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A study of a pre-school teacher professionalism in order to improve the quality of educational work

The problem and the aim of the study. High quality early childhood education (ECE) enables children to enjoy the experience and have nurturing environment that promotes holistic development. The teachers quality have been predicted to produce desirable outcomes. However, the challenge is to identify the predictors that can quantify the definition of a quality teacher. This study was formulated to identify the best practice of quality pre-school teachers.

Research methods. This study applied a quantitative approach involving survey to answer the research questions. The quantitative approach with a descriptive analysis. This study uses questionnaire to assess individual perceptions and views on quality of early childhood pre-school education. The sample size was 1817 teachers from four types of pre-school or TADIKA (kindergartens). The surveys were conducted in Malaysia starting with random sampling of groups to select representatives of the statewide zones. Each identified zone then underwent a stratified sampling method to ensure that all critical groups of informants were included.

Results. The study’s findings revealed that the gap analysis related to the upgrading of professionalism of pre-school teachers based on in-service course and teaching and learning course attended beyond the standard 7 days a year except MOE pre-school. Second, all pre-school agencies in Malaysia have not reached the best quality benchmarks. However, more than half of MOE pre-school teachers have a bachelor’s degree. The result shown differences between the ratio of teacher from the agencies. The gap ratio of children to teachers between private kindergartens with best practice benchmarks is 2.0 times, while 2.1 times for pre-schools MOE 2.6 times for KEMAS kindergartens, and 3.3 times for JPNIN kindergartens.

Conclusion. In conclusion, these findings are important to be given attention and remedial action in order the improvement and quality of teacher achieve the minimum standard especially in participating in adequate professional development programs.

Keywords: best practice, pre-school, teacher, quality, early childhood education

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Introduction

High quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) enables children to enjoy safe and nurturing environment that promotes their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development [10; 23]. From the equity perspective, every child should have equal access to such quality programme regardless of his or her gender, race, religion, age, belief, disability, geographical location, social class and socio-economic circumstances. Neuroscience research has found that brain development is most rapid in the early childhood stage. Many countries are becoming increasingly convinced of the need to provide such opportunities for early childhood care and education development [4]. This has given rise to countries developing policies to mobilize resources to meet its rising demands in quality ECCE [7]. In Malaysia, the Education Act 1996 (Act 550) regulates pre-schools for children aged 4-6 years. The public pre-schools are provided by government agencies such as the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KEMAS), Department of National Unity and Integration (JPNIN). Private pre-schools are alternative pre-school provisions that allowed privately run pre-schools registered with the Ministry of Education. The Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan (National Pre-school Curriculum Standard) revised in 2017 used in all Malaysian pre-schools provides a holistic and integrated curriculum in terms of its contents, pedagogy and assessment (Curriculum Development Division, 2017). The private providers include non-governmental agencies, religious organizations and private companies and individuals [29].

The quality ECCE practices for appropriate development and learning among children have been developed by agencies such as the UNESCO and OECD [25]. The UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2015 to 2030) has established that inclusive and equitable quality education should promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Through which, quality early childhood education should ensure that “all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education” [21]. OECD has also identified five levers of key policies that promote quality in ECE [34]. Firstly, setting out quality goals and regulations along with public funding and regulation to achieve quality goals such as the recruitment of highly professional staff, and investment in ECCE facilities and materials. Secondly, designing and implementing curriculum and standards through a regulatory framework, minimum standards for health and safety of children, and a minimum level of quality. Thirdly, professionalising the ECCE workforce through improving qualifications, training and working conditions, which could in turn increase the possibility of realising broad-based education and care quality goals. Fourthly, engaging families and communities and requesting for a parental component in ECCE services to enhance children’s achievement. Last, but not least, advancing efforts in data collection, research and monitoring aimed at achieving quality goals and raising standards [19].

Quality programs have been predicted to produce desirable outcomes. However, the challenge is to identify the predictors that can quantify the definition of a quality program. As evident from previous studies, a search for predictors of a standard universal quality program is fraught with difficulties. Quality varies with context and culture of a particular society [25]. Therefore, what constitutes a quality program in one country may not be similar to another. Nonetheless, we need to engage in the search for these predictors because we
need to: a) develop criteria that can be used to define effective program models that can serve as templates or guidelines for educators desiring to embark on ECCE programs in Malaysia [8, 9]. An understanding of what constitutes quality within the program would assist them towards creating the desirable program; b) understand what happens to successful programs when they go to scale, that is, when they are replicated for the purpose of achieving greater coverage. When small-scale programs are judged to be of high quality, there is interest in making the program available to a greater number of people. One of the concerns in doing that is how to maintain quality in the process. c) be aware of what is required to create an effective large-scale ECCE program [34]. With the advent of large-scale programs being undertaken by the government, generally with substantial support, there are concerns about how to position such programs in a place where it is able to achieve and maintain quality provision [24].

