

**BASIC “STROKE APPROACH” IN PRE WRITTEN PROFICIENCY AMONG  
AUTISM CHILDREN AT QURANIS LEARNING CENTER IN TAWAU  
SABAH.**

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**Abstract:** *Pre-writing skills are skills that involve sensory motor skills in fine motor control in the early childhood education. It can help children at an early stage in the strengthening of language proficiency through the aspects of writing. However, for children with autism, it is indeed a challenge to teach them the basic in pre-writing skills. An approach in using the basic strokes to teach basic Pre-writing skills to 8 autistic children in the Quranis Tawau learning center was conducted to help children through the early stage learning intervention. Introduction of basic stroke like sticks, humps and doughnuts are used as the basis of pre-writing skills used in the childhood learning activities. It is hope that the activities introduced can help in the early intervention of autistic children in the development of writing skills. In addition it can assist teachers in special education and early children education improved their teaching techniques in pre-writing skills that could be applied on children with autism in the future.*

**Key words:** *Autism child pre writing, basic stroke, learning activities*

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of Vision 2020 and the changes brought about by the era of cyber space, it has become an agenda for teachers in the aspects of teaching and learning. The change of paradigm is significant in ensuring the concept of design in educational development is naturally maintained for the advancement of education. It is not only limited to the normal students but also includes the students with special needs. Today's challenge of educating students with special needs is also increasingly threatened with global changes in the world. With the objective of providing appropriate and relevant education to special education students, the opportunity to develop talent, providing materials and ensure that teachers had sufficient teaching staff and trained in special education has become a major agenda in the planning of the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. The effort to develop a special education system that is flexible, easy and friendly to children and parents of special needs has become a challenge significant in the developed society nowadays. In order to achieve the policy enacted by the government in upgrading the country's education, knowledge of education in line with the demands

of the 21st century is utmost important in the delivery of learning regardless of wherever the teachers teach.

Special Education also should not be marginalized by the current educational development today the reason is said that pupils who are educated are 'special' to be scrap because these pupils also have the capability to be developed in accordance with the existing potential. Teachers play crucial roles in delivering effective lessons in the challenging context of special education. The challenge of the 21st century brought a composite impression of professionalism and dedication as a teacher to understand, support and create ways and new learning environment that is able to give a push to change the direction of thinking that stimulate learning among pupils of special needs. Since 1930 many research have been conducted in order to understand this phenomenon in the development of children with special needs, especially children with autism. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder of (DSM-IV) 1994, children with autism have a problem with languages and also the individual communication difficulties in socialization. In this respect, understanding and

knowledge in facing the challenges of educating children with autism has become an urgent necessity to help these children.

Educators, parents and entrepreneur education centers offering education and support the learning of children with autism should provide appropriate interventions for them because it impacts significantly in the development of autistic children to face the needs of the environment and to prepare themselves in the current global era. NASOM (2017), through its web site reported in Malaysia saw a very significant increase in increments of children who suffer from these disorders spectrum which accounted to 9,000 within a year. Thereby, teacher educators should educate children with special needs without preconditions to ensure children who have learning problems can be developed to the maximum in accordance with the concept of their potential, Farrel.M (2004). By implementing teaching and learning based on children's learning ability and potential could give a ray of hope to these students so that they are not left out of mainstream education nowadays.

#### **Background Review - Why and what we do?**

Changes in the present also affect the increasing professionalism of teachers in special education. Teachers need to equip oneself with the capabilities of delivering quality teaching and learning in facing challenges in special education. Teachers who served as a special education teacher also need to be fully engaged in teaching by using the methods, strategies and latest techniques in the delivery of instruction in schools for special education. Special education in Malaysia is growing rapidly since the start of the awareness of the needs of special education for students with disabilities. With the motto "Education for all" special students also have to have proper protection in the national education system. In the role of government bodies and NGOs play a very significant impact in the development of special education in the country, (Zuri Ghani & Mohd Azman Che Ahmad, 2011).

