QUALITY TEACHING BEGINNING PRESCHOOL TEACHERS: FROM SKILLS INTO PRACTICE

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Abstract- This paper discusses the finding of a study which aimed to explore the Beginning Preschool Teachers (BPT) teaching skills concerning preparation of lesson plan and implementation of the lesson. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data were analyzed by means of qualitative approach to produce the appropriate theme of the BPT teaching skills. The finding shows that BPT teaching skills in preparing lesson plan can be categories into three: i) effective time management, ii) appropriate selection of activities, and iii) planning based on the curriculum provided. The BPT teaching skills identified in implementing lesson are: i) skills in using the thematic approach, and 2) skills in conducting learning through play. In conclusion, the overall teaching skills of BPT in preparing lesson plan and implementing lesson are of good standard. 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 approch and conduct learning through play. The findings are expected to assist other researchers to further conduct in-depth study to identify effective teaching skills, and provide information. And the other hand, the finding will give the guidance for BPT to plan and manage lesson effectively according to children's need, ability and progress.

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

I. INTRODUCTION

Preschool teachers 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 beginning preschool teacher (BPT), they should undergo a trial period before being 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 involve the ability and efficiency of the BPT in the process of teaching in the classroom. Teaching skills involved either in academic or co-curricular activities through the strategies, methods and approaches that are appropriate to practice with the level of development of children (Ministry of Education, 2009b). This paper discusses the finding of a study which aimed to explore the BPT teaching skills concerning preparation of lesson plan and implementation of the lesson.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The role of BPT is to build a strong educational foundation for children by providing quality teaching skills. The quality BPT are those who can meet the three main aspects of the Teacher Standards Malaysia (TSM), the value of professional practice in teaching, have a good knowledge and understanding, and effective pedagogical skills (Ministry of Education, 2009a).

However, stress at school work faced by BPT has an impact on their teaching skills in preschool. Mohammed Sani (2007) in his study stated that teachers who had graduated from Institute of Teacher Education were found not only suffering from stress due to school work but also experiencing a situation called 'culture shock'. Culture shock is a drastic change experienced by beginning preschool teachers due to differences in teaching atmosphere within the institute and teaching in a new school 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.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching skills of beginning preschool teachers (BPT).

Research Question

Research questions were developed based on the BPT teaching skills:

i. What are the BPT teaching skills in preparing lesson plan?
ii. What are the BPT teaching skills in implementing the lesson?

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 childrens involving pre-operational and operational level, preparation knowledge and teaching activities. Teachers also need to know how to involve in teaching activities with concrete representation and symbols in the classroom.

According to Anderson (2005) the teaching skills can be developed during the implement of teaching activities. Through the Theory of Cognitive Development, teachers can improve their teaching skills in childrens based on the level and appropriateness 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 done by Gagne, Briggs and Wager (1992) identify pedagogical skills framework as a guide for beginning teachers to handle the teaching and learning process. There are nine elements contained in the framework of pedagogical 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, (6) the tasks and questions, (7) to assess the level of childrens, (8) maintain and (9) to develop childrens' knowledge and skills. Therefore, based on these elements, beginning preschool teachers teaching skills will be identified through the preparation of lesson plan and implementation of lesson.

Methodology

In this study, a case study employing qualitative research design was used. 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 lesson can be explore. The sample in this study involve four beginning preschool teacher who were selected from the list of names at Penang State Education Department. The selection of teachers was 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 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 (9194). In addition, the document analysed which is the record book on lesson plan support the data on the teacher teaching skills in preparing lesson plan. Observation was also used to identify the teachers' teaching skills in implementing the lesson. The data collected were analysed in a descriptive form.

Data Analysis

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

1) What are the BPT teaching skills in preparing lesson plan?
2) What are the BPT teaching skills in implementing the lesson?

1.1 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 categoried 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 include the usage of teaching aids in the classroom.

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

Respondent	Teachers Respond on Teaching Skills in Preparing Lesson Plan	Categories
BPT1	- Plan activities due to time factor and preschool curriculum policy. - Appropriate teaching activities according to the children needs and the needs of the teaching. - The preparation of lesson plan involves reading approaches and techniques. - Arrangement and writing lesson plan follow the format that is based on preschool curriculum documents.	i) Time ii) Selection of activities iii) Based on the curriculum
BPT2	- Choose appropriate instructional activities based on the preschool curriculum documents. - Prepare lesson plan with interesting activities and effective teaching aids - Lack of time to prepare teaching activities	iii) Based on the curriculum iii) Time

BPT3	-	Teaching activities are based on each sub-topic based on the preschool curriculum documents.	i)	Based on the curriculum
	-	Lack of time to prepare the teaching activities	ii)	Time
BPT4	-	Each activity is integrated with the suitability of time and children needs.	i)	Time
			ii)	Selection of activities
	-	Preparation depend on the theme of teaching.	iii)	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 resulted teacher to produce simple teaching aids where resources are easily accessible and available.

In adddition, preparation of lesson plan for BPT2 much depends on the appropriatness 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 lack of time, suitable teaching activities had 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 sylabus, that is the NSPC (Ministry of Education, 2010).

1.2 Teaching Skills in Implementing the Lesson

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.

1.2.1 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."

1.2.2 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 themself 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 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 childrens' language activities." (BPT3)

Meanwhile, BPT4 mentioned that the implemantation 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 approah and learning through play is presented in Table 2.

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

Respondent	Pedagogical Skills	Categories
BPT1	- Show good practice - Involves two components of a lesson - Use thematic approaches until the end	i) Thematic Approach
	- Conduct only once the activity on learning through play - Use singing and movement - Not adopt this approach in teaching first and second	ii) Learning through Play
BPT2	- Use thematic approach in second and third lesson - Do not use thematic approach in the first lesson	i) Thematic Approach
	- Implement play in the first and second lessons - Teaching involves organizing materials	ii) Learning through Play
BPT3	- Use thematic approach in the third lesson - Integrate two components in a lesson	i) 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	ii) Learning through Play
BPT4	- Use thematic approach in the first lesson - Integrate two components in a thematic teaching - Involves a number of components that are suitable only	i) 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	ii) Learning through Play

DISCUSSION

The finding 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 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.

CONCLUSIONS

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). Although there are weaknesses identified in this study, the overall teaching skills of BPT in preparing lesson plan and implementing lesson are of good standard. 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 approch 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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