

Chapter 4

Analysis of Findings

Introduction

This chapter explains in detail the three stages of instruction, assessment, planning and implementation that were provided in the three classrooms for preschool CSN. The description for each preschool is made up of four sections: the context, planning, implementation and assessment. Macro analysis of the data contributed towards the information portrayed in the context about the preschool, the teacher, the teacher assistant and the students. Micro analysis of the data helped illustrate the three stages of classroom instruction; and identify the similarities and differences amongst the three preschools for the cross-case analysis. Data obtained from triangulating the three techniques: interview, observation and document analysis helped enrich the individual case description and the cross-case analysis.

Case One: Rivers Preschool Classroom

Classroom instruction for Kayla at Rivers Preschool Classroom comprised planning, implementation and assessment, in that order. Continuous observations for five weeks in the first phase and two weeks in the second phase disclosed that the focus of instruction in this classroom was on designing and implementing activities that incorporated the learning outcomes stated in the Curriculum Specification. Kayla designed activities and used a variety of teaching strategies to help her students achieve the learning outcomes. Assessments were also conducted to gauge

students' performance level in each of the selected learning outcomes. Information from the assessment was transferred onto a checklist which was used to prepare progress reports. The reports were given to the parents twice a year. The ensuing paragraphs provide detailed description of the context, planning, implementation and assessment in Rivers Preschool Classroom.

Context

It was half past seven in the morning; Kayla was gathering the teaching materials that she prepared the previous evening for that day's lesson. Her assistant was busy mopping the floor as well as preparing the meal for the day. As the students walked into the classroom one by one, both of them stopped whatever they were doing to greet them. The students get breakfast if necessary, or were guided to their choice of toy or the computer to play games until everyone arrived. It was a busy place. The parents stopped by for advice or for updates on their offspring's progress; primary special education teachers came for advice on classroom instruction in special education; and mainstream teachers came to discuss matters concerning the tennis club, of which Kayla was the advisor. Class commenced at eight o'clock unless Zhi, one of the students threw a tantrum, which may go on for half an hour. This early morning scenario was repeated during the two phases of my data collection even though the number of students had increased during the second phase.

Rivers Preschool Classroom

The original preschool classroom was demolished following a termite attack. As the new classroom was built when Kayla was already there, she managed to ensure that it closely followed the plan stated in the specifications. Despite the

supervision there were certain alterations that did not meet requirements. For instance, the toilet commode was placed on a raised platform that was not user-friendly for students with cerebral palsy. Another inconvenience was the absence of a specific demarcation for the kitchen beside the wall measuring five foot in height and six foot in length, so Kayla had to make her own provisions for the division to prevent students from walking into the kitchen.

The preschool's floor plan is given in Figure 4.1. At the extreme top right corner is the kitchen. Next to the kitchen is an open space that Kayla used as the dining cum art and craft area. At the bottom right corner is a room that Kayla had converted into a store. It was stacked with broken teaching aids and furniture, teaching aids that were not suitable for the students, and raw materials for making teaching aids. Next to the storeroom is the open area that Kayla had divided according to the components in the Curriculum Specification. The classroom has three entrances. The main entrance is at the top left hand corner in the diagram. The side entrance is next to the kitchen whilst the third entrance opens out into the playground.

The left side of the preschool classroom is divided into three areas as shown in Figure 4.1. The first area houses two toilets. One is the squatting type placed on a platform with two steps leading to it. The other is on the ground level. The middle area is open with taps and wash basins on one side of the wall and just taps on the opposite side. The third area has two rooms with a connecting door. One is a bathroom with a shower and a tap; and the other is a changing room. The students' clothes, towels and toiletries are arranged on these shelves. Furniture, computers, television and other teaching material line the four walls of the classroom but the middle portion is kept empty for physical activities.

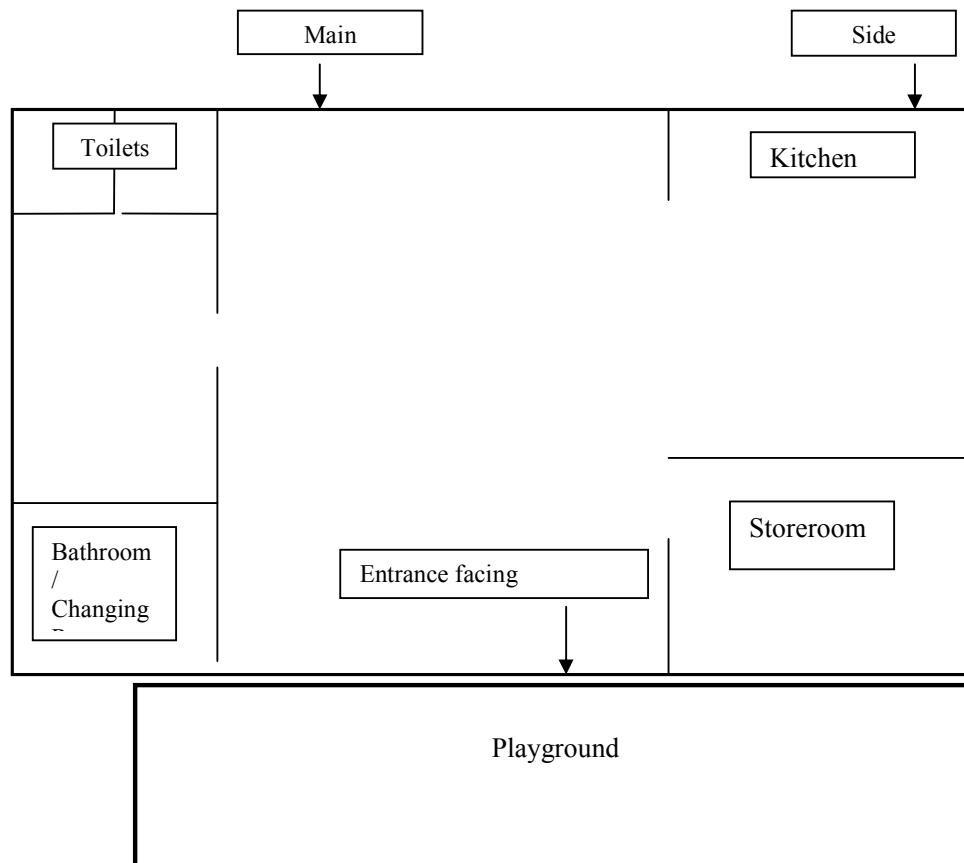


Figure 4.1. The floor plan of Rivers Preschool Classroom

The occupants of this preschool classroom are Kayla, the teacher; Medha, the teacher assistant; and their eight students. Detailed descriptions of these people are given below.