But what are the extent that educational centers able to provide services that meet the needs of children with autism which are increasing every year? The growing number significantly also requires educators who are skilled in dealing with children and to provide appropriate training interventions in order to help the children. Thus in order to further understand and help children in Quranis Tawau Centre, to strengthen the basic level of the children with autism, enable this study is carried out hoping to assist in educating them. Flexibility in teaching should also be a key sensitivity for special education teachers in designing learning so that they correspond to the performance of pupils in special education classes

or NGO centres that handle special education for the children. Farell (2004) has suggested that to increase in the quality of special education it should also look at the strategy, growth factors and how effective teachers in special education classes. Thereby, special educators, especially teachers' knowledge of autistic children can ensure the teachers to design their teaching towards encouraging the full potential of children with special needs although there are still limitations in their learning. Management support also helped the teachers in the implementation of voluntary teaching program in special education classes in the schools involved.

Teacher educators in special education should be exposed to the diversity of strategies, techniques and methods for helping children with autism so that they can provide an appropriate learning opportunities in helping these children. Aspects of disabilities in social interaction, communication and often repeating the same pattern of behavior is often displayed by autistic children. Gargiulo.R.M (2006) quoted that it is often a mystery to the public in how this inability can be helped? In connection with this aspect, the elements of the intervention and attention must be conducted to understand this phenomenon. As educators in the centres, we cannot be separated from the deeper and understand what, where and how to help these children, especially in the preschool attended by them.

Language ability has becomes a means to us as a starting point in helping children to understand the pattern of communication that occurs within them. Jones C.A (2004) states that the basic positive oral ability is the contributing factor to the development of socialization and development of intellectual among the children. Thus with the design according to the nature of children is crucial in the development of a balanced and meaningful early childhood special education development. Slow and not able to speak both verbally and showed no interest in communicating are challenges to educators in making contact with this children, (Garner & Forbes, 2015). Through this on-going project we begin with the aspects of language development which is the main problems faced by these children whom are unable to communicate and interact well. According to Zalizan (2009), they also have difficulty learning to read and write but there are also some who seek to learn the skills of reading and writing without understanding or capacity of using it. In order provide the necessary space for these children, we as teacher educators in the field of early childhood education should plan early intervention project in the pre-writing involving fine motor control among these children. In this centre, a teacher is given the

taste to provide early learning in preschool to a total of 8 children with autism.

We also want to introduce a technique known as a *skill for action* in helping these children in their motor development. Several factors have been identified to influence the motor development of children with autism. Neurological disorder, difficulty in expectation, joint hyper mobility and low muscle tone and anxious / fearful temperament are among them. In regards to these inabilities, their capabilities in doing the smooth and rough movement in a regular basis and balancing are affected. Using basic stroke in the pre-writing skills, the planned activities is to use teaching aids in providing a clear and easy understanding of autistic children who are in the centre. The application of basic stroke allows the child to begin with two basic letters that can be included into a pattern and eventually become the meaningful alphabet. Motion-repetitive movements in shaping the basic strokes also help children stimulate their fine motor according to the modification of their behavior.

This exercise involves a pattern as follows:

1. Long and short stick
2. Humps and bumps
3. Donuts
4. Horizontal and diagonal
5. Tails

Writing aids that contain portable material using recycle materials are used to save costs. The materials which are readily available in the vicinity of the children who study here. With emphasis and focus on sensory motor stimulation of children are looked into to enable their continuous development of coordination capabilities. With their activities in parallel and in sequence it can help children recognize and make connections in the activities of this written development earlier. They will also move freely in carrying out these activities in accordance with the limitations faced by these children (Garner & Forbes, 2015).

#### **Procedure of how the study was conducted – What are we doing here?**

For children with autism, problems in communication and social interaction are among the most significant effect (Vijayen A/L Gopal, 2003). With its limited capabilities in the context of learning, especially language skills it is difficult to understand them. In this respect also these children will often do the compulsive / ritualistic repetitive movements involving fine motor or gross motor (Zalizan, 2009). Researching this aspect, teacher educators who conduct classes should know the basic aspects in appropriate learning and can be promoted to children with autism.

Teaching aids in written activities will be built and used in helping these children. Besides, this study is undertaken to know the usefulness of using basic strokes material built to help children with autism in this centre. The study also would like to understand how these children can adapt to the material and the problems that can be solved using the teaching materials. The focus of this study in the teaching and learning of these children is more to the basic skills in the writing process writing only. By using the material built, it is hope it provide an opportunity enjoyable and meaningful learning to the children aged four to six years. Activity-shaped hands on, minds on is highlighted to encourage brainstorming naturally in accordance with the practice in line with the concept of children's learning even if they have learning disabilities.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The concept of 'volatility' is the key to the implementation of pre-school education. Preschool teachers need to be more creative and innovative in implementing children's learning activities. In other words, teachers should be flexible in changing strategies, methods so that it corresponds to the children's capacity according to age, ability, abilities and interests of children. Language Skills and Communication is central to children's learning, to ensure that children feel excited and happy about the activities carried out especially in the activities of speaking because it could encourage children to interact, (Mazania 2009). Mastery of language skills to improve interaction skills among children could increase the confidence of children in every activity that followed (Ormord, 2008). Design of creative teaching, innovation can provide a fun and enjoyable learning experience for children while improving the competence of teachers in quality teaching later.

