

The Developmentally Appropriate Practice for Toddlers of Teachers and Administrators at Child Development Centers in Thailand

การปฏิบัติอย่างเหมาะสมต่อเด็กวัยเตาะแตะของครูและผู้บริหารศูนย์พัฒนา เด็กเล็กในประเทศไทย

Mutita takomsane*

Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to study the developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers of teachers and administrators at child development centers in Thailand and 2) to study the developmental approach of the appropriate practices for toddlers of teachers and administrators at childcare centers in Thailand. The study group was 4 administrators and 4 teachers in 4 child development centers. Each center consisted of 4 administrator and 8 teachers, totaling 12 people. The research tools were an interview form, an observation form and a survey. The data was analyzed by frequency, percentage and content analysis. The results of the research showed that 1) the developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers of administrators and teachers at 4 childcare centers were implemented in 6 areas and covered the standards of development of appropriate practices and 2) there were some approaches of developmentally appropriate practice for the toddlers of teachers and administrators of the child development center. For the school policies, there should be additional budget for purchasing learning materials, and defective or insufficient playset. The teacher ratio should be adequate for the number of children. For creating the proper curriculum, they should enhance the curriculum's current understanding and adaptability to the context and culture of the child. For creating an appropriate environment for young children, there should be a more suitable environment for the toddler and a well for the children to play freely. For assessing of child development and learning, they should use various developmental assessments including portfolio. For creating partnerships with parents, they should provide more communication venues such as news and letters and inviting parents to participate in children's classroom activities. Lastly, for teaching that promotes

* Faculty of Education in Early Childhood Education Suan Dusit Rajabhat University
e-mail: t.mutita@yahoo.com Tel. 087 498 8533

development and learning, there should be a development of writing lesson plans to organize experiences that suit an appropriate learning for toddlers.

Keywords: 1. DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE 2. TODDLER 3. CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Introduction

The future of the nation depends on the quality of the child. Children with complete physical, mental, emotional, social and ethical can live happily and can be beneficial to their society and their nation. At present, many families are more likely to rely on school for parenting. Thai society has become more of a single family, and the mother also has to go to work in order to increase income for the family. Therefore, no one will take care their children. Parents have an idea that their children will be safe, well fed and appropriate hygiene care. Early childhood education for young children at the age of 1-3 years old will need to be more recognized in order to enhance their development with quality before entering kindergarten. So, early childhood education has the main purpose to promote education and child development. This is an important concept in early childhood education. As a result, if all administrative and teachers have appropriate parenting practices. This will result in the quality of the children in the child development centers. As the National Association for the Education of Young Children : NAEYC (2009) said that there are a variety of early childhood education management, but it must have the exact same features in common. In organizing high quality education, the environment and safety are promoted to promote physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, intellectual and language development of each child including the family of the child. At present, parents have to send their children into the care of the child development centers because they have to work for a living and have no time to care for their children. Each child development center has to take care of young children at the age between 1 and 6 months to 3 years old which carries a large number of children.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers of teachers and administrators at child development centers in many areas which are 1) school policies, 2) creating the proper curriculum, 3) organizing activities that promote development and learning, 4) creating an appropriate environment, 5) assessing of child development and learning, and 6) creating partnerships with parents. These areas are

according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children. They are in addition to the existing standards which are the prototype of early childhood education and quality.

Methodology

1) Population and sample

The population was child development centers in 4 regions of Thailand: the North, the Central, the Southern and the Northeast. It was the first semester in the academic year of 2015. There were 9 provinces in the North. There were 21 provinces in the central. There were 14 provinces in the South and 20 provinces in the Northeast. The samples for this research were child development centers in 4 regions. Each region was acquired by multi-stage random sampling. The stratified sampling randomly divided regions into layers and randomly selected provinces in each region. There were 4 provinces that was selected which were Phrae province, SakonNakhon province. Karnchanaburi province and Phuket Province. The simple random sampling was used for child development centers in each of the provinces which were 1) Tambon Saroi Childcare Center in Phrae 2) Yang Muang Childcare Center in Kanchanaburi 3) Ket Hoe Childcare Center in Phuket 4) Ban Noen Charoen Childcare Center in SakonNakhon.

2) The tools and qualities of the tools were interviews, observations, and surveys.

Interviews: The researcher conducted an interview form of developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers in the following steps: 1) studied concepts, theories and research papers that related to developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers 2) set an interview style to be individual interviews for administrators and teachers of toddlers at child development centers 3) created an interview from a research framework and set questions in the interview about developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers 4) examined the content validity and the use of language of an interview about developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers which should be more than 0.5. When an interviewed was checked about content validity by 5 experts, it consisted of 0.80 and 1.00 correlation coefficients. Then an interviewed was improved and adjusted 5) used the adjusted interview to a group of teachers who were not the research sample in order to check the understanding of the language and for a final adjustment 6) created a completed interview. There are examples of questions as follows: Part 1: Status of the interviewer, Part 2: Information on the implementation of appropriate child development, and Part 3: the developmentally appropriate practice. "Which solution from the obstacle that you want to get fixed and how to develop it?".