Kayla

A bubbly and cheerful person, Kayla believed that her entry into preschool education was destined as she unfolded her academic and professional journey. Having taught in mainstream primary school for a few years, she continued her studies to obtain a degree. She was among the first batch of Early Childhood educators to graduate from University of Malaya in 2000 under the tutelage of

Professor Chiam Heng Keng, a renowned figure in Early Childhood Education both locally and internationally. Although the course was for mainstream preschool children, Kayla had to do one paper in special education, and her assignment on visually impaired preschool children kindled her interest in special education.

Equipped with a degree but with no preschools under the MOE, Kayla was posted to teach special needs students in a secondary school. After her first degree she had plans to set up a preschool with her friends but changed her mind when she began teaching secondary children with special needs. Without regret she talked about her friend who is currently the owner of three kindergartens and she, Kayla had taken the path less travelled to do a Masters in Special Education in the same university on a part-time basis. She believed that a sound academic background helped in providing effective instruction in the PSE classroom. Kayla felt that her two degrees complemented each other. In her own words:

It is just that special education you are talking about special children. Application of early childhood you still need to apply on special education but you bring the developmental stages to a lower level, the child might not reach the developmental age of 8 years old for the normal because what I learn and then when you learn psychology you also talk about egocentric and then you also talk about approaches, the behaviourism approaches, the constructivism approaches so all this you apply the same way it's just that the theories you just need to apply practically in the class you see like handling behaviour which approach you are using whether you are using the constructive it is the same with early childhood it's the same with special ed. it's how I connect, whatever I learn in early childhood it applies a lot in special ed.

preschool special ed in fact in special ed also if you are teaching the lower levels. (T1/INT/03)

After her masters Kayla was still attached to the secondary school, teaching students with special needs, when the Department of Special Education in the MOE was setting up its preschool unit. So Kayla was asked to become the desk officer because she was the ideal candidate, holding a degree in Early Childhood Education and a Masters in Special Education.

She declined due to her growing family. But she helped the department set up the unit “from the very scratch”. She was involved in planning the infrastructure and designing the curriculum for the preschool programme. Later she also became involved in training preschool teachers. The department lost its voluntary member when she had to follow her husband who went on a transfer in 2005. So Kayla did not get to see how the preschool teachers implemented the curriculum that she had helped design. However, the primary school she was posted to was one of the 32 selected by the MOE for the first batch of preschools. Kayla was asked to teach primary students with special needs. Finding the preschool teacher struggling with her work, Kayla managed to make the switch with her. This dedicated teacher helps the Division for Special Education Management conduct courses for preschool teachers, especially in explaining the curriculum to the new teachers.

During my first visit to her preschool, I was slightly taken aback to see Kayla wearing a track bottom and T-shirt. She said that she wore *baju kurung* (a Malay traditional costume) on Wednesdays when there was assembly but on the other days this was her uniform and she said that I would understand as the day went by. I did not have to wait long. Zhi, one of her students, went into his temper tantrum, kicking and hitting himself. Kayla had to hold him, rub his forehead and finally she held his

hand and ran around the preschool six times. During the first phase of my observation, which lasted five weeks, I saw her handling Zhi's tantrums at least three times a week. Sometimes she lifted him upside down or swung him from left to right with Medha, her teacher assistant, holding his legs to calm him down. Indeed the apparel was appropriate and this medium built lady has a lot of energy.

She also has musical talent. She sang, played the simple musical instruments and did the actions for the nursery rhymes. Not only did she sing during the Morning Circle and the Closing Circle but also when the students were doing physical activities. When I remarked that she had appropriate songs when teaching certain themes, she said,

The songs are available in the market if you want to teach a theme of food, just go through CDs, any food theme you can apply it in the class already. But it is a matter of sometimes the teachers themselves.

(T1/INT/33)

She added that her other source of music was her daughter who went to the Yamaha School of Junior Music. The institution required an older member to go with the child for the lessons so Kayla accompanied her daughter, learnt the songs and actions and used them in her class.

Kayla also attended courses to keep abreast of what was happening in PSE. Even though Kayla has been involved in this programme from its conceptual stage, she still attended ministry courses to get information on the latest developments or to learn about new teaching strategies. She had attended courses on sand and water play and action and movement. She had also attended short courses on therapies to soothe the students. Besides these courses, she also browses the net to find out details about new terms or disabilities she hears about for the first time. For instance,

one of her previous year's student Hua Hua was diagnosed with Kabuki syndrome, which Kayla had never heard before.

Not only was she interested in acquiring information, but also generous about sharing it with everyone. She printed out the information from the internet and kept them in the particular student's file so that it will be passed on to the next teacher. She is also regarded as a fount of information on PSE and primary special education. Parents regard her as confidante, counsellor and baby sitter. Her relationship with the teachers and the parents gave me the impression that she had been with the Rivers Primary School all her life instead of just three years.

The Teacher Assistant

Medha, Kayla's petite teacher assistant, is in her mid-thirties. A vocal person she took immediate action such as writing letters to the department when she discovered something lacking in the quality and/or quantity of ingredients supplied for students' meals and teaching materials. Caring and loving, she was firm with the students. Medha reached school early to prepare the ingredients and cook a meal for the students. She preferred to cook because taking the students to the canteen was time and energy consuming as they had to manage eight students between the two of them and it was quite a distance from classroom to canteen. They had to hold Zhi who liked to run and carry Hanis who could not walk, not mentioning the others who may wander away if and when opportunity presented itself. So Medha said that it was less hassle to cook and eat in class.

By 8.15, Medha had prepared the meal and she could sit with Kayla and the students for Morning Circle. She usually sat between Jary and Hanis and helped them do the actions for the songs. She also helped Kayla with the students during the Physical and Cognitive Activities. During break she served the food and instructed

the students to lay the table. Both Kayla and Medha ate with the students. After break she stacked the dishes in the washbasin, cleaned up the dining area and was ready to help the students dress up after their bath. She washed the dishes after the students had gone home. Like Kayla, she stayed until four in the evening to prepare teaching aids and to do the paper work for ordering the grocery.

Besides cooking and cleaning, she helped Kayla in planning and implementing classroom instruction. Knowing that some of the students responded better to Medha, Kayla enlisted her help when instructing these students. She was neither afraid nor shy to ask Kayla questions regarding the students and the instruction that Kayla provided. Besides educating her in the ways of the CSN, Kayla also asked for Medha's help when recording assessment results. During Kayla's short absence from the preschool a few times a year, Medha had to manage the students all by herself; cooking the meals and helping the students with the work that Kayla had prepared.

