A comparative study of cognitive ability between Malaysia and Indonesia preschooler

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study is to determine the differences in cognitive development of preschoolers in Malaysia and Indonesia. The study was conducted at 6 kindergartens; 3 in Malaysia and 3 in Indonesia. A total of 200 preschool students aged 5 to 6 years from Malaysia and Indonesia were selected as respondents. Purposive sampling was used using McCarthy Instrument (1972) to measure the cognitive ability of preschool students, which consist of 3 scales; Verbal, Perceptual-Performance and Quantitative. Overall results show no significant difference in cognitive ability of Malaysian and Indonesian preschool students (Cognitive Level = Moderate Level). However, results also show that there were a significant different between respondent gender towards Perceptual-Performance and Quantitative Scale, which showed that female students scores better for both aspect.

Keywords: Cognitive Ability, Preschooler

1 INTRODUCTION

Implementation of early childhood education in preschools as implemented by government and the private sector is aimed at cultivating the potential of children in all aspects. Besides that, it is aimed at encouraging cognitive development and basic skill development in children and hence to inculcate positive attitudes as preparation for formal primary school education later. The education given is not only based on academics but provides the basis for emotional maturity and mastery of children’s social skills.

Early childhood development encompasses aspects such as cognitive, physical, socio-emotional, language and moral. According to the national preschool curriculum (Centre of Curriculum Development, 2003), explain that cognitive development is given focus in early childhood education because cognitive skills are regarded as very influential in all learning activities.

Children will be learning things indirectly through play activities (Mansor, 1998). At the same time, the process of learning and understanding a concept correctly must be inculcated in the child (Berk, 1995).

In the context of this study, cognitive development refers to the way children process information they receive through interaction and their own thinking. Information processing results from existing experience and new experience received through the process of absorption, accommodation and adaptation (Zahari, 2005). This process will occur continuously in the cognitive structure of children until they undergo a process of disequilibrium when facing new information that conflicts with their balanced cognitive structure and they are no longer dependent on assumptions but instead veer more toward logical thinking in solving a problem being faced.

Education in preschools is very important to children. This is because it is the early education in their life development before they enter the real world of school. Preschool education is regarded as the first phase in acquiring lifelong learning (UNESCO, 1976). Early childhood education is informal education but institutionalized or aimed at giving relevant education to children appropriate to their age. In school, they can absorb experience in various aspects namely cognitive, social and physical development (Awang Hadi, 1981).

Nowadays, cognitive mastery has become an important aspect in the school curriculum in Malaysia; its importance as a form of basic skills is very significant especially in early childhood education. This skill presents an opportunity for children to develop their individual potential and explore their environment in a more meaningful way. According to Kamaruddin Husin (2003), mastery of this skill enables the brain and mind of chil-