of early childhood education.

Recommendations for Improvement

To better align teaching approaches with parental aspirations and developmental needs, several recommendations emerge from this study

- a. Standardised teacher training through mandatory certification programs and continuous professional development
- b. Enhance parental engagement by establishing structured communication channels and involving parents in curriculum planning.
- c. Develop a unified curriculum for children under four that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social domains.
- d. Strengthen policy enforcement by consolidating oversight under a single authority and providing resources for quality assurance.

These steps can help TASKA centres evolve into nurturing environments that support both care and education, meeting the expectations of modern Malaysian families.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of teaching and learning strategies in Malaysian childcare facilities (TASKA) has been studied in this study, along with how well they match the changing goals of contemporary parents. The results show that although many TASKA centres are implementing developmentally appropriate methods, including play-based and theme learning, significant variations in quality persist due to inconsistent policy enforcement, unequal resource distribution, and varying levels of educator training.

Parental expectations have shifted towards a more holistic view of early childhood education, emphasising not only safety and care but also emotional, cognitive, and moral development. However, the gap between these

expectations and current practices in some TASKA centres underscores the need for systemic improvements.

To bridge this gap, the study recommends the standardisation of teacher training, the development of a unified curriculum for children under four, and stronger collaboration between parents and educators. Additionally, policy reforms that consolidate oversight and provide adequate support for TASKA operations are essential for ensuring consistent quality across the sector.

In the end, creating environments that promote infants' and toddlers' overall development requires matching teaching and learning strategies with parental goals. Malaysia can improve its early childhood education system and better prepare its youngest residents for lifelong learning and wellbeing by tackling the issues that have been identified and putting the suggested recommendations into practice.

Future research could explore empirical data from parents and educators to further validate the alignment between pedagogical practices and parental expectations.

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DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nurul Izatie Binti Che Mat Nasir does not work for, consult, own shares in, or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this manuscript and has disclosed no affiliations other than those noted above.

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