The Students

There were five students in Kayla's preschool during the first phase of data collection. One of the students left the preschool in April but four others had joined so the enrolment was eight during the second stage. Table 4.1 provides details of the students in Kayla's classroom. The details include the name, age, gender, type of disability, the level of the students, a general description of their character and behaviour. The disability of each student was stated in the medical report. However, the level of each student, whether it was high, moderate low or functioning; and the description of their character were stated by the teacher.

Table 4.1

Information about the students in Rivers Preschool

Name	Age	Gender	Type Of Disability	Level/ Characteristics	Behaviour
Shah	6	Female	Down syndrome	High functioning. Has speech. Able to work independently and follow instructions. During the second phase: Able to do more difficult cognitive activities without much help Interest: nothing specific	Sometimes moody. Likes to get her way and tries to control the other students.
Danny (left in April, 2007)	6	Male	Autism	High functioning. Has speech but more of echolalia. Cannot work independently although he can do the work. Needs frequent prompts. He can follow instruction. Interest: nothing specific	Always smiling. But closes his ears when Zhi Kai screams.
Jary	6	Male	Epilepsy	Low functioning. No coherent speech just babbling. Sleeps when there is work to do. Wakes up when food is given. Gets fits occasionally. Started to walk five months before turning six. Not balanced on his feet. During the second phase: Steadier on his feet. Interest in food reduced. Still babbling and unable to do cognitive work. Interest: food	Infantile.

Table 4.1 (*continued*)

Name	Age	Gender	Type Of Disability	Level/ Characteristics	Behaviour
Zhi	6	Male	Autism	<p>Moderate functioning.</p> <p>No coherent speech but is heard saying sounds most of the times especially when he is angry. Has to be forced to do work most of times. Sometimes he can do matching activity without help.</p> <p>During the second phase: He bathes the minute he comes to school. Not attached to his water bottle and does not pick his nose anymore. More amenable to instructions.</p> <p>Interest: water</p>	<p>Smiles occasionally.</p> <p>Has a severe behavior problem. Screams, self injurious and kicks. There are short periods of calm behaviour when he walks around the class, mumbling to himself in between tantrums.</p> <p>Attached to his water container. Likes to pick his nose and lick.</p> <p>During the second phase: Tantrums have reduced in intensity and duration.</p>
Jordan	7	Male	Autism	<p>Moderate functioning.</p> <p>No speech at all. He is able to follow instructions but cannot work independently. Has to be prompted all the time.</p> <p>During the second phase: Does not follow instructions nor does his cognitive activities.</p> <p>Interest: nothing specific</p>	<p>Looks frightened all the time. Usually quiet with sudden bursts of tears.</p> <p>Tantrums, crying and screaming most of the times; hitting the teacher and other students with his head. Tantrums start when teacher tells him to do work; disturbing him from his 'dreams'</p>

Table 4.1 (*continued*)

Name	Age	Gender	Type Of Disability	Level/ Characteristics	Behaviour
Vince (joined in May, 2007)	6	Male	Autism	Moderate functioning. No speech. Able to follow instructions and do cognitive activities with little help. Interest: animals.	Quiet. His hand is rough and has scars because he likes to bite his hand
Deni (joined in June, 2007)	6	Male	ADHD	High functioning. Has speech. Is able to complete words when teacher says them. Is also able recognize regularly used printed words. Interest: computer	Always calls teacher to read to him.
Hanis (joined in June, 2007)	6	Male	Cerebral Palsy	Moderate functioning. Says two words only, mother and bye. Needs help with cognitive activities. He can only crawl. Interest: nothing specific	Sulks for short periods when he is not allowed to be the first to do the activity. Frightened when Gordon throws a tantrum.
Mint (joined in August, 2007)	6	Female	Down syndrome	Moderate functioning. Incoherent speech. Interest: computer	Quiet.

Planning Instruction

Kayla's planning comprised writing the lesson plan, preparing the teaching materials and arranging the physical setting of the classroom. Students who attended her preschool received instruction from the very first day because Kayla had prepared her lesson plans. Being a computer savvy person, she had saved lesson plans and pictures that she had used over the last two years to use them again.

However, she continued making changes to the lessons according to the students' level and ability because of her belief that every child and every batch of students was different. Even after the careful planning, if she found that the students were not able to do the activity, she was always prepared to make the necessary changes while teaching.

She believed in planning what she could accomplish in the classroom with her students. So her planning comprised achieving the specific objectives she had set for students as well as for the activities. She was constantly planning to "...adapt whatever resources I have to achieve the objectives I have set." (T1/INT/10). Kayla's planning on paper was far less compared to the mental planning that went on in her head. Planning, according to Kayla not only involved writing the daily lessons on paper but also having a mental back-up if and when the original plan could not be carried out due to changes in the weather or the students were not prepared for that activity. She also had to plan if the students came to the preschool early, whether to give them breakfast or let them play with their favourite toy; or if they left late, then she allowed them to watch a CD on cartoons. In addition, she had to plan for days or weeks when she went off to give or attend courses.

Kayla went through books and the internet on Early Childhood Education and Special Education to help in planning lessons for her students. She brought in the information gained from the various courses she had attended over the years. Above all her two-year experience in teaching preschoolers with CSN had laid a strong foundation from which she drew continuously when planning instruction for the current year. The same experience had taught Kayla that it was better to teach the students from the day they first came to school, to instil a structure in the students' experience of classroom instruction. She said that if she let the students play as she assessed them one by one during the first week of school, as suggested

by the Special Education Department in the MOE, the students, "...will be going all over" (T1/INT/12). She feared that allowing students to do what they wanted during the first week would make it difficult to get the children to learn because they had been without direction during their first week in preschool. She preferred to teach the students from day one and assessed them while teaching. Hence classroom instruction for Kayla started with the planning stage.

Planning for instruction in Kayla's classroom focused on lesson plan, activities, teaching materials and the arrangement of the physical setting. She adhered to specific criteria some of which were similar for lesson plan, activities and teaching material. The detailed explanation of the focuses and the criteria for planning instruction in Kayla's classroom follows.

Planning Based on Curriculum Specification

The pillar for planning instruction was the components and the LOs of each component in the Curriculum Specification. The lesson plan, activities and teaching materials were based on specific LO whereas the physical setting was based on the components in general.

Kayla prepared two documents as reference for implementing instruction, the lesson plan (Appendix H) and the web (Appendix I). Her first step in planning lessons was to decide on a theme. Her second step was to design activities for each of the nine components in the Curriculum Specification. The activities were stated in the web, which was also printed out from the computer. The web comprised a few circles with the theme written in the circle which was in the middle. The rest of the circles were devoted to the nine components, one in each circle. Names of activities designed for each component was written inside the circles. Kayla had a repertoire of activities for each of the components. So matching the component to the activity

or the activity to the component was something that came naturally to her over the years. A new web was prepared only when she had carried out all the activities that she had designed, a process which might take two or three weeks.

