

ESCTI: ASSESSING CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN SHORT TERM IMPACT

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Despite the struggle faced by the Early Childhood Education (ECE) to provide inclusive education for healthy child development, a proper assessment for ECE remains underdeveloped. Given the increasing need of ECE in contemporary society, there must be some guidelines in forming the basis of further child success and development that can be recognized worldwide. The present study, therefore, aimed to assess the impact of ECE for a short-term period of time to children aged 6 years old in Malaysia and thus proposed as ECSTI. ECSTI are developed based on an in-depth review of the impact of ECE research and literature of the global context. The instruments are developed by early childhood specialists with the collaboration from preschool teachers have gone through the rigorous process of validation: face, content, construct, and concurrent validation. They are used to assess the short-term impact of ECE of 6 years old children in seven strands including: 1) cognitive, 2) social, 3) emotional, 4) moral/spiritual, 5) physical/health, 6) creativity and 7) global readiness. The test booklets on all seven strands can be administered through both quantitative method (observation, oral interaction and written test) and qualitative (creativity test). The findings show that spiritual aspect is the most prominent strand followed by global readiness for 6 years child development. The findings demonstrated that the impact of ECE is moderately positive in most strands of development. Thus, the key contribution of this study will provide an appropriate assessment instrument for ECSTI that can be used by the Malaysian TADIKAs in preparing for the 21st-century learning for early childhood.

Keywords : ASSESSMENT, escti, STRANDS IMPACT

1. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an important social-educational agenda in Malaysia. The positive impact of early childhood education is evidenced, based upon previous research findings. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 stipulated the Malaysian aspirations of preparing young children for the needs and demands of the 21st century. Parental and societal expectations towards quality education of young children have risen since Early Childhood Education forms the foundations of later child learning and development. Both international and local research conducted provided evidences on the positive outcomes of ECE on children's total development.

A child is considered to be the jewel of the nation and every child needs to develop his full potential. They need to increase their potential such as in language efficiency, ICT skills, higher-order thinking skills and emotional intelligence. ECCE services in Malaysia are varied being provided by both government agencies and the private sector. Thus ECCE differs according to curriculum orientations, philosophy, teaching approaches and socio demographic background.

In order to enhance the quality of ECE in Malaysia to be at par with international standards ECE stakeholders need to assess and evaluate the effect, outcomes and impact of ECE services. This research Project (ECSTI) entitled "The Short term Impact of ECCE in Malaysia under NCDRC seek to gauge the short term impact of ECCE on children's development as well as to examine whether the degree of impact differs according to different socio demographic variables.

The benefit of ECSTI are to be used by multiple stakeholders example Ministry of Education (MOE) to improve the current Early Childhood Education (ECE) in developing standardized assessment framework and guidelines. Moreover, ECSTI can also be used by the government as well as private TADIKAs as an indicator for assessing the children development.

2. Experimental Details

Studies have shown that the quality of ECE can equip young children with the cognitive skills required for success in the later stage of their educational experience (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). It has been found that a young child who undergone pre-primary education (early childhood education) show better progress at the primary stage and thus it helps in reducing wastage and stagnation (Arcana Kumari, 2016). She also suggested that improvement in early childhood education will produce a positive outcome of primary education for younger children.

Early Childhood Short Term Impact (ECSTI) instruments are developed based on an in depth review on impact of ECE research and literature. The instruments are developed by early childhood specialists, preschool and nurseries teachers meant to assess the short term impact of ECE of 6 years old children in seven strands. The seven strands assessed are cognitive, social, emotional, moral/spiritual, physical and health, creativity and global readiness. Each strands consists of items ranging from 5 to 10 items. The test booklet on all seven strands are administered through observation, oral interaction and written test/ individual testing. All instruments are administered to TADIKAs children in seven zones stratified according to type of ECE centers. There are 5 phases of developing assessment instruments (ECSTI):

Phase 1: Scanning of the literature

Benchmarking with other instruments

Phase 2: Theoretical Basis of Developing Assessment Instruments

National Preschool Standard-Based Curriculum (KSPK)

- i. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences
- ii. Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- iii. Theories of Child Development
- iv. Malaysian Educational Development Plan 2013-2025
(Aligned with the 21st-century ECE)

Phase 3: Validity and Reliability (with several ECE experts)

- i. Face validity
- ii. Content validity
- iii. Construct validity
- iv. Concurrent validity

Phase 4: Pilot Testing

Items for each construct were pilot tested. The pilot test was conducted with a group of parents, preschool teachers and nurseries as well as teachers of Year One via focus groups.

Phase 5: ECSTI modification

Comments from ECE experts were reviewed and used to modify the ECSTI instruments. Modifications include changing the items and correcting the level of language difficulties.

3. Results and Discussion

This study used a stratified random sampling method. Participated in this study involving 3000 children from TADIKA. The preschools children were stratified by types of preschool, namely (a) Ministry of Education (MOE) (b) KEMAS (c) PERPADUAN (d) Private and (e) Islamic Religious Department. Six zones in Malaysia which participated are north, east, west, south, Sabah and Sarawak. TADIKA were categorized according to the background of children, including ethnicity, SES, gender, and parental education.

According to Table 1, there were 1159 respondents of six years children involved in this study. From that figure, more than one-third respondents (34%) was from the pre-school KPM, followed by 26% of respondents were from TABIKA KEMAS. The least number of respondents were from TADIKA Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri (4%) and followed by the private kindergarten (15%).

Pre-schools	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-School KPM	399	34.4
Tabika Kemas	295	25.5
	245	21.1
Private Tadika	173	14.9
Tadika Jab. Agama Islam Negeri	47	4.1
Total	1159	100.0

Table 1 – Different types of pre-school in Malaysia

Table 2 shows that the most prominent domain for 6 years child development was the spiritual domain based on the mean of .012 with the standard deviation of .39 followed by mean of global readiness domain .007 with the standard deviation of .26. This is also due to the fact that not only cognitive aspect is emphasized in the National Philosophy of Education of Education (NPE), but also the spiritual aspect. The NPE mission and objectives are to accentuate on the holistic development of every child that covers important elements of intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). The concept global readiness moreover was secondarily integrated with the pre-school curriculum such as a communication skill, the use of ICT, as well as national unity. The least prominent domain found in Table 2 was cognitive and emotional domains with both shared the same mean of .003 with the standard deviation of .11.

Domains	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cognitive domain	.00335	.11421
Moral domain	.00634	.21599
Spiritual domain	.01175	.39993
Social domain	.00498	.16946
Emotional domain	.00334	.11354
Physical/health domain	.00466	.15869
Global readiness domain	.00749	.25507
(N: 1159)		

Table 2 – The 6 years child development following each domain

The findings demonstrated that the impact of ECE is moderately positive in most strands of development. Thus, the key contribution of this study will provide an appropriate assessment instrument for ECSTI that can be used by the Malaysian TADIKA in preparing for the 21st-century learning for early childhood.

4. Conclusion

The research extends our understanding of some issues related to the short-term impact of Early Childhood Education (ECE) for the pre-school children and gives insight into the multiple domains that affect the child’s development process. The seven domains as a key in the development process.

The findings demonstrated that the impact of ECE are moderately positive in most domains of development. Contrary to popular beliefs that academic readiness is prioritized, the study shows that achievement is spread around total development although there may be differences in mean scores. Therefore, the role of ECE educators and parents is very important to make sure the children have access to these seven domains: cognitive, social, emotional, moral, physical and health, creativity and global readiness during early their childhood education. Apart from the domains, this monograph also highlights the importance of establishing a good relationship between teachers and parents in order to produce quality TADIKA.

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