Based on the evidents and recommendations above, this current study seeks to identify the best practice benchmarks of quality teachers in pre-school from different agencies such as Ministry of Government, Tadika KEMAS, Tadika JPNIN and Private Kindergartens.

**Purpose of the study**

This study was formulated to meet three specific objectives, namely (i) identify the qualification and experiences of pre-school teachers from four agencies, (ii) to compare of professional development training among the teachers from different agencies, and (iii) to compare child-teacher ratio among the pre-school agencies, namely Ministry of Education (MOE) pre-school, TABIKA KEMAS (kindergarten), TABIKA Perpaduan Kindergarten (JPNIN), and private kindergarten, with best practice benchmarks.

**Literature Review**

Quality early childhood education indicators is the key to achieve the expected benefits, as mentioned in all of the international literature. The indicator of quality such as the number of staff per child, the level of staff qualifications, the features of the centre location and working conditions for staff are important preconditions for fostering child development in early childhood education settings. The effect of quality of educational outcomes showing the markedly more positive effect of high quality pre-school over low quality pre-school in children ability. The high-quality and developmentally appropriate early childhood programmes produce short and long term positive effects on children’s development and learning. The staff work experience is importance for enhancing quality in education and care settings. Professional development training for early childhood teacher is related to both better process quality and stronger learning and development for children [26].

The quality of teachers was found to have the greatest impact on the quality of pre-school and greatly affect the literacy and social development of children, especially at the age of 2 to 5 years [17]. Even competent, knowledgeable, creative and visionary teachers are able to overcome the weaknesses found in the pre-school curriculum.

Barnett [3] reported that a close relationship between teacher qualifications and children’s achievement levels, study found that children studying in pre-school who had highly qualified teachers on average showed significantly better performance and achievement than children from regular pre-school. Low academic qualifications and lack of
specific training in early childhood education were found to severely limit teachers' ability in shaping children's learning, thinking, and behaviour.

Thus, the quality of pre-school teachers is another important indicator that is given attention in measuring the quality of a pre-school [35]. To achieve the desired quality of education, teachers need to have high qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills, as well as positive interest and attitude in every aspect related to the handling of pre-school children in and outside the classroom [33]. Qualifications in this context consist of two categories of qualifications, namely academic qualifications and professional qualifications [32]. Professional qualification refers to a qualification specialized in pre-school education or early childhood education. Experience is measured by the number of years teachers have experience teaching in pre-school [11].

The importance of these teachers' academic backgrounds is identified through the qualification requirements adopted by foreign bodies. The closest example is the Singapore Ministry of Education which requires all teachers to have professional training in early childhood education at least at diploma level, credit in at least 5 'O’ level subjects, and English language skills [18]. Various agencies and bodies in the USA require at least a high school diploma, one year of experience working with children in a relevant context [16], and knowledge of pre-school education best practices as minimum qualifications for pre-school teachers [31].

The Abbott County of New Jersey Quality Pre-school Mandate, the Pennsylvania Code (1988), the National Research Council (NRC) and the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) in the USA prescribe degrees earned through a 4-year early education program children as the primary criteria of teacher recruitment [15], in line with studies showing that the most effective pre-school teachers are those who have knowledge and experience through 4 years of academic training at a recognized university [13]. The same standards apply in Finland and France, while the Singapore government will implement these standards in the near future [14].

In addition, the improvement of knowledge and skills through professional upgrading such as training and in service courses on an ongoing basis is also an important indicator of the level of quality of teachers and teacher assistants [27]. The 6th principle of ISO 9004: 2009 accreditation states that quality institutions must provide professional upgrading based on needs analysis for the continuous improvement of its staff [12]. This condition is also relevant in determining the quality of pre-school, i.e. pre-school management provides professional training or sends teachers to attend or in-service courses, especially those related to teaching and learning in order to improve their knowledge and skills [2].

