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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate pre-school environment in PERPADUAN pre-school in Malaysia. The objectives are to identify the quality of work environment in multi-ethnic pre-schools; to investigate the practices of teachers' role and responsibility; and to identify the quality of human resources. The study involved 2004 respondents who are the staff of PERPADUAN pre-school from the government agency who provide pre-school service. Questionnaires and interviews were used in this study to obtain data from respondents. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and qualitative data to support the findings from quantitative results. Findings indicated that the work environment at a moderate level. The study also found that only 53.7% of respondents agreed facilities at the workplace is sufficient. It shows that nearly half of respondents said that there is still a lack of facilities in the workplace. A total of 1,219 (60.7%) of respondents prefer to work with children of all races and a total of 1,834 (91.4%) respondents agreed the concept of cultural diversity to be nurtured at the preschool level. The ranking of duties and responsibilities of teachers in multi-ethnic preschool shows the teachers practice daily record of children's development is very little, that only 65 persons are recording the child's development. The poor ratio of teachers and child in multi-ethnic preschool is between 25 to 35 children per class which means the children needs a lot attention. Mean while the work environment is moderate with a mean score of 3.65 and overall mean score for level of staff career development 3.66 also moderate. The findings indicate the facilities provided in their workplace and staff career development requires improvements. Overall, respondents in need of improvement for the PERPADUAN pre-schools of all aspects of pre-school. Thus, from this study are expected to help achieve the objective of improving

the quality of PERPADUAN pre-schools' environment and preparing teacher better career development.

Keywords: Environment, Human Resources, Multi-Ethnic Pre-School, Quality Teacher.

Introduction

This paper draws on a study that is part of a longitudinal research project that analyses Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education in formal early years settings with 4 – 6-year-old children in Malaysia. The overall project aims to provide Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a national framework for Malaysia.

Background

The efforts to maintain the atmosphere of a peaceful and harmonious life among the various multi-ethnics in Malaysia is not an easy one. The establishment of multi-ethnic pre-schools are playing an important role in the integration of people since the early ages. The strength of multi-ethnic pre-school is a role in inculcating the spirit of goodwill, neighborliness and integration among children in early childhood. In addition, the role multi-ethnic pre-school strengthen ties and foster unity among parents and the community. Generally, multi-ethnic preschool is a link between children, parents or guardians and the community. Multi-ethnic pre-school was first introduced in 1976 under the Community Relations Plan of 25 classrooms set up as a pilot project. The project is created in urban and suburban areas, especially areas with multi-ethnic neighborhoods. Multi-ethnic preschool implemented to provide children aged four to six years to appreciate the values from multi-ethnic groups and social life.

in the process to achieve national unity and integration. However the lack of delegating tasks that are unclear over workload will affect the quality of educational services provided. Is the educational services provided during the comparable quality provided by other departments?

The quality of infrastructure and environment in multi-ethnic preschool is the thing that must be emphasized in education, as a good learning environment will be able to stimulate the minds of children so that learning can be applied more effectively. Inadequate infrastructure and poor working environment certainly affect the learning process by the teacher. This matter should also be evaluated in order to overcome (if any) to ensure that teachers carry out their duties more effectively. The unfavorable work environment also affects the teachers. The selection of pre-school is a key to the parents to ensure their children receive early childhood education quality and can help the development of their children as a whole. Accordingly, this research set three objectives in response to the above issues and questions.

Objectives

The main rationale for this study is to provide relevant input to the efforts of the National Unity and Integration Department (JPNIN) improves multi-ethnic preschools. Thus, from this study are expected to help achieve the objective of improving the quality of multi-ethnic preschools' environment and preparing teacher for better career development. The objective is to identify the quality of work environment in multi-ethnic preschools from teachers' perspective; to investigate the practices of

teachers' role and responsibility in multi-ethnic preschool; and to identify the quality of human resources in multi-ethnic preschool based on six variables and the need of improvements.