Then she selected the LO that could be taught through the activity from the components in the Curriculum Specification. She wrote the LO for each component in the lesson plan she prepared daily. The daily lesson plan was a single sheet of computer print out based on a format specified by the MOE. The teaching materials used for the activities were also written in the lesson plan.

Both the lesson plan and the web complemented each other. The LOs for the activities stated in the web were written in the lesson plan. Kayla asserted that one activity could be used to teach a few LOs stated in the Curriculum Specification. But not all the LO found in one activity were written in the daily lesson plan due to space constraint. However, Kayla stressed that the activities must contain the LO from the Curriculum Specification because she regarded it as the IEP for all her high functioning students. She said that by including the LO from the Curriculum Specification into the activities; she had taught the students all that they needed to know at the age of six. Previously Kayla first selected the LO she wanted to teach and then look for activities that could be used to teach them. But she found it easier to design the activities according to the themes and then look for the LOs that could be achieved using that activity. A copy of Kayla's web for 'Vegetable' (Appendix I) shows the activities she intended to carry out during implementation.

Figure 4.2 explains the steps involved in Kayla's lesson plan preparation for daily classroom instruction. Planning also comprised preparing the relevant teaching materials to teach the LO.

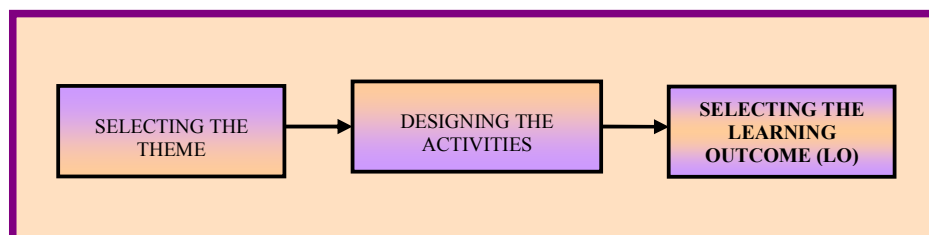


Figure 4. 2. Steps involved in preparing lesson plan in Rivers Preschool

The physical setting was divided according to the list of centres and areas stated in the Curriculum Specification. Figure 4.3 gives a bird's eye view of Kayla's classroom. The physical setting of the classroom and how it is related to instruction is discussed in detail on page 126. As per the suggestions in the Curriculum Specification, Kayla's classroom comprises centres for, Technology (C), Language and Communication (D), Spiritual and Moral (E), Creativity and Aesthetics (G), Cognitive and Manipulative (H). Centres which she had included in her preschool were Self-Help Skills (B) and Resource Centre (F).

Activities and Teaching Material based on Themes

Kayla's planning emphasised on designing activities to teach the LO stated in the Curriculum Specification but all the activities were based on a single theme. She said, "I try my best to whatever activities I do I go back to the theme," (T1/INT/12), because she felt that the themes "...help you to more focus." (T1/INT/33), when choosing activities for teaching the students.

So the selection of the theme came before designing the activities. In order to select the themes she asked herself questions such as, "...what are the themes that I want to cover? What are the themes that I want to touch first?" (T1/INT/28).

The themes Kayla wanted to cover and that which she wanted to teach first, "... had to be simple and more to their daily life..." (T1/INT/28). The application of these two criteria was obvious in the way she selected themes for the whole year. Her first theme was 'Myself', and then she included the students' family in the theme 'My Family'. Then came 'Parts of the Body', where she introduced the students to the different parts of the head and limbs. The themes that came after the students were introduced to parts of their body were things found around them such as 'Things in the Classroom', 'Vegetable', 'Animals' and 'Food'. So the theme that she "touches first" started with the students themselves as the initial focus, something simple and easy for them to connect with; and then moved outwards to include family and environment.

Besides being simple these themes were also closely related to the students' daily life. They were taught to recognise their names, their family members and become aware of certain parts of their bodies. Likewise, they were also taught to identify and handle some things in the classroom during 'Things in the Classroom'. Vegetable and food items were brought to the classroom to let students touch and taste, besides watching how the food transformed from one state to another when cooked. The things used during these themes were taken from the students' environment, something they were familiar with and could touch and feel. Having selected the theme she went on to design appropriate activities.

As stated earlier Kayla's goal was for students to experience all the activities she had planned for a specific theme before going on to the next theme. She said that she would:

...drag on the same theme until I actually cover all whatever activity I want to do for this theme, until I am able to cover that these children have experienced all the activities like playing with dough, mixing the *cucur* (dough), and then decorating the cake, I might repeat the same thing. (T1/INT/28)

Linking the activities to the theme of the week was important for Kayla. Her contention was that the 'link' would facilitate skill acquisition among the students. For instance, when the theme was 'Food', she sang songs about food; her matching activities were done with food and pictures of food; her physical activities involved carrying and holding food; her cognitive activities, such as writing and counting also involved food. When the theme was 'Things in the Classroom' Kayla sang songs related to things in the classroom; had the students holding and passing stationery; matched pictures of stationery to the real object, had the students writing the first letter 'T' of things in the classroom such as television; made the students pick stationery scattered on the floor; and for art they even made a pencil out of paper.

The copy of the web (Appendix I) designed by Kayla shows the relationship between the theme 'Vegetable' and the activities grouped according to the components. During the Language component students were required to become acquainted with a few types of vegetable; in the Cognitive component the students had to sort the same vegetable according to two colours, green and red; in the Moral Education component students learnt about washing the vegetable; for Art the students did printing with cut vegetable; for Music they sang songs related to vegetable.

Sometimes she found it difficult to relate the activity designed to teach a specific LO to the theme of the week; so she related it to a theme she had already covered with the students because she did not like to bring in, "...something that

they are not familiar with” (T1/INT/12). She preferred to teach the LO using the content from the theme the students were familiar with. Kayla asserted that relating all the activities to a single theme was advantageous for both the teachers and the students.

