A SURVEY ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES DESIGNED FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPONENT, SPECIFICALLY ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONDUCTED IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, MALAYSIA (MOE) PRESCHOOLS IN KUCHING DISTRICT.

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This final year project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Education (Honours) Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)

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ABSTRACT

A SURVEY ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES DESIGNED FOR LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION COMPONENT, SPECIFICALLY ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONDUCTED IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, MALAYSIA (MOE) PRESCHOOLS IN KUCHING

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the teaching and learning activities designed for English language in the MOE preschools in Kuching district. 20 MOE preschool teachers participated in the study through purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Semi structured interview and documentation analysis were conducted in gathering the data for the study. The study set out to explore the activities designed by the MOE preschool teachers for their English language class, the reasons for the teachers’ selection of the activities they designed and the extent in which the teaching and learning activities designed was in relation to the MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification. The findings showed that generally the teaching and learning activities designed for English language were designed in accordance to the learning outcome in the MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification. The teachers stated that their reasons for selection of the teaching and learning activities were because of the preschoolers, the curriculum, class environment and their own motivation. Based on the findings, the teachers showed positive remarks regarding the teaching and learning activities designed in relation to achieving the learning outcome in the MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification. However, most teachers perceive that the MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification is slightly difficult for the MOE preschoolers.
ABSTRAK

KAJIAN BERKENAAN AKTIVITI PENGAJARAN DAN PEMBELAJARAN YANG DIRANCANG UNTUK KOMPONEN BAHASA INGGERIS DI PRASEKOLAH KEMENTERIAN PELAJARAN, MALAYSIA (KMP) DI DAERAH KUCHING.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents an overview, the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and research questions of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, scope of the study and the chapter review.

1.1 Background of the Study

The goals of Ministry of Education, Malaysia (MOE) preschools is to enhance student potential in all developmental aspects, master basic skills and foster positive attitudes as preparation for primary education (Ministry of Education, 2008). According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2008), the preschool education in this country is an informal and flexible education process where the teaching pedagogy follows the learning through play methods and approaches. It is also mentioned that the planned activities emphasize total, balanced and comprehensive child development which include activities that stimulate their young inquisitive minds, develop their motor skills, creativity, 'espirit de corps', respect for others and discipline in preparation for formal teaching and learning at primary school.

The preschool education objectives are to build positive character and self concept as a patriotic citizen, to use proper BM and develop language and communication
skills, to use English in daily activities as it is the official second language, to incorporate good values in daily life in accordance to faith, to develop thinking and problem-solving skills, to nurture emotional maturity and social skills, to acquire good health and safety practices and to encourage creativity and aesthetic appreciation of nature and cultural heritage (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2008).

Preschool Education in this country started since the year 1950 (Preschool Education, 2008). At that time, preschool was influenced by the British education system where it was more exclusive and the opportunities were only opened to those from wealthy families. From year 1950 until 1960, kindergartens in Malaysia were founded by the Christian societies as part of their church activities (Preschool Education, 2008).

Almost all of the preschools which were owned by individuals or private agencies were located in the urban areas. Thus it only provided early education for those children whose parents were able to afford the educational fees and lived in the urban area. As a result, only a minority of the children aged between four to six years old were given the opportunity to attend the classes held by those preschools. Unfortunately, a lot of children especially those from poor families and rural areas were unable to gain the early education in kindergarten.

However, a revolution occurred in year 1969, when Asia Foundation contributed an amount of money to the Worker Society of Malaysia to fund the development capital of preschool model institution which was similar to the Head Start Project in America (Preschool Education, 2008). The Head Start Project was first developed in America to eradicate the negative effects of poverty on children's development. In 1966, Head Start was a center based preschool program serving primarily poor children aged three to five which offered a nine-month, half day program (Zigler, Styfco & Gilman, 2004). According to Zigler, Styfco & Gilman (2004), the Head Start Program is designed to meet the developmental needs of poor children in order to optimize their competence in social and school setting.
Studies done on the Head Start Program indicated that the program had positive, long term effects on the child’s ability to meet academic and social expectancies (Zigler, Styfco & Gilman, 2004). The similar program which was developed in Malaysia involves children from multi-racial society such as Malay, Chinese and Indian who comes from poor families. The targeted participants for this project were from Kampung Muniandy, Kampung Manggis and Kampung Sentosa in Selangor (Preschool Education, 2008).