Literatures Review

Working conditions have much relevance to the work elements such as satisfaction, performance, stress, and commitment. A good working environment has a positive association with work performance, otherwise the routine work situations can be stressful and has a negative correlation with job satisfaction. Reviews Avani and Abbasi (2004) showed that the dimensions of the school environment also plays a role in determining the increased job satisfaction. Thus providing a conducive work environment helps employees to build a culture of positive and dynamic influence on loyalty to the organization. Researchs found that the quality of care and education are in a comfortable and conducive environment. The preschool environment for children to be physically safe, improving social, emotional nurturing and intellectually stimulating. They should be equipped with equipments and toys that are appropriate and adequate and carefully designed environment that encourages the selection of appropriate equipment by children in different age groups (Nordin, 2012). Classroom environment and children's playground suitable for children to engage in active learning will develop children's knowledge through interaction with adults, other children and materials. An environment conducive to a child will give satisfaction to the teachers in activities with the children (Nordin, 2012).

Classroom environment and children's playground suitable for children to engage in active learning will develop children's knowledge through interaction with adults, other children and materials. An environment conducive to a child will give satisfaction to the teachers in activities with the children (Sylva, 2010; Sylva et. al, 2009).

Studies show multi-ethnic preschool is healthy and conducive environment for the implementation of effective educational programs for children. Teachers always worked in a conducive working environment and is committed to achieving the mission and goals TABIKA Unity The involvement of parents and communities in kindergarten Solidarity found that there was close cooperation between parents and the community with the kindergarten. An organization will not function effectively without the cooperation of all parties. The involvement of teachers in the community can also enhance their morale and confidence in their careers (Majzub, 2006).

Teachers spend a lot of time to plan and implement curriculum activities. Comfort and job satisfaction are important to help teachers carry out its duties in a planned and effective (Griffin, 2010). The environment that supports the growth and learning of children. The study found that a good working environment can encourage them to do a good job and diligently at work and are committed to implement their respective work. Support from colleagues and management to reduce stress at work and help teachers carry out teaching students together more regularly. Mean while, according to Gol-Guven, (2009) found physical class arrangements, poor teacher–student ratio, and structured and paper–pencil activities contributed to quality preschool.

Teacher characteristics included education, years of experience and beliefs about child rearing associated with multiple dimensions of teacher–child interactions, confirming that these patterns established for preschool teachers hold for teachers of infants and toddlers (Castle, Williamson, Young, Stubblefield, Laurin, & Pearce, 2015). Education level and years of experience contribute to

their commitment and positive interaction with children from different ethnic group. Characteristic, commitment and experience are important to ensure that children can interact and communicate well among Malaysians of all races and cultures. Multi-ethnic preschool can help the relationship between children with better and provide advantages in terms of social development as involving children of different races against other kindergarten mostly dominated by their own ethnic group (Farm & Kim, 2008). Reviews Boyer (2012) found that exposure to their and other culture can contribute to personal development and social regulation of children. The study conducted by Laura, Alison, Melissa (2012) on seven trainee teachers, 60 parents and 40 children related to the role of community-based playgroups in building relationships between teachers, families and communities have found that half of the parents stated that the concept of cultural diversity is an important aspect community involvement.

Children who received early education from a quality program also showed improvement in classroom behavior, better prepared for school, have better academic achievement, and less likely to repeat a grade. Wilcox-Herzog, McLaren, Ward & Wong, (2013) high-quality childcare is related to children's positive developmental outcomes. One way to increase quality of care is to provide training to childcare providers. Early childhood programs are high quality also affect short and long-term to improve the economic and social development in the long term (Cascio, 2010). Researchers also agree that early childhood programs that focus on the overall development of children will improve emotional maturity, cognitive development and language skills, positive social competition, and the development of good physical.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a mixed method in which a questionnaire was distributed to respondents from multi-ethnic preschool staff to obtain information and their views on the quality of work environment in multi-ethnic preschools from teachers' perspective and the need of improvements. The study involved 2,004 respondents from staff at headquarters and branch at the state and teachers and assistant teachers in of multi-ethnic preschool. Of these, 98% are women and only 40 (2%) male respondents. The details of profiles staff as following table.