As a teacher she found that by linking her activities to a single theme, her teaching was focused. She opined that “...you don’t go so like going nowhere.” (T1/INT/33), when there was a theme to provide a direction for designing the activities. The theme created a boundary for the content used in teaching. Different activities were used to teach different LO but linking the activities to a theme ensured that the content remained the same. For example, during the theme ‘Vegetable’, she carried out matching activities using the pictures of brinjal and tomato and she used the same content words brinjal and tomato for the writing activities. Automatically the theme imposed a boundary for the content so that she did not include other words although the activities varied. The LO in the Curriculum Specification were general, for instance the LO “2.5.1 *Menamakan benda maujud di persekitaran*” (To name the real objects in the surrounding). Kayla gave it a specific form by attaching that LO to a theme. When she is doing the theme ‘Things in the Classroom’, the real objects would be the things found in the classroom so students would be taught these names. On the other hand, if the theme was ‘Vegetable’, then the students would be learning the names of vegetables.

She believed that confusion among students could be reduced if all the activities of the various components were related to the same theme. During the theme ‘Parts of the Body’, Kayla introduced the various parts of their body to the students. Then the students matched two sets of pictures based on parts of body. When Kayla wanted to teach numbers she still used the theme ‘Parts of the Body’. She told the students one nose, two eyes, and two ears. Likewise when the theme

was 'Food', she used jellies to teach them the concept of number; and during 'Things in the Classroom', she used pencils and books. She did not want to bring in objects like pencils, rulers and erasers to teach numbers while doing 'Parts of the Body' because she felt that, that would confuse the students.

She also believed that activities which were related to the same theme would help students better understand the concepts because they were already familiar with the content. The names of the objects used for a specific theme would be reinforced because they were repeatedly used for all the activities carried out for that specific theme. For instance, when the theme of the week was 'Vegetable', Kayla introduced the names of vegetables during the Morning Circle in her songs. Then she did matching activities using two sets of laminated pictures of the same vegetable. This was followed by physical activities with the same vegetables. Finally she had cognitive activities such as writing numbers and language activities such as writing letters all based on the vegetable she had introduced. So the students' concept of the vegetable was reinforced when the same vegetables were used repeatedly. In fact, the high functioning students were able to identify and name the vegetable.

The teaching materials she used during the activities were also related to the theme that she had selected for the week. The songs she sang during Morning Circle were related to the theme; the materials she used during the physical activities were related to the theme; and the worksheets she prepared for the cognitive component were related to the theme. As explained earlier, Kayla was always on the lookout for teaching materials related to the themes suggested for the Preschool Programme. She purchased coloured stickers of fruits and vegetables. She saved theme-related coloured pictures in her hard disk to print out when she needed them. Sometimes themes were selected according to certain occasions. For instance, if there was a birthday during that week, the theme was food; and the teaching materials were cake

and cake decorations. After the students had decorated the cake, they celebrated the birthday.

The worksheets were also prepared with the theme in mind. The students did not learn the letters in the alphabetical order, but in the 'easy to difficult to write' order. So the first letters that they learnt were 'T', 'K'. For example, if the theme was 'Parts of the Body', then the students learnt words such as '*Tangan*' (Hand) and '*Kaki*' (Leg). So she prepared worksheets with pictures of hand or leg, and the students had to write the letter 'T' or 'K'. On the other hand if the theme was 'Things in the Classroom', then the worksheet would have a picture of a television but the letter would still be 'T'.

Activities were Meaningful to Students

Kayla made sure that the activities were meaningful to her students although she hoped to achieve specific objectives through them. For instance, her objective for the activities during the second half of the year was to concentrate more on academics, preparing students for Primary one. She wanted them to learn numbers, but she made the activity meaningful by giving them real objects from their environment like jellies and chocolates to count. She taught shapes using bread and biscuits. She also had an activity where she allowed two of her students Mint and Vince to spread the coconut jam that she put on the slice of bread with a butter knife. Then she put another slice on top and showed them a square. After that she cut the square into two triangles. Before she allowed them to eat the bread she repeated the shapes and made them count the slices of bread.

She wanted them to see how raw materials were combined to make something that they could eat. Although she was not sure if they understood how it happened, she wanted them to see the transformation. She brought them near the

stove to see the dough that they had mixed earlier transform into fried food as she scooped it into the hot oil and then took it out when it was cooked. She said, “I just want them to see the transformation of the food you know so that is why I let them stand on the chair and just look at what I am doing” (T1/INT/28). The students watched attentively as Kayla fried the dough. Later they ate the ‘*cucur*’ (local cake) they had helped to make. Even activities like making scrap books were started from scratch. The students had to string the pages together with a ribbon.

Sometimes activities were made meaningful by integrating the LO. For instance, prewriting activities like joining dots were made meaningful by turning it into a matching activity, where students matched theme-based identical pictures placed at either end of the dotted line. Kayla said, “As well as I try to relate it to the, to my theme because no point joining dots here giving them no meaning, right?” (T1/INT/12). She stated that just joining the dots was not a meaningful activity. Another instant of integrating LO to make the activity meaningful was when she taught the concept hot and cold. She made it meaningful to the students by asking them to pick out the coloured beads inside the hot and cold water and sorting them according to the colours instead of just putting their hands into the bowls of warm and ice water. She planned the activity like that because, “The lesson must be meaningful. No point just putting their hands into the hot and cold water. I integrate the cognitive skills with the hot and cold concept” (T1/INT/07).

Kayla said the activities were meaningful if they could create certain awareness or feelings of enjoyment within the students. During ‘Parts of the Body’, she had students step on water colour and then onto a piece of manila card. Kayla stated that since some of her four students were unable to vocalize the word feet, this activity would have at least made them become aware of their feet. Kayla’s Physical

activities with the parachute and the gym balls were also meaningful because they always made the students happy.

She said it was difficult to teach concepts such as sink and float, day and night because she could not design activities which would help the students learn the concepts in a meaningful way, so she preferred not to teach them. According to Kayla, showing pictures and switching off lights did not convey the meaning of day and night to these students. She would rather not teach than teach them the wrong concept.

Activities Designed to Fulfil Objectives

Kayla always mentioned that she made sure her planning considered the varied abilities, disabilities and performance levels of her class. Her activities were based on objectives she had set for her students and the activities. Like her focus on integration, these objectives were also not written anywhere; they were something she told herself as she planned and carried out her lessons. She stated that her objectives for the first half of the year were to help the students to get to know the class and the routine of the lesson; so she planned her activities to cater for this objective. Whereas, her objective for the second half of the year was to prepare the students especially the high functioning group for primary one so her activities were more academic in nature.

Besides this Kayla also had specific objectives for certain activities. Her actions during the implementation of the activity were ruled by the objective she had set for the activity. The following activity took place for Closing Circle during the theme, 'Things in the Classroom'. Kayla instructed Shah and Danny to stand up and carry out actions according to the lyrics of a song. Danny puts his left foot out when in the lyrics it was right foot. Kayla did not correct Danny's mistake although she

was aware of it because her objective for that activity was to let the students enjoy themselves. According to her, “If the objective is enjoyment then when you correct, it disrupts the enjoyment. If the objective is to teach left and right, then you correct” (T1/INT/15).