Observations: The researcher conducted an observation of developmentally appropriate practices for toddlers in the following steps: 1) studied concepts, theories and research papers that related to developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers 2) set an observation form with the basic data into a checklist and a short note 3) defined the framework for observing according to developmentally appropriate practice 4) created an observation form from a research framework 5) examined the content validity and the use of language of an interview about developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers which should be more than 0.5. When an observation form was checked about content validity by 5 experts, it consisted of 0.80 and 1.00 correlation coefficients. Then it was improved and adjusted 6) used the adjusted observation form to a group of administrators and teachers who were not the research sample in order to check the understanding of the language and for a final adjustment and 7) created a completed observation form. There are examples of questions such as: creating an appropriate environment that facilitates the learning of children like promoting positive atmosphere for learning, teamwork and individual response, learning materials and schedule, health and safety, parenting and development support, learning experience, parenting in the daily routine and response to child's need. For children's responsiveness, there are evaluation method and evaluation report. For relationships with parents, there are communication with parents and parents' participation.

Surveys: The researcher conducted a survey on the appropriate environment and learning materials of developmentally appropriate practices for toddlers in the following steps: 1) Studied concepts, theories and research papers that related to developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers 2) set a survey by considering the appropriate nature of the data which was a record 3) defined the framework for surveying learning environment and learning materials 4) created a survey from a research framework. 5) examined the content validity and the use of language of a survey about developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers which should be more than 0.5. When a survey was checked about content validity by 5 experts, it consisted of 0.80 and 1.00 correlation coefficients. Then it was improved and adjusted 6) used the adjusted survey to a group of administrators and teachers who were not the research sample in order to check the understanding of the language and for a final adjustment and 7) created a completed survey. There are examples of questions as follows: area in the classroom, activity area, space arrangement, creating good atmosphere, preparation of tools, materials and equipment, and the organization and storage of learning materials.

3) Data Collection: The researcher collected data in the following steps. 1) asked for a permission to conduct a research to child development centers 2) the researcher explained about an interview and an observation form along with setting a date and time of data collection to administrators and teachers. 3) The researcher collected data manually during the second semester of the academic year 2015.

4) Data Analysis: The researcher analyzed data from an interview by using content analysis, evaluating and grouping data together. The data analysis was presented in an essay case by case. The data from an observation was analyzed by frequency and percentage.

Results

1. The developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers of teachers and administrators at four children's development centers were conducted in six areas which were school policies, creating the proper curriculum, organizing activities that promote development and learning, creating an appropriate environment, assessing of child development and learning, and creating partnerships with parents. These were done in accordance with appropriate standards of practice.

2. There were some guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice for the toddlers of teachers and administrators of the child development center. For the school policies, there should be additional budget for purchasing learning materials, and defective or insufficient playset. The teacher ratio should be adequate for the number of children. For creating the proper curriculum, they should enhance the curriculum's current understanding and adaptability to the context and culture of the child. For creating an appropriate environment for young children, there should be a more suitable environment for the toddler and a well for the children to play freely. For assessing of child development and learning, they should use various developmental assessments including portfolio. For creating partnerships with parents, they should provide more communication venues such as news and letters and inviting parents to participate in children's classroom activities. Lastly, for teaching that promotes development and learning, there should be a development of writing lesson plans to organize experiences that suit an appropriate learning for toddlers

Discussion

The researcher discussed the results of the research on developmentally appropriate practice for the toddlers and some guidelines of teachers and administrators of the child development centers in Thailand below.

1. The developmentally appropriate practice for the toddlers of teachers and administrators of 4 child development centers were implemented in 6 areas and covered the standards of development of appropriate practices. The researchers found that teachers and administrators provide appropriate practice in all areas which were school policies, creating the proper curriculum, organizing activities that promote development and learning, creating an appropriate environment, assessing of child development and learning, and creating partnerships with parents. Most child development centers were done in accordance with appropriate standards of practice. Many child development centers adhere to the policies and strategies for early childhood development (0-5 years old) by the Secretariat of the Council of Education, Ministry of Education. They followed a National Education Plan (2002-2005) which defined in the objective of developing people in every aspects and well balanced as the basis of development. The main policy was to implement and develop everyone from birth to death and allowed them to have the opportunity to study from 0 to 5 years old. Everyone should be developed and prepared before entering the education system. The framework for the development and preparation of pre-school children was as follows. 1) they would promote and support the development and preparation of young children in a variety of ways, in particular parenting education for parents, gradients and soon-to-be parents. 2) They would encourage and support early childhood education to reach the target group, to develop children's foundation, and to develop each child in a proper way. The working process that people in the school do together shared the same objective or purpose in academic, finance, materials and supplies, building, student Affairs and the relationship with the community to be in accordance with the plan designation and good results

2. The developmentally appropriate practice for the toddlers of teachers and administrators of the child development centers in 4 regions had some guidelines in many areas.