Table 1: Profile of Staff

No.	Details	N (%)
1.	Work Place	
	Preschool	1944 (96.9)
	Office District/State/Head Quarters	60 (3.0)
2.	Working Experiences	
	< 5 years	454 (22.6)
	6 – 10 years	369 (18.4)
	11 – 15 years	280 (14.0)
	16 – 20 years	603 (30.0)
	21 – 25 years	101 (5.0)
	26 – 30 years	118 (5.9)
	31 – 35 years	67 (3.3)
	> 36 years	8 (0.4)
3.	Academic Qualification	
	SRP/PMR	119 (5.9)
	SPM/MCE/SPVM	1251 (62.3)
	STPM/STAM/HSC/Diploma	555 (27.7)
	Bachelor	56 (2.8)
	Master	3 (0.1)
	others	16 (0.8)
4.	Professional Qualifications	
	Certificates/Teachers Certificates	1252 (62.4)
	Diploma Education	321 (16.0)
	Diploma/Post Graduate Course	14 (0.7)
	Bachelor	2 (0.1)
	Others	257 (12.8)

Table 1 shows a total of 1,944 (96.9%) of the respondents worked in preschool and only about 60 (3.0%) are employed in the office participate in this study. A total of 603 (30.0%) of respondents have work experience of no longer being in the last 16-20 years, followed by 454 (22.6%) of respondents who work for less than five years. A total of 67 (3.3%) of respondents worked for 31-35 years while only 8 (0.4%) of respondents have work experience of more than 36 years.

These qualifications show in 1251 (62.3%) of respondents holding a Certificate of Education, while 555 (27.7%) is the holder of a Certificate or Diploma of Higher Education. A total of 56 (2.8%) of the respondents had a bachelor's degree while only 3 (0.1%) of the respondents is the holder of a master's degree.

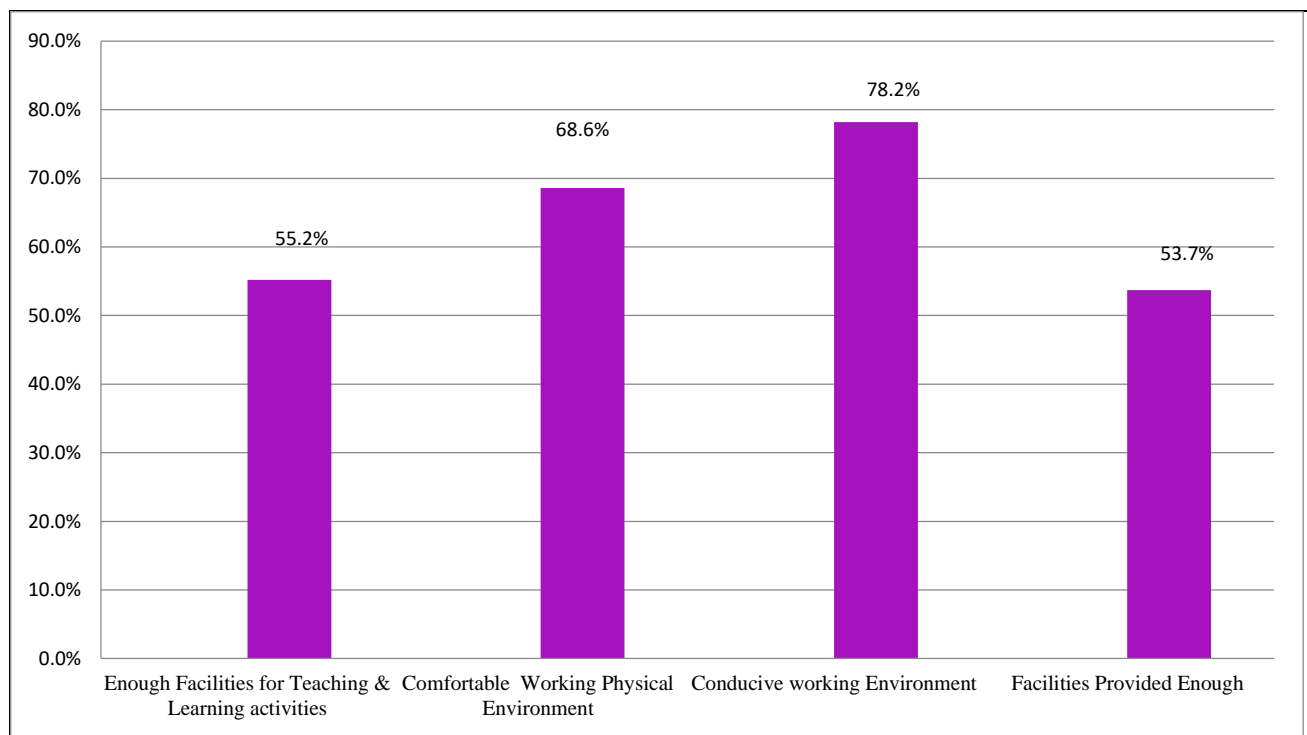
Professional qualifications, found that 1,252 (62.4%) of respondents have college certificates and 321 (16.0%) of respondents are education diploma holders. Only 2 (0.1%) respondents have a bachelor degree.

