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Development of a Quality Teaching Model for Preschool Teachers

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Abstract

A quality teaching model includes several important elements such as teaching knowledge, skills and attitudes. This study seeks to discover the level of teaching knowledge of preschool teachers. The methodology of the study is a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The instruments used were questionnaires, structured interviews and document analysis. 50 preschool teachers encompassing both private and public preschools answered the questionnaire, and only two preschool teachers were interviewed. The respondents of the study were identified using purposive random sampling. The results of the study found that 56% of teachers emphasised on one method of teaching, while 44% of teachers adopted various methods of teaching to help the children understand the learning content. Besides that, the teachers also chose a teaching method that is suitable to fulfil the learning needs of the children (56%) and fulfil need to learn in groups (54%). An appropriate teaching method was used to capture and retain the children's attention (56%) as well as improve their ranking and achievement (60%). The interview results found that teachers' knowledge increased along with their years of experience in the field of early childhood education. From the document analysis on the teachers' knowledge of planning for teaching and learning, it was found that the RPH of teachers were neat, interesting and simple. Overall, preschool teachers are aware that the method of teaching plays an important role in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Quality, Model of Teaching, Preschool Teacher

Introduction

The teaching profession is a noble task because this profession is a continuation from the tasks of the prophets in Islam. The entire country depends on the effectiveness of a teacher to perform their duties. Teachers have a high status in society and the modern world until the teaching profession is brought to a more challenging level. Teachers are faced with various demands alongside current progression and needs. They play a dominant role in realizing the inspiration of religion, race and country, which is contained in the nation's education philosophy besides being responsible for their students. The results of AKEPT 2011 found that only 50% of lessons are delivered effectively even though there are excellent teachers in the Malaysian education system. This means that

teaching passively in the form of lecturing results in the delivery of lessons that does not fully involve the students (Sufean, 2014).

Knowledge is an important aspect in preparing teachers to educate the students to solve problems. Before the teacher begins a class, the teacher should have the knowledge and understanding of the subject matter prior to teaching so that the students can learn well. Teachers are not exempt from facing problems such as lack of knowledge or confidence in terms of inner self-belief and self-concept. The lack of knowledge and understanding can cause ineffective knowledge transfer. It is important for the knowledge of a teacher's pedagogy to be parallel with the subject being taught so that there will not be confusion in the children during the process of teaching and learning. Children will not state the mistake that teachers do in the teaching and learning process because they do not know how to differentiate right and wrong. They only accept fully what has been taught by the teacher. Therefore, teachers have a very important responsibility in teaching and need to apply known and useful knowledge in the lives of the children.

Background of Study

Teachers need to be alert towards their pedagogical needs by preparing themselves with relevant knowledge and skills appropriate to the needs of the student (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2012). Preschool teachers are given early exposure to the use of the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (KSPK) (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2010). This exposure has been given by the Preschool Officer at the Malaysia Ministry of Education (JPN) and at the State Education Office (PPD) and also the Preschool Officer at the Malaysia Ministry of Education (KPM) widely. The pattern of assessment that is considered suited for preschool children were also exposed to them. Preschool teachers need to master the curriculum content so that the assessment given is appropriate to the students' capabilities. The knowledge of preschool teachers must be strong and further improved.

According to Reynolds (1992), the mode of teaching proposed involves knowledge and skill through three levels in the framework of teaching, otherwise known as the domain of teaching. This domain of teaching involves the pre-active, interactive and post-active stage. It is based on the teaching framework that teachers' teaching methods were found to be closely correlated between the three domains and knowledge and teaching skill (Reynolds, 1992). According to Shulman (1986), when teachers are planning and teaching, they need to adapt between knowledge and skill through the interaction with the students. Teachers need to re-evaluate their teaching outcomes and documentation that was taught as the last thing in the teaching process in class. Thus, there is a need for new teachers' knowledge and skills to be improved to produce a new teacher who practices effective teaching.

Based on the Malaysia Teacher's Standard (SGM), a standard evaluation to efficient professionalism that teachers need to achieve covers three main aspects (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2009). The three aspects are: (1) the practice of professional teaching values, (2) knowledge and understanding and (3) teaching skills. This professional value of practice was drafted based on the teaching culture at the Teacher's Institute of Study (IPG). Knowledge and understanding refers to the teachers' mastery of teaching knowledge that can enhance their professionalism when performing their duties effectively and efficiently. Additionally, teaching skills refer to the ability of the teacher in the teaching process whether in academics or co-curriculum.