Research methods

This study applied a quantitative approach involving survey method to answer the research questions. This study designs were used to obtain comprehensive data on four key aspects involved in this study, namely (1) demographic; (2) quality ECCE-Environment, Facilities and Resources; (3) Teaching Strategy and Learning Management; and (4) Observation and Assessment [1]. This study uses questionnaire design to assess individual perceptions or views on quality of early childhood pre-school education in Malaysia, and how this tendency varies among respondents. All data is collected using one set of questionnaire at a time as presented in Table 1 by using 5-point Likert Scale. The respondents were required to answer all items in the Early Childhood Quality Questionnaire Instrument [13].
Table 1

Early Childhood Quality Questionnaire Instrument (Teacher Quality)

| To what extent is the teacher satisfied with the following? |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Teacher’s salary                                       |
| 2. Prestige as a pre-school teacher                        |
| 3. Benefits and remuneration (allowances and facilities)   |
| 4. School holidays                                        |
| 5. Working hours                                          |
| 6. A sense of pride in a pre-school teacher’s career       |

| To what extent is the teacher satisfied with the following? |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Community appreciation                                 |
| 2. Parental appreciation                                  |
| 3. Acceptance and appreciation of other teachers          |
| 4. Appreciation of school administrators and supervisors  |
| 5. Opportunities for further studies                      |
| 6. Promotion opportunities                                |
| 7. Reasonable workload                                    |
| 8. Class size, i.e. the number of students taught         |
| 9. Opportunity to participate in professional development courses|
| 10. The work atmosphere in this preschool                 |
| 11. Positive relationships among co-workers, if relevant  |
| 12. Opportunity to provide views and suggestions.         |
| 13. Effective professional development programs           |
| 14. Opportunities to innovate in Teaching and Learning in these pre-schools |

If you were given the opportunity to choose a new career with the same eligibility and income requirements, to what extent would you agree with the following options?

| 1. Remain a preschool teacher in this school/Kindergarten   |
| 2. Remain a teacher, but not a preschool teacher            |
| 3. Select another position                                  |
| 4. Not sure which choice to make                             |

On your assessment, what is your level of ability to serve as a pre-school teacher in the following respects?

| 1. Motivate children who are less interested in lessons   |
| 2. Increase children self-confidence to succeed in lessons|
| 3. Help children appreciate the importance of lessons    |
| 4. Help families improve their children’s learning achievement in pre-school |
| 5. Provide quality assignments and questions for children |
| 6. Use a variety of assessment strategies                  |
| 7. Give different examples and descriptions to facilitate students' understanding |
| 8. Help children master the skills of reading, writing, counting and reasoning |
| 9. Help children master all the pillars of Pre-school Curriculum |
| 10. Controlling children misconduct in the classroom       |
| 11. Monitor children behaviour to comply with class rules  |
| 12. Control the calmness of the learning environment       |

Study participants

The details regarding the number of study participants involved in the pilot study and the actual data collection for the the survey method are given in Tables 1. Numbers of early childhood education teacher according to the types of Pre-school/TADIKA (kindergarten). Surveys had been conducted with Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher at four types of TADIKA: MOE Pre-school, TABIKA KEMAS, TABIKA PERPADUAN and private TADIKA. The numbers of ECE teacher involved in the surveys study according to the types of TADIKA are shown in Table 2. The sample size was 1817 teachers from four types of pre-school or TADIKA (kindergartens) that divided such as 267 (14.7%) teachers from MOE Pre-school, 432 (23.8 %) teachers from TABIKA KEMAS, 59 (3.2 %) teachers from TABIKA PERPADUAN and 1059 (58.3 %) teachers from private TADIKA.
The field surveys were conducted nationwide starting with random sampling of groups to select representatives of the state wide zones. Each identified zone then underwent a stratified sampling method to ensure that all critical groups of informants were included (teachers / employers / and supervisors), according to appropriate ratios of the pre-school types. Data collection is supported by the assistance of various agencies including the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), State Education Department (JPN), Department of Community Development (KEMAS), Department of National Unity and National Integration (JPNIN), and private where the sampling distribution for pre-school is presented in Table 3.