Outcomes

Working Environment Level

Figure 1 shows the level of respondents' work environment. The findings showed that 68.6% of respondents agreed physical environment at work is comfortable. 78.2% of respondents said that a conducive working environment encouraging them to work and 55.2% of respondents agreed services provided in their workplace is sufficient to carry out the teaching and learning process with the children at the multi-ethnic preschool. However, almost half of the respondents were not satisfied with the facilities provided teaching and learning. The study also found that only 53.7% of respondents agreed facilities at the workplace is sufficient. It shows that nearly half of respondents said that there is still a lack of facilities in the workplace.

Figure 1: Working Environment Level



The evaluation of human capital related commitments of teachers

Table 2 shows the evaluation of human capital related commitments of teachers in multi-ethnic preschool.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	N
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)		
1 Clear goals	6 (0.3)	13 (0.6)	97 (4.8)	1163 (57.9)	724 (36.1)	4.29	20
2 Cannot wait to do the tasks	4 (0.2)	20 (1.0)	111 (5.5)	1287 (64.1)	579 (28.8)	4.21	20
3 Teaching is the first priority	2 (0.1)	20 (1.0)	63 (3.1)	1122 (55.9)	795 (39.6)	4.34	20
4 Did not do the unrelated work	28 (1.4)	66 (3.3)	160 (8.0)	1068 (53.2)	678 (33.8)	4.15	20
5 To cooperate fully	6 (0.3)	8 (0.4)	43 (2.1)	1078 (53.7)	868 (43.2)	4.39	20
6 Hard working to improve the service	1 (0.0)	4 (0.2)	28 (1.4)	932 (46.4)	900 (44.8)	4.46	18
Total Mean Score						4.31	

Note: Score Level: 1.00 - 2.33 = Low; 2.34 – 3.67 = Moderate; 3.68 – 5.00 = High.

Table 2 shows a total of 1,887 (94%) of respondents agreed that the goal of what they do is clear. Meanwhile, 1,866 (92.9%) of respondents could not wait to do their daily tasks and a total of 1,917 (95.5%) of respondents give teaching is first priority to their duties. A total of 1,746 (86.7%) of respondents have never made a work that is not related to the current task at work. A total of 1,946 (96.9%) of respondents are very cooperative as possible to work while only 6 (3%) were less cooperative in the organization. A total of 1,832 (91.2%) of respondents who agreed to try to perform the task perfectly. The mean score for each item is in a high scale. The overall mean score for multi-ethnic preschool teachers commitment to their work is high at 4.31. Overall, teachers have a

commitment to their duties. The findings show that teachers in multi-ethnic preschool understand the aims of their work and always wanted to perform the work as quickly as possible to prioritize the tasks given. The multi-ethnic preschool teachers also focus on their job and only perform work related to their professions. Teachers in multi-ethnic preschool cooperate fully in order to fulfill their duties effectively.

Multicultural aspect in multi-ethnic preschool

Based on table 3, A total of 1,834 (91.4%) of respondents believe the concept of multi-ethnic should be instilled at the preschool level.

Table 3: Multicultural aspects in multi-ethnic preschool

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean (SP)	N
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)		
1 Interested to work with children from multi-ethnics	17 (0.8)	118 (5.9)	416 (20.7)	853 (42.5)	366 (18.2)	4.30 (0.62)	1770
2 Chose multi-ethnic preschool because of mission and vision of national unity	4 (0.2)	7 (0.3)	114 (5.7)	1005 (50.1)	691 (34.4)	4.10 (0.73)	1821
3 The concept of cultural diversity to be nurtured at the preschool level	4 (0.2)	2 (0.1)	70 (3.5)	1035 (51.6)	799 (39.8)	4.37 (0.58)	1910

A total of 1,219 (60.7%) of respondents prefer to work with children of all races. A total of 1,696 (84.5%) of respondents chose to remain on the mission and vision of the importance of national unity in multi-ethnic preschool. The teachers also agreed the concept of cultural diversity to be nurtured at the preschool level, a total of 1,834 (91.4%) respondent. Based on interviews with teacher (G1K), she explained that,

“I think the Department of National Itegration has its own vision and objectives. When we talk about ethnics unity or multi-racial unity...sure this multi-ethnic preschool, many pupil from different ethnics and enhance relationships between all ethnics”.