Shulman (1986) identified a missing piece of the pedagogical teaching practice, which is the teacher's knowledge of what needs to be taught and the relationship between knowledge and teaching that will benefit students. Grossman (1992) stated that in today's education context, this pedagogical practice is often linked to routine or the teacher's tendencies through the teaching skills used to deliver specific knowledge in a field. The overall knowledge and pedagogical skills are connected through the process of teaching and learning as the required educational procedure (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002; Hotaman, 2010).

There are ten standards that are the focus to the development of a teacher's profession (NAEYC, 2011). However, the focus to the teacher's development involves pedagogical practices such as the aspects of curriculum, teaching and assessment. This standard is drafted to ensure each teacher can equip themselves with knowledge and skills according to the standard required.

Methodology

This study focused on pedagogical practice based on the knowledge of teaching inventory. The methodology used are a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method used was through a survey to analyze a questionnaire descriptively. On the other hand, the qualitative method was used to obtain data from interviews and document analysis. 50 preschool teachers involving 25 from private preschools and 25 from government preschools around Selangor and Perak were the respondents of the study. However, only two preschool teachers were interviewed. The respondents of the study were identified using purposive random sampling. Purposive random sampling was chosen because the respondents were preschool teachers who have teaching experience of between five to ten years. The two teachers who were interviewed were excellent teachers.

The instruments used in this study were a questionnaire, structured interviews and document analysis. To identify the preschool teachers' knowledge, a set of questionnaires was translated based on the survey on Self-Evaluation of Preschool Teachers (Nevelidine, 2002). This questionnaire has four parts, which are the demography, level of teaching knowledge, level of teaching skill and teachers' attitudes towards teaching. This study is focused on the level of teaching knowledge of preschool teachers. The questionnaire consists of 60 items. Seven items in the questionnaire measured the level of teachers' knowledge. The Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability of the questionnaires 0.924, which is the highest level. This proves that the questionnaire can be used for this study. The structured interview questions contained open and closed questions used to interview two excellent preschool teachers who conduct teaching and learning activities in class. The document analysis was conducted to preschool teachers to analyse the knowledge of teaching and learning planning through the Daily Teaching Plan (RPH).

Results

Knowledge refers to known and possessed information from experience, learning and observation through the senses. From a professional standpoint, teachers should have diverse and deep knowledge to help students in their learning and enable them to understand the subject (Eggen & Kauchak, 2012). Knowledge is the main domain to shape actions (Muhammad Taufiq, 2010). According to Abdul Halim Masnan (2014), knowledge of contents covers the knowledge of teachers

about the basics or content that needs to be taught to fulfil the needs of the students in terms of knowledge, skills and values.

The data was obtained from questionnaires, structured interviews and document analysis to identify the level of teaching knowledge of preschool teachers. Through the questionnaire, Table 1 shows the statistical data that displays the percentage and frequency of the level of teaching knowledge of preschool teachers. These items were to determine how high are the levels of knowledge of the preschool teachers regarding teaching. The results of the study from the questionnaire shows seven items that focused on the level of preschool teachers' knowledge.

Question	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
S1 – I give emphasis to a teaching method that is appropriate and effective.	Very rarely	2	4.0
	Rarely	13	26.0
	Often	28	56.0
	Very often	7	14.0
	Total	50	100.0
S2 – I use various teaching methods to help children understand the learning content.	Very rarely	3	6.0
	Rarely	11	22.0
	Often	22	44.0
	Very often	14	28.0
	Total	50	100.0
S3 – I choose a suitable teaching method to fulfil the students' learning needs.	Very rarely	1	2.0
	Rarely	10	20.0
	Often	28	56.0
	Very often	11	22.0
	Total	50	100.0
S4 – I also choose a suitable teaching method that can fulfil the learning needs in groups.	Very rarely	2	4.0
	Rarely	11	22.0
	Often	27	54.0
	Very often	10	20.0
	Total	50	100.0
S5 – I use a suitable teaching method to capture and retain the childrens' attention.	Very rarely	1	2.0
	Rarely	9	18.0
	Often	28	56.0
	Very often	12	24.0
	Total	50	100.0
S6 – I use an appropriate teaching method to enhance the achievement of the children.	Very rarely	2	4.0
	Rarely	7	14.0
	Often	30	60.0
	Very often	11	22.0
	Total	50	100.0
S7 – The success of teaching and learning depends on the wisdom of the teacher in choosing the teaching method.	Very rarely	1	2.0
	Rarely	9	18.0
	Often	28	56.0
	Very often	12	24.0
	Total	50	100.0

