

Parents Understanding of The Project Approach for Preschool Children

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the level of parental understanding of the project approach for preschool children. The project approach is one of the strategies found within Standard Based Curriculum and Assessment Document (DSPK) National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) REVIEW 2017. This study employs a survey method involving a total of 342 pair of parents in Malaysia. The data were analysed using mean scores, standard deviation, and percentages. The level of agreement for understanding will be assessed based on percentages and minimum score values. The level of agreement for understanding will be assessed based on percentages and minimum score values. The study findings indicate that the overall minimum score for nine statements related to parents' understanding of project-based learning for children is 3.97 ($sp=0.014$). All statements show minimum values ranging from 3.33 to 4.78. This indicates that majority of parents understand project-based learning for children.

Keyword: Parents, Project Approach, Children, Kindergarten.

Introduction

The project approach involves an in-depth study of topics that interest children, including the investigative process that occurs through small group activities in the classroom (Katz and Chad, 2000). The project approach fulfils the characteristics of children who enjoy exploring and investigating their rich environment, which is abundant with new knowledge, and provides opportunities for children to apply basic skills they have acquired during project activities. These skills will develop and enable them to independently carry out each activity with guidance from teachers or parents to grasp the foundational concepts that will help them continue their learning journey into elementary school.

According to Katz and Chard (2000), a project is an in-depth investigative activity on a particular topic based on questions posed by students themselves during discussions or morning conversations. The project-based activities conducted through this project enhancement involve three main phases project initiation, project development, and project culmination. Children play a primary role in conducting in-depth investigations directly, while teachers serve merely as facilitators and activity planners.

The project activities are tailored to suit the interests of the children. Additionally, children are actively involved in activities such as discussions, field study representation,

investigation, and production to be showcased inside or outside the classroom (Helm & Katz, 2015).

One unique characteristic of this approach is the facilitator's role as the primary observer. This is because the facilitator is always alongside the children to listen to conversations and make observations about them. Therefore, the facilitator must have the same level of thinking as the children to encourage their direct involvement in an activity (Helm & Katz, 2014). In this method, the facilitator also acts in making decisions on when and how to involve children, as well as what types of questions to pose to stimulate thinking and build children's experiences. High-level questioning techniques are employed by the facilitator to help enhance children's thinking processes during investigative activities.

Problem Statement

The challenges of communication and teacher support in Home Based Learning

Challenges in communication and teacher support are one of the critical issues in the implementation of Home-Based Learning (HBL), especially for preschool students. Teachers often find themselves in situations where establishing effective interactive communication with preschoolers becomes a challenge. According to studies by Lapada et al (2020); Misty (2020), the face-to-face learning habits that were once customary have changed, and teachers must adapt their teaching methods to fit the HBL format. This is not an easy task, considering preschool students require clearer and more visual interaction, as well as more direct guidance and feedback from teachers.

In addition, teachers also experience a heavy workload in implementing the HBL approach. This burden is not only related to preparing and adapting learning materials for the online format but also includes managing online classes, providing, and assessing assignments, and offering assistance and support to their students and parents. Misty's study (2020) indicates that this situation requires a lot of time and effort from teachers, sometimes exceeding their capabilities and resources. As a result, this may reduce the quality of support they provide to students in the learning process.

Challenges in providing effective support in HBL are also related to the lack of adequate resources and training for teachers. In many cases, teachers may not have access to the latest technological resources or specific training for online teaching, which are required in distance learning situations. According to Lapada et al (2020), this can create a gap in teachers' abilities to deliver learning materials effectively and address various technical challenges that arise. Therefore, to ensure the success of HBL, it is essential for educational institutions to provide adequate resources and relevant training for teachers so that they can provide maximum support to their students in the context of home learning.

Lack of Parent Involvement

The lack of parental involvement in their children's learning process at home is one of the critical issues in the implementation of Home-Based Learning (HBL). According to a study conducted by Irfan and Iman (2020), many parents are not fully aware of the importance of their role in supporting their children's learning process, especially in the context of HBL. This lack of awareness often results in students' absence from online learning sessions, which in turn affects the overall effectiveness of the HBL approach. This indicates that, even though teachers try to provide quality learning resources, without support from home, these efforts may be less effective.

The lack of parental involvement is not only related to a lack of awareness but also often due to time constraints and resources. Many parents are busy with their work responsibilities, making it difficult to find enough time to actively engage in their children's education. Additionally, some parents may lack sufficient knowledge or skills to assist their children in online learning, such as handling technological tools or guiding children to access digital learning materials. This situation results in children lacking the necessary guidance at home to complement what is taught online by teachers.

Therefore, the importance of the active role of parents in supporting HBL is crucial. Increasing awareness and parental involvement in children's education should be prioritized. Initiatives such as parent education sessions, teaching materials that can help them support their children's learning, and better communication between schools and homes can significantly contribute to addressing this issue. Collaboration between teachers and parents in overcoming existing barriers and providing a conducive learning environment at home is key to ensuring the effectiveness of Home-Based Learning for children.