(G1K/PdP)

The improvement of multi-ethnic preschools

In term of improvement to this preschool, respondents basically agreed that the improvements made in terms of:

Table 4: Aspect of Improvement

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean (SP)	N
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)		
Aspects of improvement:							
a. Quality of Teaching & Learning materials	4 (0.2)	6 (0.3)	69 (3.4)	1069 (53.0)	764 (38.1)	4.35 (0.60)	1907
b. Safety	5 (0.2)	7 (0.3)	73 (3.6)	1039 (51.8)	784 (39.1)	4.36 (0.61)	1908
c. Health & Cleanliness	5 (0.2)	13 (0.6)	76 (3.8)	1044 (52.0)	770 (38.4)	4.34 (0.62)	1908
d. Interior Design Attractive	5 (0.2)	12 (0.6)	68 (3.4)	1051 (52.4)	772 (38.5)	4.35 (0.61)	1908
e. Physically Facilities	5 (0.2)	8 (0.4)	67 (3.3)	1021 (50.9)	808 (40.3)	4.37 (0.60)	1909
f. Teacher Quality – Training	6 (0.3)	11 (0.5)	68 (3.4)	1006 (50.1)	817 (40.7)	4.38 (0.66)	1908
g. Promotion & Career Path	13 (0.6)	10 (0.5)	81 (4.0)	990 (49.3)	814 (40.6)	4.34 (0.75)	1908
Total Mean Score						4.04	

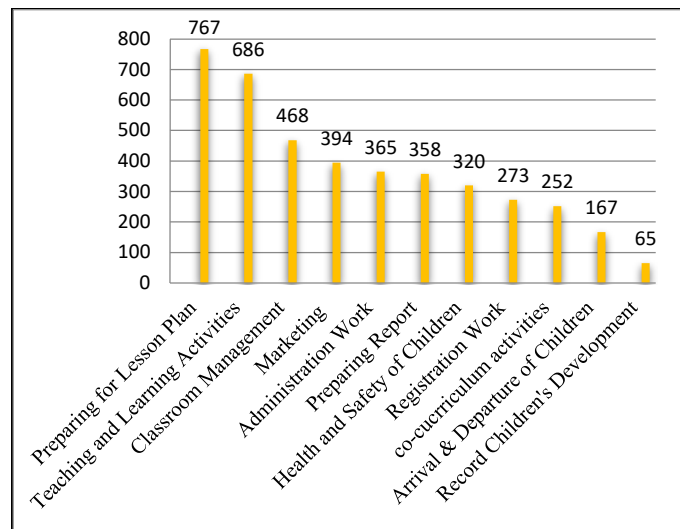
Table 4 shows the improvement of multi-ethnic preschools. Results showed that as many as 91.1% of respondents agreed that the quality of teaching and learning materials needs to be improved. A total of 90.9% of the respondents agreed to the improvement of safety and a total of 94.2% of respondents expect improvement in terms of health and cleanliness. A total of 90.4% of the respondents agreed to the improvement of the interior design and more attractive with fun aspects. A total of 91.2% of respondents expect improvement in terms of physical facilities, while 90.8% of respondents wanted to increase the quality of teachers in terms of training and 89.9% of respondents want improved employment and promotion. This is because the majority of respondents are on work contracts. Overall, respondents in need of improvement for the multi-ethnic preschools of all aspects of preschool.

Roles and responsibilities of Teachers

Figure 3 shows the ranking of duties and responsibilities of teachers in multi-ethnic preschool. The findings of the duties of teachers found that of the 767 respondents said that the lesson is the main task to be performed for a teacher. A total of 686 respondents indicated that roles and responsibilities of teachers are implementing the teaching and learning process and 468 respondents indicated that classroom management in the areas of teacher responsibility. A total of 394 respondents were involved with the task of promoting unity and a total of 365 kindergarten respondents carry out

administrative tasks. In addition, a total of 358 respondents made the task of preparing reports and 320 respondents are responsible for maintaining the safety of children in multi-ethnic preschool.