Table 1:

Percentage and frequency of the level of teaching knowledge in preschool teachers

Next, the results obtained from the structured interviews on the teaching knowledge of preschool teachers found that the teachers' knowledge increase when their teaching experience increases. The teachers' knowledge increases alongside their teaching experience.

The interview results found that the experience teaching in preschools help Preschool Teacher 1 (PT1) find appropriate methods in early childhood teaching and learning.

"However, my experience at the preschool is enough for me to aa... find more appropriate methods in the field of early childhood education." (GP1)

On the other hand, Preschool Teacher 2 (PT2) stated that the field was an added value to his profession as a preschool teacher.

"So err... if my experience after 10 years being a teacher changes a lot hahaha. It means more knowledge." (PT2)

PT1 and PT2 both have experience teaching children at the nursery and preschool and for more than 10 years. PT1 and PT2 have differences in specialization or field that they enjoy. However, the specialization or main field that they enjoy are under the same branch, which is art and aesthetics.

"Emm... if considering my specialization, because we have taken all subjects, we need to master all subjects. But I prefer aa... crafts and lab exploring. Because I like watching the kids get something not just from what the teacher gives, but something he got from his own discovery." (PT1)

PT1 believes that through handcraft activities and lab exploration, children can learn from their own discoveries.

"For me, I lean more to creativity. I like something that is different but err... can give an effect or impact. So, I like to use hands-on approach. Because err children are easily attracted to something that is tangible." (PT2)

On the contrary, PT2 believes that activities that require the children's creativity may give an impact to them due to the use of materials that seem to increase their interest.

"Now, our resources are mainly from the internet, books, and the easiest is through early childhood education blogs inside and outside of the country. We do not just need to focus on KSPK. KSPK provides the guideline only." (PT1)

"Truthfully, it has already been my practice to widen my er... scope. I mean in terms of knowledge. So, I explore the internet a lot. I will explore many preschool approaches that are practiced in advanced countries." (PT2)

When asked regarding teaching preparation, PT1 and PT2 admitted that they often refer to the internet. This is good practice in today's world that is continuously progressing where children are

becoming more IT savvy. PT1 stated that KSPK only acts as a guide for preschool teachers. The materials or activities that needs to be taught can be referred to from many sources, especially the internet. PT2 on the other hand stated that the internet is used to refer to preschool activities that are conducted in modern countries. This prevents the children in the country from being left behind with the advancements in academics.

Besides the questionnaire and interview, the research results also showed the result of the document analysis towards the PdP and RPH of preschool teachers. The following are the analysis results of the researcher towards PT1 and PT2 in the aspect of PdP planning knowledge.

Table 2: Knowledge of PT1 Teaching and Learning Plan

No	Item	Score					Notes
		0	1	2	3	4	
1.	Preparing Teaching Record Files on Daily Lesson Plan (RPH)					/	PT1 prepared an RPH that is very interesting and neat. RPT and RPM were prepared in an orderly manner and is easy to understand. However, the lesson reflections were not as parallel to PdP content.
2.	Prepare and Display the Yearly Lesson Plan (RPT)					/	
3.	Prepare the Weekly Lesson Plan (RPM)					/	
4.	Prepare a complete RPH, including the current ABM.					/	
5.	Write the learning outcomes suited with the teaching and learning activity.			/			
TOTAL : $\frac{18}{20} \times 25\% = 22.5\%$							