Educational toys were purposely placed on open shelves to allow students to reach out and take what they wanted to play so that they enjoyed being in the classroom. Even books were kept in shelves which allowed for easy access. Kayla encouraged them to play with the toys whenever they were free. Kayla, through observation had noticed what the students liked so she always gave toys that interested them. Shah and Danny were usually given puzzles; Jary and Jordan got clothes pegs or tongs to pick up objects to practice their fine motor skills. Vince liked to play with animals, Deni liked computer games. Hanis liked the ball. Jary liked to use the scribble board. The songs she sang or played during Morning and Closing Circles were selected to provide enjoyment. According to Kayla, she played songs she felt were, “very interesting for the children to follow” (T1/INT/05). These were songs that she had got from her daughter’s music school. She had attended the music classes with her daughter to learn the actions for the songs.

Kayla had specific objectives for students involved in the same activity. An example of such an activity is making a scrap book for ‘Things in the Classroom’. Four of her students, Shah, Danny, Zhi and Jary were involved in this activity. The objectives for high and moderate functioning students like Shah, Danny, and Zhi were to identify the pictures and make the scrapbook by pasting pictures. But, the objective for low functioning Jary was different. He had to improve his fine motor skills so Kayla used this activity to improve his skills through the act of pasting the pictures in the book. So all the four students did the same activity but their objectives for doing the activity were different. She said:

I am using the same activity but I have different objectives for each child. Since my theme is Things in the Classroom so I use those pictures to teach the skill, pasting instead of using any other pictures and might as well let them paste and make a scrapbook even though they don't understand or realize what they are doing. (T1/INT/20)

User Friendly Teaching Material

According to Kayla, "Preparing material is also an important component of classroom instruction" (T1/INT/12). She gave ample time and attention to preparing teaching materials because she used them extensively during implementation of instruction. Pictures, worksheets, toys, musical instruments, songs, educational software, books, gym balls, puppets, and real objects are some examples of the teaching materials that Kayla often used. Some of these things were supplied by the authorities; and some were bought or prepared by Kayla. Some examples of teaching materials that she bought were food items such as vegetable, cake decorations, and CDs that had theme related songs. The materials that she prepared were picture cards and worksheets. The pictures were prepared and reused with every batch of students but the worksheets were specially prepared for each batch.

Kayla made teaching material out of things that people threw away. Parents were always requested to bring books and boxes. Kayla collected used refrigerator door magnet stripes, egg holders, cartons, old magazines and books, cereal and other boxes for preparing teaching materials. The door magnets were stronger than the commercial ones she used for holding charts on the magnetic board and she could break them into the length she wanted. The egg holders were used to mix colours during art work. She opened the cereal boxes and cut the different sections and kept them as cards to be used for pasting pictures from the books, magazines and

computer before laminating them; as photo frames to put up the students photographs on the board; and as pages for scrap book. Even parts torn from carton boxes were used for art work and for the students to run their hands on it to feel the texture of the ridged edges. She also used plastic bathroom mats for the students to feel the texture as they walked on them.

Coloured pictures of various sizes were used extensively in activities. But using the pictures from the magazines for preparing matching exercise worksheets consumed a lot of time because they had to be cut and pasted so she preferred to use stickers. Kayla managed to get small sized cheap stickers according to the themes that she taught while on her trip to Thailand. She was glad to have obtained these stickers because she could save a lot of time since she made many copies of the same worksheet. Her enthusiasm for making suitable teaching material was challenged by time constraint so, “Over the years I have saved a lot of pictures from print artist. So I just have to print them out when I need them. I use a colour printer” (T1/INT/21). She was always devising cost effective and time saving ways for making suitable teaching material.

Bearing cost in mind Kayla always tried to buy multi-dimensional teaching materials, so that she could use them for various activities. For instance, the Vikki Stick, a long and flexible stick which according to Kayla was “cheap and useful” and it could be used for many purposes such as “prewriting skills, for cognitive and physical activities, for hand-eye coordination” (T1/INT/05). She added that its rough texture was good to feel for the students. She used it to help Jordan and Jary trace shapes. Shah was able to handle the Vikki stick by herself to trace the shapes. Kayla and Medha also helped Jordan, Shah and Jary to use the Vikki stick to match pictures from one end of the black sugar paper to the other end. Another multi-dimensional teaching aid was the three-panel flannel board which Kayla had bought.

She moved the boards to and fro effectively to reduce the size of the area and distraction. The flannel boards also came in useful during matching activities when they offered a large area for the students to stick the pictures. Moreover the board could be used on both sides.

Quality and safety were important criteria where teaching materials were concerned. The materials she got from the authorities were not according to the specs mentioned in the program. She quipped, “For example the specs say a drum, the actual big one, but the one I got, in fact, two from the Two Ringgit shop.

There it is broken.” (T1/INT/05), Kayla also lamented that, “Many of the things are of low quality and some are even dangerous. They are too small that children can swallow them.” (T1/INT/05). Wooden toys chipped easily. So these materials were packed, sealed and put away in the storeroom.

On the other hand she was proud to say that the parents had donated or sponsored a lot of teaching materials over the years as the extract below explains. Last year I had one parent who used to give me RM350 every month to buy things. You see the horn balls over there; they are the original ones, from Italy. They also gave me a complete set of Cinderella and the Seven Dwarfs. The mothers stitched the cushions for the mattress, even the mattress was donated by one of the parents.

(T1/INT/05)

Some of the materials prepared by Kayla had a couple of purposes. For example, the decorated card with the photographs of the students on the soft board also had small pieces of rectangular pink paper beneath each photograph with the name of the student, birth date and parent contact number. Kayla and Medha did not

have to open the files in the middle of the lesson during an emergency. It also reminded them of the students' birthdays which were celebrated in the classroom.

Worksheets Catered for Diverse Abilities

Besides educational toys Kayla used a lot of worksheets. According to Kayla "... my worksheets I do not print, photostate directly from workbook. I get the ideas, I try to prepare it" (T1/INT/05). After school hours both Kayla and Medha were busy preparing various types of worksheets for each student based on the theme of the week and according to their level. She opined that, "...the one you prepare you cater for individual child, the one in the market cater for all levels." (T1/INT/12/28). Furthermore Kayla believed that by giving students material prepared to suit to their needs, the students, "can improve better" (T1/INT/28), as compared to, "you take the one in the market and just give it to the child" (T1/INT/28). As an example she showed me a book where there were worksheets with outlines of fruits done with dots that students had to join to form the complete picture of the fruit. Kayla said that it would have been easier for her to get her students to join the dots after photocopying the worksheet; but she preferred to do her own worksheet based on the idea in the book. Her worksheets were colourful and two-dimensional. She used white and black sugar paper and colourful pictures printed from the computer. She had worksheets for pre-writing skills such as joining dots, writing letters and numbers, matching, providing texture, collage, and for colouring.

