

# THE TEACHING SKILLS OF BEGINNING PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the Beginning Preschool Teachers' (BPT) teaching skills that are related to the preparation of lesson plan and implementation of lesson. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data were analyzed by means of qualitative approach to produce appropriate themes for the BPT teaching skills. The findings showed that BPT teaching skills in preparing lesson plan can be categorised into effective time management, appropriate selection of activities, and planning based on the curriculum provided. The BPT teaching skills identified in implementing lesson are skills in using the thematic approach, and skills in conducting learning through play. The beginning preschool teachers are competent and efficient in preparing and implementing lessons through effective time management, selecting appropriate activities, planning based on thematic approach and learning through play.

**Keywords:** pedagogical skills, beginning preschool teacher, lesson plan, and implementation of lesson.

## INTRODUCTION

Beginning preschool teachers (BPT) who have successfully completed the course and placed in selected schools will face new challenges inside and outside the classroom environment (Abdul Jalil, 2007; Russell, 1987). As a BPT, they should undergo a trial period before being confirmed their certified to teach in the post within one to three years in preschool (Ministry of Education, 2010). Although most of the BPT have a good academic background, however, they have lack of understanding of the concept and reality of teaching skills (Zakiah, Azlina & Yeo, 2011). Teaching skills of the BPT involve their ability and efficiency in the process of delivering the teaching techniques in the classroom. Teaching skills involved in both academic and co-curricular activities through the strategies, methods and approaches that are appropriate to practice accordingly to the level of children development (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

The role of BPT is to build a strong educational foundation among preschool children by providing quality learning process and environment. BPT are expected to meet the three main aspects of the Malaysian Teacher Standard, value of professional practice in teaching, have a good knowledge and understanding, and have effective pedagogical skills (Ministry of Education, 2009a).

However, stress due to the teaching and workloads at school which faced by the BPT has an impact on their teaching skills in preschool. Mohammed Sani (2007) in his study found that teachers who had graduated from Institute of Teacher Education not only suffering from stress due

to school workloads but also experiencing a situation called 'culture shock'. Culture shock is a drastic change experienced by BPT due to differences in teaching atmosphere within the institute where they were trained and actual teaching environment (Bezzina, 2006; Romano, 2008). According to Siti Saleha and Surayah (2007) 'culture shock' has a negative impact on beginning preschool teachers in implementing effective teaching in the classroom.

Other problems faced by new teachers also involve preparing daily lesson plans which is incomplete (Chong & Cheah, 2009). Unsystematic management of teaching is very much influenced by the situation of teachers who are in the process of learning to teach (Mohammed Sani, 2007). A study done by Cloke, Jane Sharif and Abdul Said (2006) for beginning teachers find that they prefer to implement daily lesson plan as a daily routine and not as an added value processes. Therefore, in-depth study to identify BPT teaching skills concerning preparation of lesson plan and implementation of lesson should be carried out.

The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching skills of beginning preschool teachers (BPT) concerning preparation of lesson plans and their teaching strategies accordingly to what they planned in their lesson plans.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

Two research questions were developed in this study:

- i. What are the BPT teaching skills in preparing lesson plan?
- ii. What are the BPT's capabilities in implementing the lesson according to the lesson plan?

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Teaching skills based on preschool education is influenced by Piaget's Developmental Theory. According to Levin (1983), teachers need to know the appropriate teaching skills with children involving pre-operational and operational level, preparation skills and teaching activities. Teachers also need to know how to plan and deliver teaching and learning strategies with concrete representation and symbols in the classroom in order to make the children understand better.

According to Anderson (2005) the teaching skills can be developed during the experiences implement of teaching activities. Through the Theory of Cognitive Development, teachers can improve their teaching skills in childrens based on the appropriateness level of development activities (Anderson, 2005). In addition, teaching activities generated by beginnging teachers is also a work of art involving skills in a creative and interesting teaching (Cruickshank, 1996). Therefore, specific teaching skills that dominated the beginning preschool teacher be an important factor in the efficiency of their practices in the classroom.

