

TEACHERS' ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE DEVELOPMENTAL OF PRE-SCHOOL STUDENTS: A PILOT STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Development of a child's learning begins at home. Parents are the main person to start and to help the physical, social, emotional, language skills and cognitive development of children (Children, 2005; Satoria Amiruddin, Sombuling, & Kiong, 2014; (Nor Hashimah Hashim & Yahya Che Lah, 2007). The developments of these five aspects in accordance with nature are by genes and environment. Psychologists have recognized that no individual has the same rate of growth (Aliza Ali, Sharifah Nor Puteh, & Zamri Mahamod, 2013; Atan Long, 1980; Azizi Yahaya, Halimah Ma'alip, & Zuhaimy Ismail, 2012; Nor Hashimah Hashim & Yahya Che Lah, 2007). (Shahrin Hashim & Yusof Boon, 2008) enhances that the development of each individual is unique and also have stages. Although their development are the same but they have the different levels from each other based on genetic, environment, education and nutrition.

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INTRODUCTION

Development of a child's learning begins at home. Parents are the main person to start and to help the physical, social, emotional, language skills and cognitive development of children (Children, 2005; Saturia Amiruddin, Sombuling, & Kiong, 2014; (Nor Hashimah Hashim & Yahya Che Lah, 2007). The developments of these five aspects in accordance with nature are by genes and environment. Psychologists have recognized that no individual has the same rate of growth (Aliza Ali, Sharifah Nor Puteh, & Zamri Mahamod, 2013; Atan Long, 1980; Azizi Yahaya, Halimah Ma'alip, & Zuhaimy Ismail, 2012; Nor Hashimah Hashim & Yahya Che Lah, 2007). (Shahrin Hashim & Yusof Boon, 2008) enhances that the development of each individual is unique and also have stages. Although there development are the same but they have the different levels from each other based on genetic, environment, education and nutrition.

Teachers' acquaintance with student's growth development is very important to simplify the preparations of teaching and learning (P&P). This science is called as educational psychology or developmental psychology. Educational psychology needed by their teachers, especially as knowledge about children's behavior in order to achieve a good effect in the process of P&P. According to Azizi Yahaya *et al.*, 2012; Nor Hashimah Hashim & Yahya Che Lah (2007) teachers who are knowledgeable about child development can understand the behavior of existing and expected behavior. Teachers can also be prepared in all aspects such as classrooms, teaching aids, approaches and techniques in teaching. Teachers can understand that the development of physical, mental, and emotional health of children are different from each other; there are children who are better developments in one field but weak in other areas. Child development followed a form that can be expected. Therefore it is certainly easy to simplify the preparation of P&P and regulatory discipline in the classroom and make the subject understandable (Killen, 2009).

The acquaintance concerning the developmental of pre-school students are more meaningful by intensifying the main theories of the individual developmental that have been mentioned by several psychologist such as the Arnold Gesell Developmental Theory. Arnold Gesell (1880-1961) assumes that children are similar to plants (Nor Hashimah Hashim & Yahya Che Lah, 2007). According to his theory, behavior of an individual person can be predictable because their behavior develops according to a fixed time schedule. Gene factor is the main cause of child development as well as environmental and cultural factors. Children develop at their own way of development naturally. Thus, every child has the distinction of personality that should be known by every educator. At

preschool age between four and six years, children begin to socialize, to be able to submit questions, can determine what is right or wrong and be able to hear the opinions of others (Devi, 1998).

The next discussion is on Jean Piaget's Theory of Development, which is famous for Cognitive Development. Jean Piaget (1896-1980) has conducted research through observation of his own children and other children too. Observations were conducted through the structure, behavior, intelligence, reasoning, thinking, and intellectual maturity. At the age of two to seven years, the development of sensory motor switches to mental development. The uses of symbols are to represent objects around them. In this age, children begin to speak and being egocentric. They do something of their own volition and feels that others agree with them. For Piaget, children construct knowledge in itself that are influenced by environmental and natural factors (L. Alan Sroufe, Cooper, DeHart, & Marshall, 1996).