The worksheets that she used for writing letters and numbers were just A4 paper with rows and columns of empty square boxes. She wrote the alphabet or number that she was teaching the student in one box. Then she used a highlighter to write the alphabet or number in the other boxes. Students went over the highlighted alphabet or number with a pencil to write the alphabet or number. The number of

boxes with highlighted alphabet or number depended on the level of the student. She left some boxes empty for better students like Shah and Danny to write the alphabet or number on their own. So the worksheet was individualized.

Then there were worksheets where she had pasted sandpaper of varying degrees of coarseness for the students to feel the texture. Quite often Kayla used these worksheets with Jary to stimulate his fingers. Sometimes Jordan was also told to rub his fingers on the sand paper. Then she had worksheets with photocopied pictures which she used for collage work with the students.

Physical Setting Aids Structure

The students spent four hours a day, five days a week in the classroom. As far as Kayla was concerned, the setting was an important component of classroom instruction. She was in fact one of the officers involved in designing the BRIEF project which comprised the preschool building specification and what went into it. So when she saw her preschool for the first time, she knew it was not built according to the BRIEF specification. That and various other problems forced the State Education Department to demolish the old one and build the new one currently used by Kayla. According to her:

The classroom setting is very important because the child has to be structured in a way. A good classroom setting then the child knows where they should go for whatever activities. So you kind of reduce the stress level and also the disciplinary problem in a way. Because they notice that this is the place for eating, this is the place for learning, this is the place for singing.

(T1/INT/28)

She believed that CSN needed to have structure in its life and that the setting should provide it in the classroom. The setting should inform the student what to do and where to do it. So Kayla paid attention to the division of the classroom and the arrangement of things to provide the much needed structure for the students. Figure 4.3 provides a bird's eye view of Kayla's classroom setting. As per the suggestions in the Curriculum Specification, Kayla's classroom comprises centres for, Technology (C), Language and Communication (D), Spiritual and Moral (E), Creativity and Aesthetics (G), Cognitive and Manipulative (H). Centres which she had included in her preschool are Self-Help Skills (B) and Resource Centre (F).

Arranging things in a convenient manner enabled her to provide structure when she carried out activities that involved eight students at the same time. The sand play pit and the water play container were kept in the Self-Help Skills Centre. When Kayla wanted to use the sand pit she dragged it into the bathroom because the students threw the sand around when they were digging for objects buried in the sand. It was easier, more convenient and less time consuming for Kayla and Medha to pour water and wash away the sand on the bathroom floor. The water which splashed on the floor while the students were playing with the toys in the water tub was easily swept away. However, the containers were pushed towards the wall to make way for the students to carry out art work involving water colours, manila card and big brushes. Again it was easy to pour water and wash away the water colour that had spilt on the floor as well as take the students straight into the bathroom for a bath as I observed one day. Kayla did not do much work in the Self-Help Skills Centre because, "Unless sometimes I do it inside (referring to the Self-Help Skills Centre) if real dirty then I will do it inside there but inside is a bit warm you see, the bathroom" (T1/INT/09). Even though it was easier to do the painting work inside the

Self-Help Skills Centre, sometimes she did it outside on the dining table because it could become quite hot inside the centre, which was uncomfortable for the students.

The dining table was also used for art lessons which were done in a smaller scale using art paper and brushes. The students could wash their hands at the basin after the lesson. The cabinet, in which the materials for art such as aprons, colours, brushes of varying sizes were arranged, was next to the dining tables for easy access. The art work done here was displayed on soft boards next to the dining table. Below the boards was a stretch of wall, painted white annually for the students to do finger painting, literally leaving their handprints on the wall until the wall was painted white again for the next batch of students.

A set of three flannel boards was attached to a book case. Kayla manoeuvred the flannel board to block the area where she was conducting Morning Circle from the rest of the room to reduce distraction. The flannel boards were also used to paste pictures and hang charts. While carrying out a matching activity with the students, Kayla realized that they could not reach the top of the board so she quickly dismantled the board and arranged it lengthwise to let students reach any part of the board. The position of a shelf and the teacher's table was changed. The shelf holding the files were kept near the door next to the teacher's table but Kayla had replaced the shelf with a set of drawers and shifted the table. She explained that both Medha and she were tired of rearranging the files that were messed up by the students, especially Zhi so they decided to use drawers instead for convenience. She stated, "...because that cupboard was like they were digging, digging that cupboard, with all the files always thrown everywhere. So we decided to buy like this drawer" (T1/INT/28). The table was shifted to allow students to hide when they felt the need for security like in the case of Zhi.

Just as she plans the position of the things in the classroom for convenience, she also removed things for the same reason. For instance, when Vince joined in the middle of the year, he liked to tear all the books. Looking at him Zhi, Jary and Jordan started doing the same. Jary joined in tearing the books, Zhi arranged them in rows and Jordan began to flip the pages. There were too many papers and half torn books on the floor so Kayla had to pack all the books and put them away because she did not want to spend time clearing the torn papers. Then as days passed she noticed that they were slowly growing out of the habit so she said that she would slowly put the books back on the shelves, which she did towards the last few days of my sojourn in the preschool.

Kayla preferred to keep things in the proper places to allow for structure in the physical setting. For example, the position of the mattress, television, and computer followed certain criteria. She stated that:

The bed must be in the quiet area of the class, with the books. The TV and computer can be in one area because they are noisy. Even the dirty clothes basket you see if I had space in the *Pusat Pengurusan Diri* (Self Help Skills Centre) I will keep them inside. (T1/INT/05)

So the mattress was kept as far away as possible from the noisy appliances. But she had to compromise on the matter of distance between the bed and the computer due to lack of space. She could not find enough space inside the Self-Help Skills Centre for the dirty clothes basket. So her next best choice was to put it under their school bags. Before going home Medha or their parents put the clothes into their school bags for them to take back.