A study by Gagne, Briggs and Wager (1992) identified that pedagogical skills framework as a guide for beginning teachers to prepare the teaching and learning process. There are six elements contained in the framework of teaching skills, (1) interest, (2) state the learning outcomes, (3) stimulating recall the last content, (4) the use of teaching materials that stimulate childrens, (5) providing guidance, and (6) the tasks and questions. Therefore, based on these elements, beginning

preschool teachers teaching skills will be identified through the preparation of lesson plan and their capability in implementing the lesson according to the lesson plan.

Preparation of teaching involves learning experience and their participation in professional development training program (Reynolds, 1999). However, according to Halimah (2006) found that teachers experience is not sufficient to provide them with a good lesson plan. He believes that knowledge of effective planning of activities is due to the ability to diversify their teaching methods and providing teaching aids. Therefore, an effective pre-school teaching preparation should involve their ability to plan activities well.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, researchers used a qualitative research design, Thus, a holistic picture of the situation, events, or deep and complex phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003) that happens to BPT teaching skill in preparing and implementing the lesson can be explore. Selection purposive sampling technique (purposive sampling) is to identify samples that have characteristics desired by work experience and understanding of education by gaining a deeper information (Merriam, 1998). The samples in this study were four BPT who were selected randomly from the name list provided by Penang State Education Department. The criteria required for the respondents were those who hold Bachelor of Education from Institute of Teacher Education, had served less than two years and willing to participate in this study.

The data of this study was collected through interview, observation and document analysis. The teachers were asked regarding the preparation of lesson plan. Based on appropriate interview techniques and systematic, teacher information of personal nature can be studied, especially involving the experiences and issues of teaching practice Connelly and Clandinin (1994). In addition, the document analysed which were the record book on lesson plan support the data on the teacher teaching skills in preparing their lesson plan. Observation was also used to identify the teachers' teaching skills in implementing the lesson accordingly to the lesson plan. The observation notes consist of three parts, i) teaching preparation, ii) the implementation of teaching (introduction and steps), and reflection. The data collected were analysed in a descriptive form.

By Standard Guru Malaysia (SGM), efficiency standards of professionalism include three aspects (Ministry of Education, 2009a). Three aspects are: (1) the practice of professionalism in teaching, (2) knowledge and understanding, and (3) teaching skills. However, the scope of this study is limited to only teaching skills.

### **Data Analysis**

This section presents the analysis and findings of this study in relation to the research questions:

What are the BPT teaching skills in preparing lesson plan?

The summary of BPT responds concerning teaching skills in preparing lesson plan is shown in Table 1. Preparation of lesson plan is the initial step before a teacher starts teaching. The skills

identified through the interview and document analysis are categorised into three: i) effective time management, ii) appropriate selection of activities, iii) planning based on the curriculum provided. In addition, the preparation of lesson plan includes the usage of teaching aids in the classroom.

Table 1: Summary of BPT Teaching Skills in Preparing Lesson Plan Through Interview and Document Analysis

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Teachers Respond on Teaching Skills in Preparing Lesson Plan</b>	<b>Categories</b>
BPT1	Plan activities due to time factor and preschool curriculum policy.	Time
	Appropriate teaching activities according to the children needs and the needs of the teaching.	Selection of activities
	The preparation of lesson plan involves reading approaches and techniques.	Based on the curriculum
	Arrangement and writing lesson plan follow the format that is based on preschool curriculum documents.	
BPT2	Choose appropriate instructional activities based on the preschool curriculum documents.	Based on the curriculum
	Prepare lesson plan with interesting activities and effective teaching aids	
	Lack of time to prepare teaching activities	Time
BPT3	Teaching activities are based on each sub-topic based on the preschool curriculum documents.	Based on the curriculum
	Lack of time to prepare the teaching activities	Time
BPT4	Each activity is integrated with the suitability of time and children needs.	Time Selection of activities
	Preparation depend on the theme of teaching.	Based on the curriculum

Preparation of lesson plan according to BPT1, requires appropriate management of time. Due to time constraints and the involvement of teachers in extra-curricular activities, the has to come out with simple teaching aids where resources are easily accessible and available.