### Table 2

| Types of Pre-school/TADIKA | n   | %  |
|----------------------------|-----|----|
| MOE Pre-school             | 267 | 14.7 |
| TABIKA PERPADUAN           | 59  | 3.2 |
| TABIKA KEMAS               | 432 | 23.8 |
| TADIKA Private             | 1059| 58.3 |
| Total                      | 1817| 100.0 |

### Table 3

| Zone                  | State          | Pre-School Distribution Ratio | Total By State | Total By Zone | List. Sample Pre-School |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|
|                       |                | KPM                           | KEMAS          | JPNIN         | Private                |
| North                 | Pulau Pinang   | 160                           | 283            | 116           | 431                    | 990                    | 3082                     |
|                       | Kedah          | 421                           | 734            | 107           | 522                    | 1784                   | 5089                     |
|                       | Perlis         | 72                            | 141            | 37            | 58                     | 308                    |
| South                 | Johor          | 664                           | 877            | 206           | 1404                   | 3151                   |
|                       | Negeri Sembilan| 200                           | 356            | 120           | 391                    | 1067                   |
|                       | Melaka         | 168                           | 278            | 64            | 361                    | 871                    |
| Central               | Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur | 130             | 129            | 132           | 343                    | 734                    |
|                       | Wilayah Persekutuan Putra Jaya | 14               | 19             | 9             | 51                     | 93                     |
| West                  | Selangor       | 508                           | 795            | 182           | 1700                   | 3185                   |
|                       | Perak          | 515                           | 726            | 164           | 632                    | 2037                   |
| East                  | Kelantan       | 405                           | 713            | 107           | 217                    | 1442                   |
|                       | Terengganu     | 312                           | 754            | 72            | 121                    | 1259                   |
|                       | Pahang         | 502                           | 676            | 126           | 257                    | 1561                   |
|                       | Sabah          | 867                           | 991            | 142           | 369                    | 2369                   |
|                       | Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan | 14               | 20             | 25            | 13                     | 72                     |
|                       | Sarawak        | 1106                          | 1076           | 172           | 407                    | 2761                   |
|                       | TOTAL          | 6058                          | 8568           | 1781          | 7277                   | 23684                  | 23684                   |

| Distribution Ratio    | Total |
|-----------------------|-------|
| KPM                   |       |
| KEMAS                 |       |
| JPNIN                 |       |
| Private               |       |

| TOTAL                 | 379   |
|                       | 97    |
|                       | 137   |
|                       | 29    |
|                       | 116   |
|                       | 379   |
Table 3 TADIKA survey population distribution and sample for TLA project (The sampling based on Krejcie & Morgan [16] with a population of 23684 was 379 of which 2% of the sample was selected).

Findings

Demographic Background of Teachers

This section compares the performance of curriculum practice. The comparison was made using data from the survey.

a) Professional Qualification Level

Table 4 shows the professional qualification of TADIKA ECCE teacher. For TADIKA in MOE Pre-school, 110 respondents (41.2%) had a degree in ECCE, followed by 55 respondents with a diploma in ECCE (20.6%). There were 60 respondents (22.5%) who did not have any professional qualification in ECCE. On the other hand, 30 respondents (11.2%) had a certificate in ECCE, 9 respondents (3.4%) had a master’s degree in ECCE and one respondent (0.4%) had a Ph.D in ECCE. 2 respondents (0.7%) did not give any information about their professional qualification related to ECCE.

| Types of TADIKA   | Professional Qualification                                      | Respondents |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|                   | n                  | %           |
| MOE Pre-school    | Ph.D in ECCE       | 1           | 0.4        |
|                   | Master in ECCE     | 9           | 3.4        |
|                   | Degree in ECCE     | 110         | 41.2       |
|                   | Diploma in ECCE    | 55          | 20.6       |
|                   | Certificate in ECCE| 30          | 11.2       |
|                   | Do not have any professional qualification in ECCE             | 60          | 22.5       |
|                   | Not Stated         | 2           | 0.7        |
|                   | Total              | 267         | 100        |
| TABIKA PERPADUAN  | Degree in ECCE     | 1           | 1.7        |
|                   | Diploma in ECCE    | 29          | 49.2       |
|                   | Certificate in ECCE| 13          | 22         |
|                   | Not Stated         | 14          | 23.7       |
|                   | Do not have any professional qualification in ECCE             | 2           | 3.4        |
|                   | Total              | 59          | 100        |
| TABIKA KEMAS      | Ph.D in ECCE       | 2           | 0.5        |
|                   | Master in ECCE     | 1           | 0.2        |
|                   | Degree in ECCE     | 5           | 1.2        |
|                   | Diploma in ECCE    | 192         | 44.4       |
|                   | Certificate in ECCE| 140         | 32.4       |
|                   | Do not have any professional qualification in ECCE             | 75          | 17.4       |
|                   | Not Stated         | 17          | 3.9        |
|                   | Total              | 432         | 100        |
While TABIKA PERPADUAN, 29 respondents had a diploma in ECCE (49.2%), followed by 13 respondents (22%) with a certificate in ECCE, one respondent had a degree in ECCE (1.7%), while 14 respondents (23.7%) did not have any professional qualification in ECCE. There were 2 respondents (3.4%) who did not provide this information.