Professionals in the Educational department and other mass organizations realize the importance of early childhood education in this country. They believe that young children should be given the time and opportunity to prepare themselves before facing the formal education in school. This is in accordance to one of the goals of Preschool Education in Malaysia which is to foster positive attitudes in students as a preparation for primary education.

Therefore, the Agriculture Department, Society Development Sector or known as KEMAS (Bahagian Kemajuan Masyarakat), took the further steps to organize preschool programs in rural area. The Preschool Program launched by KEMAS was named as Tabika (Taman Bimbingan Kanak-kanak). The main objective of this Preschool Program by KEMAS is to provide education and social opportunities to those unfortunate children, where the environment in rural area did not attract their interest to learn.

Besides that, there were government agencies and half government agencies that took part in this project such as FELDA, RISDA, Kementerian Perpaduan Masyarakat dan Pembangunan Negara including the Jabatan Perpaduan Negara (TADIKA Perpaduan) and Ministry of Human Resource, Labour Sector (Preschool Education, 2008). On the other hand, non-government agencies include Malaysian Preschool Organization, Angkata Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri (JAIN), Parti Pas (PASTI), private agencies and university (Preschool Education, 2008).
As of 31 January 2007, a total of 5852 pre-school classes have been opened by Ministry of Education, Malaysia which is inclusive of those in special primary schools and teacher training institutes and as recorded on 31 January 2007, the total number of preschool students in the country inclusive of those in special primary schools and teacher training institutes is 118686 (Ministry of Education, 2008).

In addition, there are another 27 pre-school classes in teacher training institutes, 28 in special primary schools and 93 in Special Education Integration Programme. As for preschools teachers under the Ministry of Education, must be either graduate teachers or diploma holders (Ministry of Education, 2008). Besides that, a teacher assistant is placed in every pre-school class to assist pre-school teachers (Ministry of Education, 2008).

1.2 Research Problem

Many problems occurred due to the multiple agencies that took part in the operational of the preschool education. This is because these institutions have their own objectives, orientation, priorities and abilities as well as using different languages. Aware of this phenomenon, Ministry of Education Malaysia announced Educational Act 1996, Act 550 as a step to gain control over the MOE preschool’s education in this country.

In the Education Act 1996, Act 550, Section Four, Chapter Two- Preschool Education, number 20(1) is mentioned that, 'No kindergarten can be developed, managed or organized except if the kindergarten is registered below this act. While Act number 22 mentioned that, 'Program and each activity in kindergarten must obey to the rules in curriculum for kindergarten guidelines which have been verified by Ministry. Other than that, Act number 23 mentioned that, 'Although Section 17 (1) stated that languages other than national language can be used as the communication language in kindergarten, but if kindergarten uses other
languages as communication language, then national language must be taught as the compulsory subject.'

Previous studies show contradictory findings on whether preschools do abide to the national preschool curriculum. A study by Kwon (2004) in Seoul, the main capital city of Korea on preschool teachers in the main preschool institution, reveal that the actual practices in the preschool settings are significantly different from the National Kindergarten Curriculum.

The study shows that in Korea kindergartens, teachers used other approaches including extrinsic motivation, worksheets and separation of play time from work time which oppose the National Kindergarten Curriculums aims and objectives. This discrepancy could be explained by several factors such as the reflection of Korean traditional education values, the low adult to child ration and parental pressure.

However, a study done by Amy (2008), found out that generally the teaching and learning activities designed and conducted by the preschool teachers in MOEM preschools around the Kuching district is based on the MOEM preschool curriculum specification which encompasses the six learning components which are language and communication, cognitive development, Islamic/ spiritual and moral, socio-emotion development, physical development and creativity and aesthetic.