In addition, preparation of lesson plan for BPT2 much depends on the appropriateness of instructional activities which is based on the preschool curriculum. BPT2 also emphasises on the quality teaching aids which should be interesting and effective. Furthermore, this teacher claimed that the lack of time to prepare the teaching activities.

BPT3 also ensure that the teaching activities are based on each sub-topic stated in the National Standard Preschool Curriculum/NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2010). Due to time constraint, suitable teaching activities is hard to be planned.

Meanwhile, BPT4 mentioned each activity is integrated with the suitability of the time and children needs. Besides, BPT4 said preparation of lesson depend on the theme stated in the syllabus, that is the NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2010).

What are the BPT's capabilities in implementing the lesson according to the lesson plan?

*Efficiency of teaching skills is very important in producing teachers who meet the standards in Malaysia. The BPT teaching skills identified in conducting the lesson are classified into two: i) skills in using the thematic approach, and ii) skills in conducting learning through play. The data was collected through observation and interviews.*

## **SKILLS IN USING THEMATIC APPROACH**

Thematic approach is essential and the guidance of using the approach was provided in the NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2010). The teachers were required to implement the thematic approach every week following certain theme. This is to ensure that the teachers are able to provide a more in-depth knowledge and comprehensive child development.

According to BPT1, the implementation of the overall teaching skills depends on the thematic approach run daily. She conducted thematic approach through daily, weekly and monthly schedule according to the suitability and appropriateness of the children of development. BPT1 also said that the implementation of the thematic teaching was based on the NSPC. When children gave positive response, she will continue the thematic approach. However, she expressed of lack of time in the preparation of appropriate teaching aids. Thus, this constrain had affected the implementation of thematic approach.

BPT2 also conducted thematic approach according to children's' needs and level of development. She also noted that the implementation of teaching based on thematic approach can be adapted to the children and classroom environment. When children responded well, BPT2 will continue the thematic approach in the following week depending on the appropriateness of time and children readiness. BPT2 explained:

"Usually a given theme is different every week. But I run it if it is appropriate. If a theme is fun for children, I will conduct the same theme for 2 weeks and will change as appropriate." (BPT2)

BPT3 mentioned that the implementation of the thematic approach is running well according to the daily routine. Although the approach was done every week, good teaching can be carried out based on specific components in the curriculum. BPT3 further explained that the thematic approach greatly help her to intergrate the other components in the curriculum. This is based on her statement that said:

"Yes, if I can associate with a particular theme. Look what I wanted to be consistent with the activities relate. But it can be linked by a theme." (BPT3)

Meanwhile, BPT4 feeled that the thematic approach facilitate her in selecting appropriate teaching aids. She said further, there are some themes stated in the NSPC which is rather less

appropriate to be implemented in the first term. Therefore, BPT4 did not use these themes in the first month of school sessions because she focused more on childrens' basic skills such as reading and writing. She said:

"The first month is no need for this theme yet. I teach the basic skills first. This is due to some inappropriate themes taught in the early months, I use a lot of aspects of literacy and writing."

## **SKILLS IN CONDUCTING LEARNING THROUGH PLAY**

Learning through play is an approach that involves both teachers and children in activities which is fun in the teaching-learning process. This approach is suitable to be implemented in any subject with authentic teaching aids.

According to BPT1, the implementation of reading activities is to enhance childrens' understanding. One of the approaches used in implementing reading activities is learning through play. BPT1 used a lot of singing and movement for reading activities.

BPT2 mentioned that childrens seem to enjoy themselves in the activities which involve them moving and playing, especially after the break. BPT2 also claimed that more activities on learning through play were carried on after the break. For example, BPT2 gave each child the opportunity to organize the bears according to the size in a period of time. Music was used to while the children participated.