School policies: Teachers who work at child development centers will select those who graduated in early childhood education with bachelor's degree or higher. For professional development, teachers should be educated in teaching experiences for young children. So, child development centers conduct training on the development of instructional media. There

are budget allocations for learning materials, buildings and facilities, as well as for arranging indoor and outdoor environments and provide morale support teachers. The centers also provide trainings or seminars, social security, lunch, a working uniform for teachers and 3-month maternity leave. Teachers use the experience-based approach based on each child's ability, create activities through play, which will lead to physical, emotional, social and intellectual development as well as self-help in daily routines such as toilet, brushing, eating, tucking, socks, shoes, toys or personal belongings. Children of this age begin to cultivate discipline and responsibility through daily routines in accordance with the policies that are necessary to succeed in early childhood education. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) stated that the development of personnel to have good knowledge and understanding of early childhood education in educational institutions should educate them about child development and teaching experience. They should encourage teachers to be expertise with new knowledge to apply in an early childhood field.

The ratio between teachers and toddlers in the child development centers found that the number of children per teacher was not appropriate. Since there was 1 teacher per 20 children. The teachers further commented that they had made a request for an additional teacher, but no teacher was added. This caused too much burden on them. This was not according to the developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers. The National Association for the Education of Young Children stated that school policy required a proper teacher-to-child ratio (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). It was also related to Yeawpha Dechakhupt (1999) about the quality of child rearing teacher-to-child ratio, supervision and evaluation of child care. It was something that every child development center should take into account. Caregivers represent parents of the child at the centers. They play an important role as a model for young children. If caregivers understand and show a sympathy to children who lack warmth in the family, it will help them in many ways. The caregivers are responsible for linking the child's life between home and school. They need to have some special features for working with young children. Therefore, administrators must have an understanding of the characteristics, roles and responsibilities of the caregivers in order to select a child care provider with quality and suitability for the child. Many child development centers did not have a teacher supervision, which is not according to the guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. School policy must improve the quality of the team, collaboration, expertise and

resources. It also must have appropriate ratio between teacher and children including adequate budget and quality assessment of the schools (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997).

Creating the proper curriculum: All child development centers were organized according to the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and the Early Childhood Curriculum B.E. 2546 (2003) has been implemented according to the standards of the Child Development Center, Department of Local Administration. The standards of young children by the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health was deployed by the curriculum of each center. The centers integrate child-centered experiences by encouraging teachers to organize their teaching to meet and the needs and interests of each child and correspond to the individual's ability. The environment and atmosphere cater children's learning and practicality as much as possible. It was also flexible by events and local conditions, incorporating ethics into children and to encourage children to learn together happily. Activities are divided into 6 main activities: 1) Outdoor activities 2) Creative activities 3) Motion and rhythm activities 4) Free activities 5) Experienced activities and 6) Educational game activities. Most of learning units, teachers had adopted lesson plans from the academic and local education standards to adapt the teaching and learning in accordance with local or situation. This was related to the guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. It stated that content of early childhood curriculum should include social or cultural values, parental guidance and age and experience of young children (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). It was also consistent with the Principles of Early Childhood Curriculum B.E. 2546 (2003): 1) to promote the learning process and development that covers all types of young children 2) to follow principles of parenting and provide education that children are centered, take into account the differences between individual and the way of life of children in the context of the community, society and culture 3) to develop children through holistic play and proper activities for each age 4) to provide a learning experience to maintain a high quality of life and happiness 5) to collaborate between families, communities and schools in child development.

Creating an appropriate environment: The child development centers provided an appropriate environment for children's learning. Most teachers gave priority to cleanliness and safety, and allowed children the freedom to play. In one day, there are 6 activities for young children which are outdoor activity, creative activity, motion and rhythm activity, free activity, experienced activity and educational game activity. The activities of the teachers were mostly individual rather than groups. The environment within the classroom was organized into

various corners, such as the music corner, book corner, block corner, role-play corner, etc. for children to choose. There was bright and airy room with outdoor environment. Most centers had playsets and space for children to run, jog and climb. There were also other activities in the area provided that children could do such as planting trees, flowers and vegetables to use as a learning resource for children. The emphasis was on the outside environment to be shady, clean and safe. In interviews with both teachers and administrators, the child development center needed new materials and equipment to be replaced the broken ones. Some centers did not have a water or sand station for children to play. There were some learning materials that were created by the staffs. However, they were not durable. Moreover, they also commented that there was a lack of adequate budget to provide appropriate and adequate environment for the number of children.