The study found out that although 70% teachers showed positive remarks that their teaching and learning activities are in relation to the MOEM Preschool Curriculum Specification, they were caught in a dilemma of successfully developing the children’s language skills in a more focused and formal learning approach or emphasizing on a fun, stress free learning approach . Based on the findings of the research, teachers’ reasons for focusing on the children ability to read and write is to meet parents, school administration and Ministry of Education expectation that students will excel in KIA 2M (Kelas Intervensi Awal Membaca
KIA 2M is a screening test that students need to take when they enter Primary 1 to measure their abilities in reading and writing. Therefore, as an implication of the study, the researcher recommended that a future research should be done to find out the teaching and learning activities conducted for language and communication component, specifically the English Language.

1.3 Research Objectives

In order to study the teaching and learning activities for English Language in KPM preschool, the following objectives will form the basis for this study.

i. To identify the activities designed by the MOE preschool teachers for English Language class.
ii. To investigate the MOE preschool teachers reasons for selection of the activities for English Language class.
iii. To examine to what extent the teaching and learning activities designed in relation to the MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification.

1.4 Research Questions

In line with the objectives of this study, the research questions that need to be answered are:

i. What are the teaching and learning activities designed by the preschool teachers for English Language?
ii. What are the preschool teachers’ reasons in the selection of the activities for English Language classroom?
iii. To what extent are the activities designed in relation to the MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification?
1.5 Significance of the Study

The finding and outcomes of this study can provide some useful information to other MOEM preschool teachers to share and enhance their teaching and learning activities for English Language. The findings will also be important in providing beneficial information to lecturers in teachers training institutions, university and personnel in the education department who are directly involved in the MOEM preschool program to improve the teaching and learning activities conducted in the MOEM preschools. While at the same time, the findings may provide some insight to parents of preschoolers attending the MOEM preschool or ones who are interested to look into the teaching and learning activities for English Language in the MOEM preschool.

1.6 Operational Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Teaching and learning activities

The teaching and learning activities conducted in MOE preschools should attain to the National Preschool Curriculum. Thus, the teaching and learning activities designed for English language in those preschools ought to be aligned with the required MOEM Preschool Curriculum Specification for English language. As stated in Act number 22 of the Educational Act (1996), 'all activities in kindergarten must obey to the rules in curriculum for kindergarten guidelines which have been verified by the Ministry of Education.'

1.6.2 Language and Communication Component specifically English Language

Language and communication is one of the six components in the National Preschool Curriculum. The six components are:

i. Language and communication

ii. Cognitive development
iii. Islamic/spiritual and moral
iv. Socio-emotion development
v. Physical development
vi. Creativity and aesthetic

The language and communication component consist of two languages which are Bahasa Melayu as the national language and English Language as the official second language. According to Act number 23 in the Educational Act (1996), 'although Section 17 (1) stated that languages other than national language can be used as the communication language in kindergarten, but if kindergarten uses other languages as communication language, then national language must be taught as the compulsory subject.'

1.6.3 Ministry of Education, Malaysia (MOE) Preschools

The MOE preschools are preschools which are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Those preschools implement the use of the National Preschool Curriculum. According to the Ministry of Education (2008), as of 31 January 2007, a total of 5852 pre-school classes were opened by Ministry of Education Malaysia which is inclusive of those in special primary schools and teacher training institutes. In addition, there are another 27 pre-school classes in teacher training institutes, 28 in special primary schools and 93 in special education integration programme.

1.6.4 MOE Preschool Teachers

MOE preschool teachers are trained and qualified preschool teachers acknowledge by Ministry of Education Malaysia with either a degree or a diploma in early childhood education. Besides that, a teacher assistant grade (N17) is placed in every pre-school class to assist pre-school teachers.

1.6.5 MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification
The MOE Preschool English Language Curriculum Specification is a guide for MOE preschool teachers to designed activities for English language class and to come up with their daily and yearly lesson plan. It consists of 4 component which are listening, speaking, reading and writing which states specifically learning outcomes which should be achieve in each component. (Appendix E)

1.7 Scope of Study

The data for this study will be collected from 20 MOEM preschool teachers in the Kuching district only. The participants selected for this study may not be the sole nor typical representation and hence the generalization will not be valid. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all MOEM preschools and other public or private preschools.

