

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# UNDERSTANDING TEACHING APPROACHES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN MALAYSIAN TASKA: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY ON PARENTAL ASPIRATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of teaching and learning strategies in Child Care Centres (TASKA) to support the holistic development of infants and young children and meet the expectations of modern parents. In Malaysia, the National PERMATA Curriculum emphasizes education through play, inquiry and interaction. However, educators face challenges in balancing curriculum objectives with practices that are appropriate for children's development due to changing parental aspirations that demand early exposure to literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional skills. This study uses a qualitative approach through library research and teacher interviews to identify strategies used in TASKA. Findings show that play-based approaches, sensory and interactive activities are often used. Teachers emphasize the importance of positive teacher-student relationships, effective communication with parents and continuous monitoring of children's development. Continuous professional training and close collaboration are recommended to improve the quality of early childhood education in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Parental Aspirations, Play-Based Learning, Teaching Strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Background of the study*

Early childhood education has a significant impact on children's overall development (ECE). Infants and toddlers' brain development, cognitive development, social-emotional health, and physical health are all significantly impacted by early stimulation (0–3 years). Childcare centers (TASKA) in Malaysia are based on the Kurikulum PERMATA Negara, which emphasizes a holistic approach to children's development via play, discovery, and interaction in a safe and loving setting (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2013).

On the other hand, parents nowadays have changing goals for their children. In addition to basic care, many parents want TASKA to offer worthwhile educational opportunities to prepare their children for preschool and beyond. While

character development, social skills, and emotional resilience are given priority by some parents, others concentrate on early reading and numeracy (Mustafa, Azman & Ismail, 2013). As a result, TASKA teachers have found it difficult to balance parental expectations with developmentally appropriate activities.

Implementing teaching and learning techniques for infants and toddlers requires careful preparation that takes into consideration the national curriculum, parental objectives, and the needs of the children. Through routines and activities like storytelling, singing, sensory play, and motor skill development, teachers are the primary implementers of these tactics. Improving the standard of childcare services in Malaysia requires

an understanding of how these tactics are applied and how well they satisfy parents' expectations.

Thus, this study explores the ways in which teaching and learning tactics are implemented for young children in TASKA and assesses whether or not these approaches meet the expectations of contemporary parents. The findings will provide insight into contemporary methods, difficulties faced by educators, and strategies for improving early childhood education.

### *Problem Statement*

Children grow cognitively, physically, and socioemotionally at a high pace throughout the early years, making this a critical period. As per the Kurikulum PERMATA Negara, TASKA is responsible for executing superior teaching and learning methods that foster holistic development in Malaysia (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2013). Care facilities now face difficulties as a result of the growing needs of contemporary parents. In addition to safety and well-being, parents today want early exposure to literacy, numeracy, and life skills (Mustapha, Azman & Ismail, 2013).

Many teachers struggle to strike a balance between developmentally appropriate methods and parents' wishes for early formal schooling. For example, although play-based approaches are advised, some parents insist on more regimented, academic-like activities (Bredekamp & Copple, 1985). This leads to conflict between meeting parental expectations and following best practices for child development. Notwithstanding the importance of this problem, little study has been done in Malaysia on how TASKA uses teaching and learning approaches for young children to meet the goals of parents.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To determine the teaching and learning strategies used with young children in TASKA.
2. To investigate how teachers see the early childhood education objectives of parents.
3. To explore the difficulties teachers have when putting tactics into practice that meet parental expectations.

## **METHOD**

### *Research Design*

This qualitative study used a combination of library research and teacher interview methods to examine how teaching and learning strategies are applied in TASKA to meet parents' expectations.

### *Participants*

A semi-structured online interview was conducted with Cikgu Husna, an early childhood educator from Richmind Childcare Centre, who has four years of experience working with infants and toddlers.

### *Data Collection Strategy*

The library study looked at government publications, books, and journal articles that offered insights on play-based learning, parental ambitions, and early childhood best practices. These included the Kurikulum PERMATA Negara (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2013). The interview included practical viewpoints on implementation difficulties, family expectations, and instructional strategies.

### *Data Analysis*

To provide a thorough picture of how TASKA instructors match developmentally appropriate activities with evolving parental desires, both data sources were thematically analyzed and contrasted.

## **RESULTS**

### *Findings from Library Research*

For infants and toddlers, play-based learning, sensory exploration, social interaction, and early communication are essential tactics. Instead of focusing only on academics, these approaches promote overall development (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). Physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual development are all prioritized in Malaysia's PERMATA curriculum (Ng, 2021). Research also emphasizes the value of parental participation (Othman & Yusuf, 2023) and play in early mathematics (Abdullah & Rahman, 2023). Parents also anticipate that TASKA will provide character development and educational value (Ahmad & Mansor, 2023). There is a favorable correlation between school

preparation and parental engagement (Ismail & Zulkifli, 2022). Identity development is aided by incorporating local culture (Rahim & Yusof, 2015), and educators have issues in securely integrating technology due to the proliferation of digital media (Zainal & Rahman, 2022).

#### *Findings from Teacher Interview*

According to Cikgu Husna, the main strategy of Richmind Childcare Center is play-based learning. Teachers put a lot of effort into developing safe, engaged, developmentally appropriate interactions with their students. Block building, dancing, singing, and playing in the sand and water are a few examples. To promote connection and communication, infants participate in "tummy time," tactile exploration, and soft reading. Under the direction of the Kurikulum PERMATA Negara, ongoing observation aids in customizing programs to each child's unique requirements.

Limited facilities, time, and manpower are among the difficulties. Updating educational expertise requires regular professional training. Parents anticipate early exposure to education and comprehensive care. Early literacy and numeracy are preferred by some. Teachers include learning via play using games, music, and flashcards instead of formal instruction to balance expectations.

Meetings, messaging applications, and record books are all effective ways to communicate with parents. Cooperation helps to match expectations and builds trust.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings reveal that play-based, sensory, and interactive strategies dominate TASKA teaching methods, consistent with global early childhood standards. Teachers are essential in establishing supportive settings that complement the PERMATA program.

Early childhood programs are increasingly influenced by parental goals. Early academic exposure and social-emotional development are both something that parents want. Teachers use

well-rounded, kid centered strategies to manage these demands.

In order to bridge the gap between contemporary academic goals and developmental best practices, effective parent-teacher communication is essential. Maintaining high-quality childcare requires ongoing teacher training, creative teaching methods, and open lines of communication.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study comes to the conclusion that the cornerstone of effective early childhood education in Malaysia's TASKA is play-based, child-centered, and developmentally appropriate activities. Teachers make ensuring that activities promote holistic development and are in line with the Kurikulum PERMATA Negara.

The demands placed on early literacy, numeracy, and emotional development by parents underscore the necessity of continuous cooperation. Improved teacher-parent interactions, ongoing professional development, and creative yet sensible teaching strategies can raise the standard of early childhood education in Malaysia.

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### **DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Regarding this paper's publication, the authors state that they have no conflicts of interest.

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