Flexibility in teaching should also be a key sensitivity for special education teachers in designing learning so that they correspond to the performance of pupils in special education classes. Basic standard to be achieved have to be consistent with the content standards and learning standards. Farrell (2004) has suggested the quality of special education should also look at the strategy and growth factors and how effective teachers in special education classes are. Based on the observation indirectly, teaching and learning materials that are easy, fun to be applied especially in syllable reading could proceed to the formation of letters and sometimes these children could develop their own creativity but educators should give appropriate guidance to the child's in carrying out the given intervention. Effectiveness and failure of teaching is influenced by how one

teaches and not what he teaches, (Cunningham.P 2006).

Teachers need to be creative in selecting effective teaching methods and in accordance with the interests of children. The choice of material that is easy to operate in dependent on teachers to plan the delivery of effective teaching. With the evidence base practice is that the use of aids or learning strategies in accordance with this child will provide a deeper understanding of the behavior of children and thus give educators an insight into the problem faced by the children in order to help educators develop appropriate teaching and learning based on learning problems that are primarily the autism children in Quranis Tawau Centre.

### IMPLICATIONS

Meaningful learning experience which emphasis on student participation actively in the actual activities are those that they can relate to everyday life. Many of the learning principles in accordance to the principles advocated by Maria Montessori (Morrison, 2009). Mastery of the basics of learning is a significant keywords in active participation, whereby children will learn to be independent by providing appropriate opportunities to their environment (Sandra 2005). Encouraging learning which emphasizes on the interest and eagerness to learn is also important. Learning means includes curriculum and a supportive environment for children enthusiastic and add interest to the learning itself (Morrison, 2009). This fact explains the proper emphasis on learning advocating exciting and fun situation. If the children's was having fun then they will be able to learn more quickly and effectively and it is also equally felt by these children. With the guidance of experienced educators, skilled and able to understand the child's future learning can be mastered and will at least give them a chance to explore the world of learning within the context of existing autism.

Learning experience in special education, especially in the stage of effective intervention, significant and encouraging will be able to provide children with a positive attitude towards learning that will be pursued in the future. In a child's early education, the learning process should not be viewed solely as a result. Kaplow (1996) stated that education in the preschool and early childhood experience is intended to provide a solid foundation to support the achievement of learning to adapt in the context of the development of the self. Therefore, children with autism should have proper protection not because they have a shortage, but they also have the potential to be nurtured to that allows them to be aware of the context of space-time, self-space and their environment.

### SUMMARY

Teachers play a very significant role in pursuing the sustainability of this matter. The curriculum is designed to emphasize the diversity of accounting expertise, culture and values in the process of this transformation. As the manager of human resources, especially in the special education teacher's role in imparting knowledge, skills and values of the culture of a nation, requires an approach that is able to determine the students to possess the characteristics of "the right person at the right place, at the right time with the right attitude. In the realization of the management of teaching and learning resources that are sustainable with the students, the composition of the most influential individuals is to ensure that progress can be achieved or not. Key Player is not only of trainers and coaches but they also will be involved directly in the process of strengthening teaching and learning, (Fullan, 2007).

The experience of schooling and effective learning, meaning and delight can supply students with a variety of skills, self-confidence and a positive attitude in preparation for entering formal schooling and lifelong education. As a teacher in special education, the teacher should have in-depth pedagogical knowledge relevant in the delivery of teaching and learning, in accordance with the nature of the students and their ability. Students with special needs are given the same educational curriculum and modified so that it can be applied and practiced by them. The needs of these children of the same age in terms of their development and growth need to be looked into. With the mission of providing quality education to students with special needs to turn them into individuals who can be independent, successful in life and give back to the community is a major milestone in the process of becoming a mission of special education in Malaysia.

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