1.8 Chapter Review

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and research questions of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms and scope of the study. The following chapter will present some related study and previous researches.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter will discuss in depth the importance of early childhood education, the development of preschool curriculum, brief description of Malaysia National Preschool Curriculum, Korea National Preschool Curriculum and Singapore National Preschool Curriculum, comparison of the three curriculum and other related studies on preschool curriculum and practices and teaching and learning activities in MOE preschool.

2.1 Early Childhood Education

Over the past years, there is a growing realization of the importance of early childhood education. A recent National Research Council (2000, cited in Currie, 2001) report on early childhood education and intervention mentioned that the goals of early childhood education can be divided into three areas which are cognitive skills, school readiness, and social and emotional development.

Early childhood education does bring significant effects to children’s cognitive development. Nippold (2000, cited in Ely, 2005) believes that by the time children enter kindergarten, usually around age five, they have acquired a relatively sophisticated command of language, an accomplishment that has sometimes led
researchers to believe that language development is essentially complete but major tasks still await the child, and developments that are as dramatic as those of the early years are yet to come.

A research conducted by Gorey (2001) across 35 preschool results in the primary findings which are preschool effects on standardized measures of intelligence and academic achievement were statistically significant, positive, and large, the cognitive effects of relatively intense educational interventions were significant and very large, even after five to ten years, and that seven to eight of every ten preschool children did better than the average child in a control or comparison group.

It is also argued that early childhood education effects children's' growth in terms of social behaviour. The same research conducted by Gorey (2001) also found out that the cumulative incidences of an array of personal and social problems were statistically significantly and substantially lower over a ten to twenty five year period for those who had attended preschool. The social problems involve school drop out, welfare dependence, unemployment, poverty and criminal behavior.

2.2 Preschool Curriculum

Preschool curriculum differs across country although some may apply the same approach. The development of preschool curriculum foundation of a preschool is usually based on the understanding of the importance of early childhood education towards children growth. Most countries implement preschool curriculum which is develop by the ministry of education in their country. Therefore, the national preschool curriculum of each country may differ and may have some similarities as well because of the differences in believes which maybe affected by social, culture, history and religious factors. Kwon (2004) stated that preschool education cannot be separated out from its specific social and cultural context and it reflects the values of the society that implements it.
2.2.1 Malaysia National Preschool Curriculum

The goals of Ministry of Education, Malaysia (MOE) preschools is to enhance student potential in all developmental aspects, master basic skills and foster positive attitudes as preparation for primary education. The preschool education objectives are to build positive character and self concept as a patriotic citizen, to use proper BM and develop language and communication skills, to use English in daily activities as it is the official second language, to incorporate good values in daily life in accordance to faith, to develop thinking and problem-solving skills, to nurture emotional maturity and social skills, to acquire good health and safety practices and to encourage creativity and aesthetic appreciation of nature and cultural heritage.

The activities planned emphasize total, balanced and comprehensive child development which include activities that stimulate their young inquisitive minds, develop their motor skills, creativity, `espirit de corps', respect for others and discipline in preparation for formal teaching and learning at primary school. The teaching pedagogy follows the learning through play methods and approaches in the following six components of the curriculum:

1. Language and communication
2. Cognitive development
3. Islamic/spiritual and moral
4. Socio-emotion development
5. Physical development
6. Creativity and aesthetic

2.2.2 Korea National Preschool Curriculum

The focus of the current National Curriculum in Korea is a student centred curriculum which promotes the development and autonomy and creativity of students. It is supported by one of the Korean National Curriculum parameters
which state that it is not compulsory for preschool children to have acquired academic skills in numeracy and literacy before starting compulsory schooling (Kwon, 2004). Thus the kindergarten curriculum main focus is on the child holistic development which emphasizes the whole child learning through play rather than learning specific information or skills. It also emphasizes recognizing the differences in children’s developmental phases and their learning progress. Thus, it requires teachers to provide an education which caters for the individual child’s learning and level of development.