Majority respondents in TABIKA KEMAS had a diploma and certificate in ECCE which were 192 respondents (44.4%) and 140 respondents (32.4%), respectively. There were 75 respondents who did not have any professional qualification in ECCE, 5 respondents (1.2%) who had a degree in ECCE, 2 respondents with a Ph.D in ECCE (0.5%), and one respondent (0.2%) had a master’s degree in ECCE. There were also 17 respondents (3.9%) who did not give any information about their professional qualification related to ECCE.

In addition private TADIKA, 507 respondents (47.9%) did not have any professional qualification in ECCE. There were 229 respondents (21.6%) with a diploma in ECCE, followed by 215 (20.3%) who had a certificate in ECCE. Moreover, there were 39 respondents (3.7%) with a degree in ECCE, 12 respondents (1.1%) with a master’s degree in ECCE, and 8 respondents (0.8%) with a Ph.D in ECCE. Other than that, there were 49 respondents (4.6%) who did not give any information about their ECCE professional qualification.

The results of the analysis of the academic qualification gap between pre-school teachers of different agencies. The best teacher quality benchmark (TAS) discussed earlier is the approval of a degree. It was found that in general, all pre-school agencies in Malaysia have not reached the best quality benchmark in terms of the qualifications of their respective teachers. Relatively, only 41.2 % of MOE pre-school teachers have a bachelor's degree. The average qualification of other pre-school teachers is much lower, namely only 4.6% of KEMAS kindergarten teachers, 3.9 % of JPNIN kindergarten teachers, and 8 % of private kindergarten teachers who have such qualifications. These findings are consistent with educational policy assessments.

b) Period of service in Pre-school/TADIKA

In Table 4, MOE Pre-school had 212 respondents (79.4%) with service period of more than 6 years, followed by 27 respondents with between 3 to 6 years (10.1%) or service. There were 23 respondents with a service of less than 3 years (8.6%) while 5 respondents (1.9%) did not give this information.

A majority of the respondents from TABIKA PERPADUAN had a period of service of more than 6 years which were 45 respondents (76.3%), followed by 8 respondents who had served for between 3 to 6 years (13.6%) and 6 respondents who had served for less than 3 years (10.2%).

Meanwhile, a majority of the respondents at TADIKA KEMAS had served for more than 6 years which were 343 respondents (79.4%), followed by 56 respondents (13%) with
between 3 to 6 years and 29 respondents’ (6.7%) with less than 3 years. There were 4 respondents (0.9%) did not give any information about their period of services.

Table 4

| Types of TADIKA | Period of Service | n  | %   |
|----------------|------------------|----|-----|
| MOE Pre-school | Less than 3 years| 23 | 8.6 |
|                | 3-6 years        | 27 | 10.1|
|                | More than 6 years| 212| 79.4|
|                | Not stated       | 5  | 1.9 |
|                | Total            | 267| 100 |
| TABIKA PERPADUAN | Less than 3 years| 6  | 10.2|
|                | 3-6 years        | 8  | 13.6|
|                | More than 6 years| 45 | 76.3|
|                | Total            | 59 | 100 |
| TADIKA KEMAS   | Less than 3 years| 29 | 6.7 |
|                | 3-6 years        | 56 | 13  |
|                | More than 6 years| 343| 79.4|
|                | Not stated       | 4  | 0.9 |
|                | Total            | 432| 100 |
| TADIKA Private | Less than 3 years| 290| 27.4|
|                | 3-6 years        | 229| 21.6|
|                | More than 6 years| 515| 48.6|
|                | Not stated       | 25 | 2.4 |
|                | Total            | 1059| 100 |

Finally, in private TADIKA, 515 respondents’ (48.6%) services were more than 6 years, while 290 respondents (27.4) had less than 3 years, 229 respondents (21.6%) had between 3 to 6 years and there were 25 respondents (2.4%) who did not give such information.

Comparison of Professional Development Training

Figure 1 summarizes the results of the gap analysis related to the upgrading of professionalism of pre-school teachers based on In-Service Training (IST) course and Teaching and Learning (TL) course attended. This analysis is based information from survey of the teachers. The best practice benchmark of course participation in pre-school teaching and learning related services is 7 days a year; this is in line with the Service Circular No. 6 (2005), Public Sector Human Resource Training Policy.