Figure 2: Teachers's Roles and Responsibility



However in terms of teacher practices daily record of children's development is very little that only 65 persons are recording a child's development.

Teachers and Child Ratio

The ratio of teachers and child in multi-ethnic preschool is between 25 to 35 children per class. Based on interviews with teachers in multi-ethnic preschool, she said the number of children in multi-ethnic preschool is more than a predetermined ratio. Teacher (G1J) explained,

"If it's not enough but if teachers do exactly it might be enough je! Like I have a lot of number in my class... thirty five children each year. There is an assistant so there's no problem just the beginning of the end of the year a lot of work a bit. "

(G1J/NGM)

Teachers ratio in multi-ethnic preschool, there is no problem in term of ratio of teachers and children because shall not exceed 35 children. However, this teacher (PGK/NGM) expressed disappointment. She stated as follows,

"I feel pity for all teachers. The quantity of children to teachers is too much. Quantity of pupil in private preschool is minimum between 15 or 14 pupils. With over 30 or 25 pupil in one class I think teachers can not handle"

(PGK/NGM)

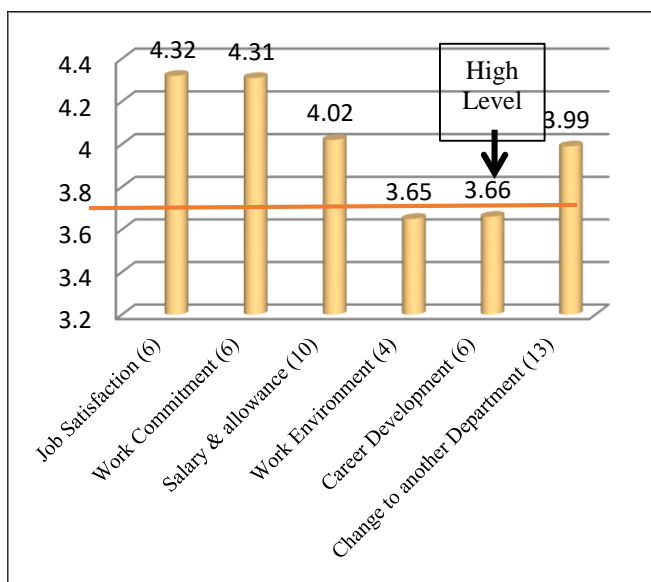
Views on staff shortages are also supported by officer who supervises multi-ethnic preschool. She stated that,

“The lack of staff. Teachers with thirty-five pupils. I was told by her superiors that we set a maximum of thirty-five, but if possible we want to put the pupils in class only a maximum of thirty so teachers easy to control. Because there is one teacher and one assistant only right”
(PJ/NGM)

Quality of Human Resources

Based on figure 3 shows the quality of human resources in multi-ethnic preschool based on six variables were measured using 32 items. The results showed that six variables were constructed using 32 items. The findings indicate the quality of human resources in the context of satisfaction, commitment and salaries and remuneration are in high level. However, two factors working environment and development work is at a moderate level.

Figure 3: Quality of Human Development



Total mean for variable work environment is moderate with a mean score of 3.65 points. The findings indicate the facilities provided in their workplace is located at a level that requires improvements for teaching and learning facilities.

Total mean for variable work environment is moderate with a mean score of 3.65 points. The findings indicate the facilities provided in their workplace is located at a level that requires improvements for teaching and learning facilities. Interviews with respondents, teacher (G2PP) said, “Not all multi-ethnic preschool has its own building, had relations with the neighborhood. The structure of the building is not in accordance with the specifications of the actual kindergarten.”

(G2PP/SeK)

This shows that the environment is still an issue for some places in preschool services offered by this government agency. This illustrates that the staff are less satisfied with the work environment.

Based on Figure 3, the overall mean score for level of staff career development this government agency is 3.66. A total of 1,414 (70.5%) of respondents would like to re-evaluate their career in this multi-ethnic preschool and 1,216 (60.6%) of respondents are satisfied with the results of her career. A total of 1,059 (52.7%) of respondents said that their career stability is assured and 1,198 (59.7%) of respondents are satisfied with their careers in multi-ethnic preschool but percentage at moderate level which mean this agency should plan and provide teacher better career development.