The implementation of the curriculum stresses on content and instruction rather than assessment of the learning targets. The National Kindergarten Curriculum of Korea covers the objectives, content and methods of instruction for each of these five areas:

1. Physical Health
2. Social Relationship
3. Expression
4. Language
5. Enquiry

The National Kindergarten Curriculum of Korea is based on the six principles below:

i. Integrated activities for young children should be planned according to seasons and situations. Good habits of working and playing with others

ii. The educational contents should be chosen and implemented appropriately according to the children’s interests and developmental level.

iii. Education should be play-centred

iv. Everyday routines should be balanced, with active and passive activities, indoor and outdoor, individualized and group, and child initiated and teacher initiated activities.
v. Daily educational activities should promote various types of interactions between child-teacher, child-child, and child-materials.
vi. A teacher should ask many open questions in order to stimulate curiosity, give motivation to study, and improve creative thinking.

2.2.3 Singapore National Preschool Curriculum

The aims of Ministry of Education, Singapore kindergarten curriculum is to give the opportunity for children in the kindergarten years to enjoy observing, exploring and discovering the world, to develop a thinking nation and life-long learners based on the believe that it is necessary to nurture children from the start, to learn to think and to think to learn. The kindergartens curriculum follows the following six principles:

i. a holistic approach to development and learning
ii. integrated learning
iii. children as active learners
iv. adults as interested supporters in learning
v. interactive learning
vi. play as a medium for learning

It is hoped that by the end of their education in kindergarten children should know what is right and what is wrong, be willing to share and take turns with others, be able to relate to others, be curious and able to explore, be able to listen and speak with understanding, be comfortable and happy with themselves, have developed physical co-ordination and healthy habits and love their families, friends, teachers and school.

The curriculum also foster in children the following dispositions and skills namely sound moral and social values, good habits of working and playing with others, positive self-concept and confidence, strong sense of curiosity about things and objects around them, an ability to communicate effectively in English and a
mother tongue language, physical control and manipulative skills, positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle and positive family values and strong community ties.

2.3 Comparison of the Preschool Curriculum in Malaysia, Korea and Singapore

All three curriculum discussed above stresses on child-centred philosophies which incorporates the play based approach that emphasizes on the preschoolers cognitive and social development. This similarity in the principles of this three national curriculums, shows the importance of learning through discovery where learning is learner driven which means that learners are given the opportunity to direct and decide their own learning. Thus, it can be concluded that the national curriculum for preschools of the three countries are quiet similar because it is based on the same beliefs.

2.4 Other Related Studies

2.4.1 Research on Preschool Curriculum and Practices

A research conducted by Kwon (2004) in Seoul, the main capital city of Korea on preschool teachers in the main preschool institution, reveal that the actual practices in the preschool settings are significantly different from the National Kindergarten Curriculum. The study by Kwon (2004) involves 121 early childhood educators in Seoul which consist of 15 early childhood educators from public kindergartens and another 106 from private kindergartens and six preschools, 3 from public kindergarten and 3 from private kindergarten.

The objective of the study is to explore the characteristics of the National kindergarten Curriculum as it is implemented, to examine pre-school teachers’ perception, daily practice and the curriculum content in the preschool setting and to examine to what extent the Korean National Kindergarten Curriculum has
actually influenced preschool practices in the country. The researcher uses questionnaire and observation as instrument for the study.

The findings found out that despite a child centred Korean National Curriculum and the teachers' beliefs, the actual practices in the preschool settings are significantly different from the child centred philosophies. Even though a child centred National Kindergarten curriculum emphasizes individuality and creativity, in reality lessons are mainly teacher directed rather than children were being encouraged to explore their own personal interests.

This study shown that in Korea kindergartens, teachers used other approaches including extrinsic motivation, worksheets and separation of play time from work time which oppose the National Kindergarten Curriculums aims and objectives. This discrepancy could be explained by several factors such as the reflection of Korean traditional education values, the low adult to child ration and parental pressure.

2.4.2 Research on Teaching and Learning Activities

While another research conducted by Amy (2008) found that generally the teaching and learning activities designed and conducted by the preschool teachers in MOE preschools around the Kuching district is based on the MOEM preschool curriculum specification which encompasses the six learning components which are language and communication, cognitive development, Islamic/ spiritual and moral, socio-emotion development, physical development and creativity and aesthetic.

The objectives of the study is to find out the teaching and learning activities designed and conducted by the preschool teachers in MOE preschools, their reasons in the selection of those activities and to identify whether the activities are in relation to the National Preschool Curriculum goals. The study involves 30