Sigmund Freud Development Theory (1856-1939) also states that children should get adequate basic requirements for progression to the next age. The breakdown for this requirement led to having problems of interaction with people. He divides the concept of personality to id, ego and superego. Id is the unconscious personality, Ego as a controller of Id so as not to violate the values and norms of society. While the superego is the moral personality. So, the moral superego provides information to the ego to control id. Process development stage between the ages of four to six years, children feel enthusiasm to their sex organs. Therefore a boy is more close to her mother and a girl is closer to her father (Devi, 1998).

Erik Erikson Development Theory (1902-1994) concerning three to six years of age, children wants to explore something

new and challenging and began to be independent at this age. Therefore they need to be encouraged so that their potential can be discovered and continued (L. Alan Sroufe *et al.*, 1996).

Throughout the knowledge of the development theory, teachers and educators can understand students' behavior better and can prepare the P&P with more structured and more creative and also can control the student's discipline. Finally, all objectives can be achieved to produce a glorious and brilliant generation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010 (KSPK), highlighted the development of children have to go through six Learning cord which are language development, spiritual development, social development, cognitive development, physical development of gross motor skills and fine motor skills as well as creativity and ultimately the development of socio-emotional development (Ministry of Education, 2010). According to (Nur Hanani Hussin, Mohd Aderi Che Noh, & Ab Halim Tamuri, 2013) dan (Shulman, 1987) that the knowledge of students and characteristics of students is one of the essential components of a quality teacher.

According to the Ministry of Education (2012), the level of student learning and development process are the main factor in the success of an education system. Based on the philosophy of national education (PNE), MOE devote the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, physical and students. Therefore MOE ensure that teachers use student-centered P&P that can meet the needs of students differently because quality teacher is the main cause of a success student.

The study of teaching by the Higher Education Leadership (AKEPT) in 2011 found that only 12% of teaching practices

more to pedagogical such as imparting knowledge to a high standard, 38% were at a satisfactory standard. While 50% indicated that the instruction imparted is not satisfactory. Therefore, efforts must be intensified to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers so that new knowledge and skills that is intended to be delivered to students.

Based on the requirements of the MOE and the results of the AKEPT study in 2011 found that an urgent need for all teachers to understand educational psychology and pedagogy of teaching more deeply. However, the limits of this study are only the teachers' acquaintance with the development of students or educational psychology only. Where the study was confined to selected preschools.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study is to explore the level of preschool teachers' acquaintance with the developmental of preschool children and how to implement this acquaintance in the process of teaching and learning (P&P).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a pilot study with a qualitative approach using case study method. According to Creswell (2012) case studies focusing more on the program, event, something special groups, cultures, individual as well as more in-depth focus on the exploration of real cases. A government and a private pre-school was selected as a place of study and one of the teachers from both schools was selected as the sample of study. Samples of the study were selected using purposive sampling techniques with the criteria, namely teachers have been teaching in preschool exceeding three years, have a formal education in college or have a diploma early childhood education. The

purpose of the selection of samples using purposive sampling method is because this method is the most appropriate method for a qualitative research (Creswell, 2012).

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observational data triangulated with data interviews and document analysis to get the validity and the reliability of this study. According Marohaini Yusoff (2001), the use of variety data collection techniques can strengthen the validity of a study undertaken. Moreover, Creswell (2003) also argues that qualitative data collection techniques are considered suitable for events, activities and processes of an in depth study can be made. The interview data were recorded using the voice recorder; data observations were recorded using video camera and documentary evidence were captured using the camera. Data have been through the process of transcription and analyzed using NVivo 7 to generate themes, subthemes, and sub-sub-theme.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study found that samples of this study have intimate acquaintance with student's development of physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development. Sources of samples' acquaintance derived from the university that samples studied before and also form their own experiences. Next, samples were able to understand the development of students through the sources of information by the classroom teachers' and parents.

According to the sources of the teacher's acquaintance, when he was asked he stated that,

"Here we follow the developments of JERI. That was where I learned about physical development, intellect development, emotional development, social development and spiritual development".

Obviously with this answer, he obtained the information of the developmental of students from the university. He mentioned clearly on the contents of the Philosophy of National Education (FNE), which is developing the physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual (JERI).