Table 2: Knowledge of PT2 Teaching and Learning Plan

No.	Item	Score					Notes
		0	1	2	3	4	
1.	Preparing Teaching Record Files on Daily Lesson Plan (RPH)				/		PT2 prepared an RPH that is good and simple. The elements of creativity are less prominent.
2.	Prepare and Display the Yearly Lesson Plan (RPT)		/				
3.	Prepare the Weekly Lesson Plan (RPM)		/				
4.	Prepare a complete RPH, including the current ABM.					/	PT2 prepared RPT and RPM. However, this is not shown to the researcher. The learning results are suited to PdP.
5.	Write the learning outcomes suited with the teaching and learning activity.				/		
TOTAL : 15 x 25% = 15% 20							

Discussion

Students who receive motivation from teachers will often become more interested and therefore help the process of achieving the lesson's objective (Maimun Aqsha Lubis, Wan Nurul Syuhada' Wan Hassan & Mohd Isa Hamzah, 2017). Therefore, it is important for teachers to equip themselves with knowledge and be prepared to conduct new learning techniques that are appropriate and effective. Preschool teachers need to master all knowledge and skills suited to the development of children (Abdul Rahim, Mohd Najib & Lily, 2010). According to Abdul Halim Masnan and Nor Mashitah Mohd Radzi (2016), the learning outcome that involves the students' content must be exact and suitable with the student's development. The expectation to achieve a good learning outcome can achieve the needs of PdP students overall.

The results of the study found that 56% of preschool teachers emphasize a teaching method that is suitable and effective, and only 4% of preschool teachers rarely emphasize a teaching method that is suitable and effective. Besides that, preschool teachers also diversify their teaching methods to enable the children to understand the lesson's contents at 44%. As many as 6% of preschool teachers rarely diversify their teaching methods. In terms of choosing an appropriate teaching method, 56% of preschool teachers often choose a suitable teaching method to fulfill the learning needs of the children, while 54% fulfilled the need to learn in groups. Preschool teachers are knowledgeable that the choice of a suitable teaching method is important to fulfill the learning needs

of the children and fulfill the needs of learning in groups. 56% of teachers used an appropriate teaching method to capture and retain the children's attention and 60% of preschool teachers used appropriate teaching methods to increase the achievement of the children. Besides choosing an appropriate teaching method, the use of teaching method is very important in teaching. 56% of preschool teachers believe that the success of teaching and learning is dependent on the wisdom of the teacher in using the teaching method, and only 2% of preschool teachers did not agree with this opinion. Overall, the knowledge of preschool teachers towards teaching is that the choice and use of teaching method is important to help the children understand the lesson's contents, to meet the learning needs of the children, to meet the need to learn in groups, to capture and retain the attention of the children and to increase the children's achievement.

Through a structured interview conducted with two preschool teachers, the knowledge of the teachers was found to increase through their experience. For PT1, his knowledge increased when searching for more suitable methods for early childhood education. Meanwhile, PT2 gained a lot of knowledge regarding modern approaches applied outside and inside the country and can apply those approaches according to the suitability and ability of the children. In terms of the teachers' knowledge towards the approach they use in PdP, for PT1, he prefers to use craft and lab exploration so that the children can achieve self-discovery. PT2 alternatively preferred creativity and using hands-on approaches to attract the interest of the children. In terms of their teaching preparation, the teachers preferred to use IT facilities especially the internet to obtain information and new knowledge. This can ensure children are not left behind from advances in education. On top of that, from the document analysis, the RPH prepared by PT1 was interesting, neat, orderly and easy to understand. However, the learning outcomes were not parallel to PdP. The learning outcomes of PT2 was parallel to PdP and PT2 prepared a simple RPH but lacks the element of creativity.

Conclusion

This study only involves 50 preschool teachers as the respondents. Therefore, it is recommended for a more widespread study to be conducted using a larger sample size and including other aspects as variables to provide a better picture regarding the knowledge of teaching among preschool teachers. In conclusion, all preschool teachers have enough knowledge and need to always increase their knowledge to enhance their teaching knowledge in preschool.

Based on the study's results, the teaching knowledge of preschool teachers encompasses diversifying teaching methods to help children understand the contents of the lesson. Due to this, it is important for a teacher to choose suitable methods for certain topics. The use of the wrong method can confuse students from understanding the contents of the lesson. Besides that, an appropriate teaching method can also capture and retain the children's attention while increasing their academic achievements.

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