Spending time with your kids, giving them love and attention, is crucial for their mental and emotional health. The best way parents can do this is by regularly dedicating quality time to their children. When kids spend more time with their families, it enhances their well-being. Overall, quality time with your children is vital for both you and their happiness. (Nadia Shahira, Uzzairah Nabila, Farhana & Jamilah, 2023)

Research Methodology

This study utilized a survey method. This method involved using a questionnaire instrument to obtain responses to the established research questions. The questions presented were adapted from DeWitt (2011); Mansor (2021); Katz (2000). This questionnaire is based on previous research studies but has been adjusted with the study's context and questions. Its aim is to collect data from the sample population. According to (Muqsith et al., 2017), questionnaires are employed in studies because they save time and allow respondents to answer without direct guidance from researchers. When prepared effectively, questionnaires can yield reliable and consistent results (Cates, 1984). The validation process was conducted in terms of language and content by six experts. The sampling method employed was purposive sampling. The population sampled consisted of 11,069 married couples in Selangor. According to Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970), the sample size used was 342 married couples who have children in kindergarten. The data were analysed using mean scores, standard deviation, and percentages. The level of agreement of understanding was assessed based on percentages and minimum score values. The researcher used a Likert scale based on the following Table 1:

Table 1
Level of agreement

Scale	Agreement
1	Strongly disagree (SD)
2	Disagree (D)
3	Moderately agree (MA)
4	Agree (A)
5	Strongly agree (SA)

Finding

Table 2

The Level of Parents Understanding of the Project Approach for Kindergarten Children

No	Item	Percentage (n=342)					Mean Score	Standard deviation
		SD	D	MA	A	SA		
1.	I know PBP is one of the learning strategies in kindergarten	0.6% (2)	1.8% (6)	37.1% (127)	59.9% (205)	0.6% (2)	3.58	.571
2.	I know there are several phases in PBP	0% (0)	1.5% (5)	25.4% (87)	71.9% (246)	1.2% (4)	3.73	.501
3.	I know there is a model in PBP	0% (0)	1.5% (5)	15.8% (54)	70.2% (240)	12.6% (43)	3.94	.583
4.	I know that PBP requires a lot of exploration activities	0% (0)	0% (0)	5.6% (19)	62% (212)	32.5% (111)	4.27	.556
5.	I can plan investigation activities through PBP at home.	0% (0)	0% (0)	17.8% (61)	71.6% (245)	10.5% (36)	3.93	.528
6.	I can conduct investigation activities through PBP at home	0% (0)	0% (0)	5.6% (19)	82.2% (281)	12.3% (42)	4.07	.418
7.	I am able to provide guidance during PBP activities conducted at home	0% (0)	0% (0)	8.8% (30)	74.9% (256)	16.4% (56)	4.08	.496
8.	I am aware of my role while conducting PBP at home	0% (0)	0% (0)	5.3% (18)	75.1% (257)	19.6% (67)	4.14	.478
9.	I can assess my child's work after PBP activities conducted at home	0% (0)	0% (0)	12.3% (42)	75.1% (257)	12.6% (43)	4.00	.499

Findings for project-based learning knowledge items reveal that it is one of the learning strategies in kindergartens. 59.9% of the sample agree that parents are informed about this strategy being present in kindergartens, while 0.6% strongly disagree with this statement. The minimum value for this item is 3.58, indicating agreement. For the item regarding parents' knowledge of the phases in project-based learning, 71.9% agree. This indicates a difference of 70.4% with disagreeing values, and the minimum value for this item is 3.73, indicating agreement. Meanwhile, the item regarding parents' knowledge of the existence of a project-based learning model shows that most parents, 70.2%, agree that they are aware of the model, with only 1.5% of the sample disagreeing with this statement. The minimum value for

this item is 3.94, indicating agreement. As for the next item, parents taking note that project-based learning requires many exploratory activities contribute to 62% agreeing and 5.6% moderately agreeing. Therefore, the minimum value for this item is 4.27, indicating agreement.

For the item regarding parents' ability to plan investigation activities through project-based learning at home, 71.6% agree and 17.8% moderately agree. There were no samples choosing strongly disagree or disagree, indirectly indicating a minimum value of 3.93. Next, for the item regarding parents' ability to conduct investigation activities through project-based learning at home, the highest percentage is 82.2% agreeing, while moderately agree represents the lowest percentage at 5.6%. The minimum value for this item is 4.07, indicating agreement. Additionally, the item concerning parents' ability to provide guidance during project-based learning activities at home shows that 74.9% of the sample agree, with the lowest percentage being 8.8% moderately agreeing. The median value for this item is 4.08, indicating agreement.

Meanwhile, the item regarding parents' awareness of their roles during project-based learning activities at home contributes 75.1% agreeing and only 5.3% moderately agreeing. The median value for this item is 4.14, indicating agreement. The last item regarding parents' understanding of project-based learning for children is whether parents can assess their child's work after completing project-based learning activities at home. Most of the sample made statements agreeing, with a percentage of 75.1% agreeing and 12.3% moderately agreeing. The minimum value for this item is 4.00, indicating agreement.

The overall minimum value findings for the nine statements regarding parents' understanding of project-based learning for children is 3.97 (SD=0.014). All these statements show minimum values ranging from 3.33 to 4.78. This indicates that most parents understand project-based learning for children.

Conclusion

The findings of the parental needs analysis have been linked to their perceptions of the Children's Project Approach. Parents who have a positive perception of the importance of Early Science and their ability to actively engage in the learning process using the project approach. Positive perceptions of the importance of the project approach in child development are aligned with parents' abilities to plan activities, follow guidelines, and actively participate. Therefore, a better understanding of the Project Approach contributes to parents' readiness to accept and integrate the project approach and Early Science. This supports their needs and understanding of how these activities can be effective tools in supporting their children's science development.

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