BPT3 indicated that learning through play activities was much easier to conduct based on children acceptance of an activity. However, BPT3 explained that she seldom conduct learning through play approach. This is because she focused on language component of the curriculum. BPT3 said:

"But the play is rarely performed, too much on learning to read. Sometimes I do carry out but most of the time, I do not do conduct it. I pay more attention to strengthen children's language activities." (BPT3)

Meanwhile, BPT4 mentioned that the implementation of learning through play approach depend on the theme of the week. In addition, BPT4 claimed that the children enjoyed themes such as animal and vehicle because childrens were able to imagine. They appreciate learning activity which is related to their environment.

The data from the interview was in line with the data obtained through observation. The observations were conducted three times, that is in three lessons for each BPT. The summary of BPT pedagogical skills in conducting lesson using thematic approach and learning through play is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Pedagogical Skills in Implementing Lesson Through Observation

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Pedagogical Skills</b>	<b>Categories</b>
<b>BPT1</b>	Show good practice Involves two components of a lesson Use thematic approaches until the end	Thematic Approach
	Conduct only once the activity on learning through play Use singing and movement Not adopt this approach in teaching first and second	Learning through Play
<b>BPT2</b>	Use thematic approach in second and third lesson Do not use thematic approach in the first lesson	Thematic Approach
	Implement play in the first and second lessons Teaching involves organizing materials	Learning through Play
<b>BPT3</b>	Use thematic approach in the third lesson Integrate two components in a lesson	Thematic Approach
	Implement play in the second and third lesson Carry out two activities: play musical instrument & puppet in the second lesson Carry out tasting activity in the third lesson	Learning through Play
<b>BPT4</b>	Use thematic approach in the first lesson Integrate two components in a thematic teaching Involves a number of components that are suitable only	Thematic Approach
	Implement play in the second and third lesson Carry out playing with numbers by using beads in the second lesson Carry out building words with the dough in the third lesson Carry out outdoor games	Learning through Play

## **DISCUSSION**

The result of this study showed that BPT teaching skills in preparing lesson plan involve skills in effective time management, selection of activities and planning based on the curriculum provided. The planning of activities was based on the procedures set out in the NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2009b). In addition, the selection of teaching aids must involve factors such as manageable,

functional diverse, creative production, compatibility and can attract the attention of childrens. Preparation of teaching aids should be more interesting and appropriate to the level of a child's development as a whole. The findings also support the view Gagne, Briggs and Wager (1992) that the preparation of teaching and learning is consistent with the use of teaching aids which can increase the interest, knowledge and skills of the children.

The finding also indicated that BPT teaching skills in implementing the lesson require skills in using thematic approach and skills in conducting learning through play. The activities carried out through a thematic approach by the teachers were more effective by involving children in their development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor. According to Anderson (2005) careful organized and systematic activities can guarantee every child to have the opportunity to do activities together. Based on learning through play approach conducted by the teachers, children were found to be imaginative and they appreciate each learning activity which employed teaching aids and favorable environment. The findings of this study support the view by Cruickshank (1996) which states that teacher teaching skills is a creative work of art, interesting and provide a good understanding to children.

## **CONCLUSION**

Effective teaching skills of beginning preschool teachers (BPT) reflect their profession as a teacher. Effective pedagogical practices should be encouraged in every preschool teacher regardless of whether the beginning teacher or a senior teacher. The findings of this study showed persistence of beginning preschool teachers to achieve the government's goal to meet the standards of quality education (Ministry of Education, 2009b). In other words, BPT are able and efficient in preparing and implementing lesson through effective time management, appropriate selection of activities, planning based on NSPC, employ thematic approach and conduct learning through play. The findings are expected to assist other researchers to further conduct in-depth study to identify effective teaching skills, provide information and guidance for BPT to plan and manage lesson effectively according to children's need, ability and progress.

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