From the teacher's observation sessions, students learned for a short period and were taught individually according to their cognitive level. When teachers were asked in an interview, they explained that:

“The teacher have to speed and be fast in teaching because the students can't stand for half an hour to hear what we say and teach. As an example, the letter A is for Abu, we have to explain it in 10 minutes but the routine should be aware everyday over and over again for just a shot time. For the four years, we have to teach them not more than five minutes and continuously so that they can get what we meant. Student ages five years old can write their own names but have problems in sounds. The differences between ages four and five are, for ages four we just introduce them with the alphabet and numbers but for ages five we introduce them again but with the sounds. That is the reason why we can teach reading to the six year old students. These are the steps we use here to teach them - 4,5 and 6 years old students”.

From the implementation of the interview and the observation, the researcher can conclude that teachers not only understand about the developmental of student, but they also applied it in accordance with their own knowledge and understanding. This finding is consistent with the fact by Department of Community Service (2002), that the existing theory or knowledge can assist teachers in the P&P, but less effective if teachers do not have acquaintance with the behavior, abilities and personality of each child. Thus for Abdul Syukor Hashim, Hamimah Hashim, & Siti Zuraida Maaruf (2007), each child has their own learning

style. Similarly, the interests, needs and motivations are different from each other. Hence teachers need to be aware and know of any developments and differences of students. This finding is also consistent with the opinion of Ab. Halim Tamuri & Mohamad Khairul Azman Ajuhary (2010) that teachers should be concerned about his ability to accept science and knowledge.

The developments of intellectual, social, emotional and physical are well connected to each other. Samples understand that cognitive development is also related with emotions and motivations. He does not force students, who cannot read, as he says:

“We don't force students which have not yet attain the time to read. We are afraid if we push and force them, the students will switch off. They will be stressed and will feel being annoyed. They will not open the books to read anymore because of the negative impact in his psychology that he got from the teachers whom always says that he wrongly read the book”.

The knowledge and implementation of the teacher coincides with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which says children's cognitive development are gradually and follows their environment (Rohaty Mohd. Majzub & Abu Bakar Nordin, 1989). In addition to the cognitive aspects related to the emotional aspects of physical development as well as gross motor noted by samples of this study. This is because the healthy physical development has a huge role to build the perfect cognitive development. In this case the physical aspects of development affects cognitive development, emotional and social.

“There is a 6 year old student who could not even write his own name. This student will always be frustrated. The reason is because he doesn't want to hear when his friends talk to him so he thinks that nobody wants to be friend with him. He will be

angry and stubborn everyday at school and want to attack or fight with other student. I do not blame him because when we observe, he doesn't want to hear. So he is frustrated to think that his friends doesn't like him and doesn't want to be friends with him. So he gets angry."

The developments of these five aspects are related to each other for an example a student is found to have a problem to read which is language and cognitive aspects. Upon investigation, it was found that this problem starts from the physical aspects of hearing, so his emotional instability; irritability and the effect of these students also decelerate in learning to read. This finding is consistent with studies of (Shahida, Tee, Rosadah, Zalizan, & Hamizatun Akmal, 2013) found that students who have hearing problems are weak in managing their own emotions and feeble in social relationships, difficult to follow instructions, like to interfere their friends and less in understanding the rules of the class. They often show negative emotions such as love to scream, get angry when disturbed and get temper when their desires are not fulfilled. They are not able to manage their emotions.

When teachers understand a situation like this it will not be overlooked and the students can be helped. After detecting the problem, the teacher suggested her mother to see a pediatrician and apparently this child have hearing problems.

In addition, cognitive and language development of students as decelerate in reading is also due to family's background and environment. Samples stated that:

"One more is we have to study their background too because sometimes he goes back from school to their babysitter's house or sometimes his beg left in his grandmother's house to go back to his mother's house so, he won't open the book and by the next day he will forget what we teach."

Samples are seen to understand the causes and reasons for the development of its students. Thus the teacher tries to teach students according to student's own ability, which is different for each student in all aspects.

CONCLUSION

Every parent expects the help of teachers to educate their children with full responsibility, understanding the demands of children and can control their discipline. The parents also hope teachers can educate with love and respect the children as they are human beings too. Therefore to meet the demands of administrators and parents' responsibility, teachers should be informed and know about the students' developmental in order the process of P&P can be implemented successfully.

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