Teaching that promotes development and learning: The teaching that promotes development and learning was the teaching experience that every teacher should take care of children, be observant, talk and listen to their children. Most importantly, all the teachers were ready to help their children as soon as they need help. Each child development center had an expectation for the development of toddlers, focusing on four aspects: physical, emotional, social and intellectual. The canters supported their children to have a healthy body, good habits with mental health and happiness. Children could help themselves in their daily lives. They trained their children to have self-discipline, responsibility for themselves and can live happily with others. Teachers used teaching techniques and methods to organize activities through learning experiences for young children. The teachers would give the children some advice in order to meet the need of each child. In the learning activities, they used story books, songs and rhymes to enhance the children appropriately in language skill and provided a variety of learning activities. This was related with the developmentally appropriate practice for toddlers according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children that proposed to parents or caregivers to recognize the crying and body movements In order to communicate with children. They should respond to children's crying and calling immediately because children will be secure and help them to build a bond between each other (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). According to the Office of the Education Council (Ministry of Education, 2009), preschool children aged 0-3 years are considered as the year of life or the age of creation. The form of learning activity of 2 year-old to 3 year-old children would be fun in learning by trial and error. Even though, they are not ready to do many things, they develops quickly in all developments. Piaget (1962; 1972) and Vygotsky

(1962; 1976) said the development of children's intelligence is a process of building knowledge through interaction with the person around them. For this reason, the appropriate environment and teaching methods for children are considered important in creating knowledge.

Assessing of child development and learning: All child development centers were assessed for their children's development by observing, interviewing and testing by applying standard evaluation criteria of various agencies. They evaluated in four main areas: physical, emotional, social and intellectual. There was also a report on the growth of children in weight and height by recording the results of the assessment in the student report book and sending it to the parents. The results of the evaluation of children was used to promote the development of the children. If the child develops delays, teachers will know which areas and how to help them to have appropriate development. The result of the evaluation helped to know children's learning and behavior problems. The child development centers had modified and promoted the development of children by providing extra activities for children based on their age and interests. They also informed the parents in order to help promote the development of children in another way. Teachers at the centers visited, met and talked to the children at their homes. The report card of each child would send to the parents every semester. The results of the assessment could be considered in the planning of child development in the future which was an appropriate practice. This was consistent with the principle of assessment of children's development in the early childhood education curriculum in BE 2546 (2003), as followed: to assess the development of all children and bring about the development of children, to do an Individual assessment throughout the year, to assess in the conditions that were the same as daily activities, to do a systematic evaluation, to have a plan of using tools and record it, to do an authentic assessment with a variety of methods that are suitable for children including several resources. The National Association for the Education of Young Children also recommended that children should be evaluated by observing their developmental progress and learning in order to be used in curriculum planning to meet their needs and to know the developmental problem. Communication with parents was important and could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the school.

Creating partnerships with parents: Every child development center created partnership with parents by communicating with them during the pick-up time both in the morning and evening which teachers considered as the best time to talk about their children. There was also an opportunity for parents to participate in activities with the centers, such as

teaching and learning in the classroom in various units. Parents' education also promoted in four areas: physical, emotional, social and intellectual. It focused mainly on children's hygiene, storytelling, creating local learning materials, cooking for children, and providing a knowledge on local musical instruments. In addition, every center had developed projects such as a child development project and a beautiful smile project that invited lecturers who had a knowledge in the subject matter to educate parents. Every child development center had a program to visit children and parents at their homes. All activities would focus on creating relationships and found that there was 1 center that provided information about the development of children to their parents. They also contacted the parents by phone and had parent meetings to help them understand and solve any problems together. In addition, there were communication through notice board and leaflets about health and disease outbreaks, which encouraged parents to take care of their children to stay in good health by arranging parental orientation and educated parents about infectious diseases to children. The centers also clarified the terms of the regulations as well as the exchange of ideas between administrators, teachers and parents. The parents' feedback and suggestions would improve the management of teaching and learning within the child development centers. This was related to the National Association for the Education of Young Children which suggested that in building relationships with parents, teachers must work with parents. Communication was always about trust and understanding both welfare and child development. Teachers should know the needs of parents and respect the culture of each family. Teachers must listen to what parents say about their children and discover and find out the goals of each family. Teachers need to help parents feel good about their children by telling good and interesting things that happen to children each day.

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