It was found that in general all pre-school agencies in Malaysia meet the best quality benchmarks in terms of in-service course participation among their respective teachers, except MOE pre-school teachers. Data show that MOE pre-school teachers, on average, only participated in in-service courses of 5 days in 2020. A comparison between agencies found that KEMAS pre-school teachers recorded the highest participation (14 days), followed by JPNIN teachers (12 days) and private teachers (12 days). The data also shows that in terms of teaching and learning course analysis for MOE pre-school teachers, on average, only participated in teaching and learning courses of 5 days in 2020. Comparison between
agencies found that KEMAS pre-school teachers recorded the highest participation (8 days), followed by JPNIN teachers (7 days) and private teachers (8 days).

**Figure 1** Gap Analysis for Upgrading the Professionalism of Teachers

**Child-Teacher Ratio and Child-Assistant Teacher Ratio**

Figure 2, the gap analysis of child-teacher ratio and child-assistant teacher ratio obtained through analysis on the data shown differences between the agencies. Relatively, the gap in the performance ratio of children to teachers between private kindergartens with best practice benchmarks is 2.0 times, while 2.1 times for pre-schools MOE 2.6 times for KEMAS kindergartens, and 3.3 times for JPNIN kindergartens. While the performance gap ratio of children with assistant teachers between private kindergartens with best practice benchmarks is 5.0 times, while 2.3 times for MOE pre-schools, 4.1 times for KEMAS kindergartens, and JPNIN kindergartens.

**Figure 2** Gap Analysis of the Ratio of Children with Teachers and Children with Assistants
Discussion

The results of the gap analysis related to the upgrading of professionalism of pre-school teachers based on in-service course and teaching and learning course attended. The best practice benchmark of course participation in pre-school teaching and learning related services is 7 days a year; this is in line with the Service Circular No. 6 (2005), Public Sector Human Resource Training Policy. However, the teachers from MOE did not reach the set standard level as compared to other agencies. Among the factors is that most MOE teachers follow courses that are management in nature instead of teaching and learning courses [21]. The teachers in all pre-school agencies in Malaysia meet the best quality benchmarks in terms of course participation in teaching and learning-related services in pre-schools exception of MOE pre-school teachers [5].

Second, in terms of teacher qualifications, all pre-school agencies in Malaysia have not reached the best quality benchmarks. However, more than half of MOE pre-school teachers have a bachelor’s degree. The average qualification of other pre-school teachers is much lower, at less than 10% for each type of implementing agency. This issue should be given attention so that the implementation strategy of education policy is achieved, (i) provide adequate trained teachers for the needs of pre-school education and (ii) ensure all pre-school option teachers and early childhood education teach in pre-school. This is in line with the results of a previous study found of high quality teachers [29], namely (i) academic qualifications, (ii) professional qualifications of pre-school teachers, (iii) work experience as pre-school educators, (iv) appointment of official duties related to early childhood education, (v) early childhood education consultants, (vii) authors, researchers, or presenters of papers related to early childhood education, and (vi) award recipients who recognize contributions to early childhood education [25].

Third, all types of pre-schools did not achieve a quality of practice of child-teacher ratio and class size comparable to best practice. Among local pre-schools, private kindergartens have the lowest average child-teacher ratio and class size. In this regard, private kindergartens are significantly better quality when compared to MOE pre-schools [31]. Certainly, this child-teacher ratio and class size contribute to the quality of interaction and teaching and learning process among private kindergarten children [27].

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, these findings are important to be given attention and remedial action in order the improvement and quality of teacher achieve the minimum standard especially in participating in adequate professional development programs. For example it is difficult for MOE pre-school teachers to become competent and effective pre-school teachers without a preparing continuous professional development training [28]. In this regard, it is recommended to the MOE that the review of the governance system restructuring as proposed through the Malaysia Report: Education Policy Review (UNESCO, 2012) also clearly defines the balanced distribution of Malaysia education policy review between central agencies, district education office, and pre-school [29]. Policy statement and monitoring of violations of the principles of child learning development in the pre-school curriculum [29]. Placement of graduate teachers of
study in pre-school or early childhood education in all pre-school classes that meet best practices [20]. The terms of service of teachers include the requirement to comply with the benchmarks of course participation in pre-school teaching and learning related services for at least 20 hours per year.

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