Teacher (P1S) explained,

“We will attend the professional development course...either at the headquarters itself or our department level. We also participating Ministries of Education curriculum. The government should give priority to the development of the professionalism of teachers and also in terms of promotion if they feel the importance of multi-ethnic national preschool...especially to national unity and integration.”

(P1S/PrP)

Teachers indicated that they need a variety of profesional development courses to improve their knowledge and career path until degree level like other government agencies do for their teachers if the government feels this multi-ethnic preschool is important for national unity.

Discussion and Improvement

Working Environment Level

Improvements must be made not only in the quality of teaching and learning but in the infrastructure, environment, cleanliness, safety and staff image. The outcomes show most of the teachers said the work environment at a moderate level, but conducive and can attract them to perform their duties more effectively. Almost half of respondents said that the facilities provided insufficient to carry out educational activities with children. Inadequate facilities will interfere with the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. Negative working environment such as lack of facilities and uncomfortable work environment will reduce their interest to work. In line with Griffin (2010) states that working conditions will negatively affect the effectiveness of the work conducted by someone. A conducive environment includes comfortable working environment, clean and spacious area can motivate staff to work. The results from this study also found that overall, teachers have a commitment to their duties. They understand the aim of their work and always wanted to perform the work as quickly as possible to prioritize the teaching and learning activities.

The practices of teachers' role and responsibility in multi-ethnic preschool

Based on ranking of duties and responsibilities of teachers in multi-ethnic preschool the findings shows teachers have been given priority to their planning lesson and implementing the teaching and learning. However in terms of recording their children's development is very little and that needs an improvement. Beside that the poor ratio of teachers and child in multi-ethnic preschool is between 25 to 35 children per class which needs a lot attention. Research shows that teachers face

difficult times to control children from different of backgrounds and it's more difficult to handle the children if the number is more than 25 (e.g Gol-Guven, 2009).

The quality of human resources in multi-ethnic preschool based on six variables and the need of improvements

Based on six variables that were constructed using 32 items, they indicate the quality of human resources in multi-ethnic preschool in the context of satisfaction, commitment and salaries, and remuneration is in high level. However, two factors which are working environment and development work is at a moderate level. Career paths or stages of career development is at a moderate level, which respondents expect the management to re-evaluate their career in multiethnic preschool with regard to their appointment. With this, the probability of leaving their career is low.

The quality of Multi-ethnic preschool as responsive to multi-ethnic

The teachers agreed that they prefer to work with children of all ethnics and nurtured the concept of cultural diversity at the preschool level. They suggested that to improve the image of multi-ethnic, providing extensive facilities that driven multi-cultural is needed. Multi-ethnic preschool should be built according to certain specifications and landscaping shows multi-culturalism, happiness and safety. If the government agency objective to strengthen multi-ethnic preschool is in terms of contribution for national integration, the selection of children's activity books and teaching aids should in line with the development of children. Selection of teaching and learning materials accordingly can help improve a child's development and multi-ethnic awareness. Rearrange class room seating by children's age, are able to ensure that children receive instruction appropriate to their age and stage of development. The aim is to create a learning environment that is effervescent and improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning for every child can be given the utmost attention. In line with Nordin (2012) multi-ethnic presechool should attract more children from different ethnic groups in accordance with the direction of national unity and integration. This ethnic diversity should be highlighted through the modules of a multi-ethnic concept.

Conclusion

The summary and conclusion of the study is that the overall working environment is moderate. The conducive classroom environment encourage teachers to perform well in their duties and deliver lesson effectively. Some teachers wanted to increase the quality of teachers in terms of training because 62.4 % only have certificate. The number of children in the classroom and teacher-child ratio are also needs improvement from the government agency because teacher-child ratio are well-known contributors to classroom quality. The poor ratio of teachers-child in multi-ethnic preschool is 35 children per class contributes to poor results. The researchs show early childhood teaching training contributes positively to teacher effectiness beside experience. The findings show multi-ethnic preschool premises needs improvement in terms of standard specifications including landscaping, happiness and safety. The government has been taken numerous steps to improve the quality of multi-ethnic preschool service for better future.

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