Kayla stressed that, “You don’t change the setting. Too many times. Unnecessarily” (T1/INT/28). So when I noticed the changes she had made to the

setting during the second phase of data collection I asked the reasons. She explained that she had to shift cognitive activities from the round table to the rectangular dining table because:

Ya I find this table more conducive. In a way because if I sit in the centre I can reach out to all my students. The circle table if I sit one I cannot reach out to another student opposite me. That is why now I shift this table rather than using that table. More students and this one easier for me to handle. Don't you see that one if I sit on one side, I cannot reach over to another side. (T1/INT/28)

She had to carry out cognitive activities on the rectangular table because the number of students in her class had increased to eight from the middle of the year. The round table could not seat all eight at the same time. Moreover, as she explained, the round table did not allow her to reach out to her students on the opposite side when she was seated because of the distance, the diameter of the table being about four feet so it was practical for her to change tables. However, she did not replace the round table with the rectangular table at the Cognitive centre, nor did she shift the students to the dining area to do the cognitive activities. She maintained students' familiarity with the area. She said, "But I did change this table, instead of learning there to here but I still pull it toward this area rather than they come here" (T1/INT/28), meaning that the dining table was pulled towards the Cognitive and Manipulative Centre for the Cognitive activities and returned to the Dining area for Break. Kayla also changed the position of her table to allow Zhi to hide when he felt like it so that his stress level would be reduced. She said:

...Zhi always like hiding under the table. Ok you want to hide we let you hide then also like we can see him you see. That's why last time we try to

block here, block there but now you notice that we block less already.
Open, ok let you go. Block, it causes more stress also.

(T1/INT/28)

Zhi liked to hide in dark places, such as the store and under the table. The store was dirty and when he came out of it his arms were covered with rashes so Kayla made it easier for him to hide under the table. Even Danny liked to go under the table. By shifting the table to the new position Kayla made it convenient for them to go in and out and she could also keep an eye on them.

Kayla had to make sure that the furniture was suitable and comfortable for the students in order to provide. Her skill at improvising was evident when one looked at the furniture in the preschool. The television cabinet sent by the State Education Department was originally too high for the students. The students had to incline their neck at 45 degrees to watch the screen so Kayla had the top part sawn off. Now the television screen was at eye level when the students sat on the plastic chairs to watch. The removed portion was used as a platform to put a doll house. Even the tables for the computers sent by the department were too high for the students but luckily the parents volunteered to get suitable tables to put both the computers and a printer. Another example was the two long two feet by four feet dining tables. They were more suitable for adults so Kayla had to saw the legs to accommodate the students' height. She also had to nail the legs which had become loose to make them sturdy for the students to sit. She said:

You see the computer table, the two tables are sponsored by parents, each cost about RM400. The original table was too high for the children. The TV table was also too high. I asked for a table so that the TV will be at eye level for the children when they sit on the floor but the one they sent was too high. So I had to saw one part of it, actually the top part. The top

I use as a side table to put the doll house. Even the dining table's legs I asked my husband to saw to that level so that the children can sit and have their meals. Its original height was that of a normal dining table.

(T1/INT/05)

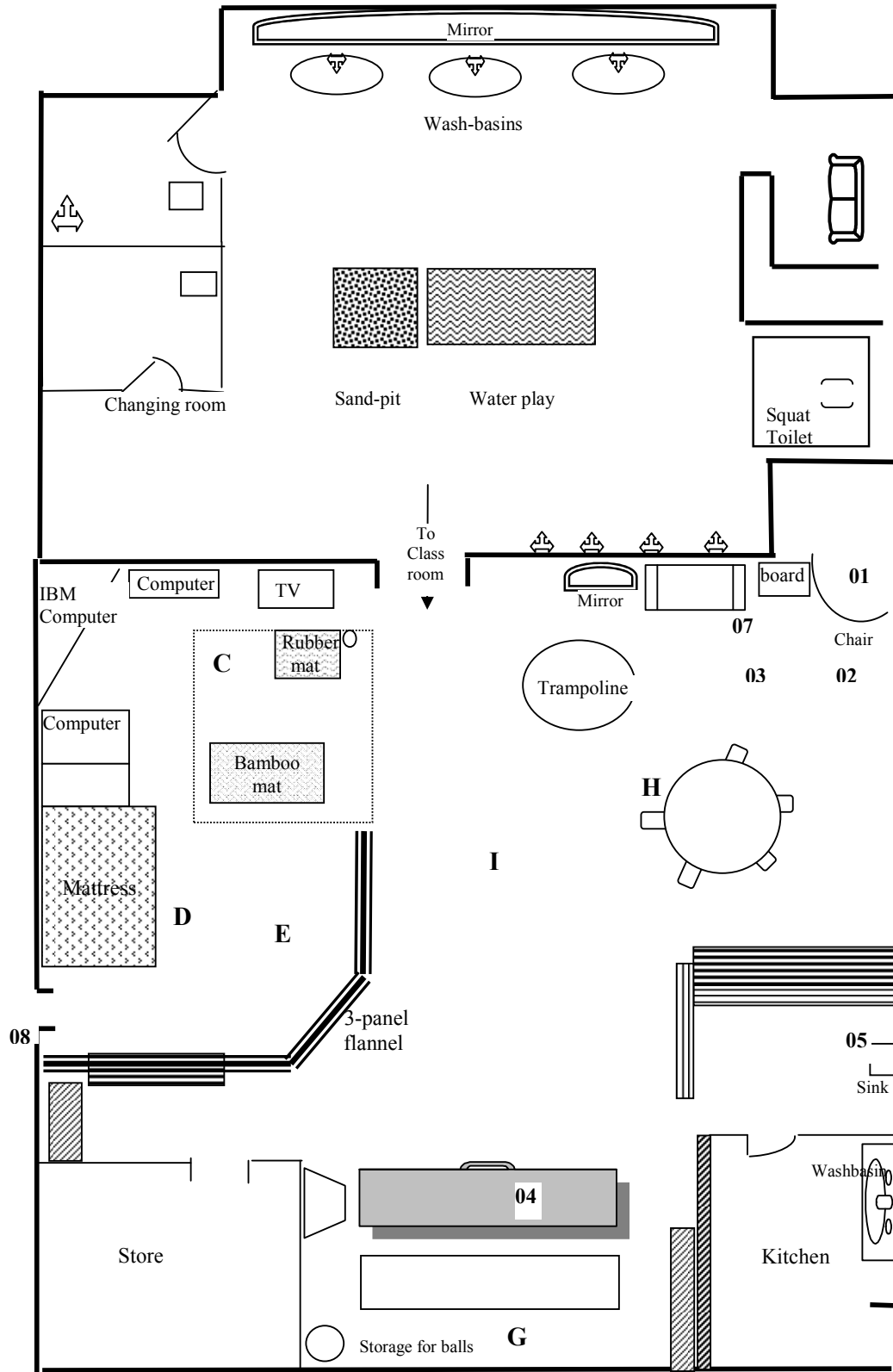


Figure 4.3. Physical setting of Rivers Preschool Classroom

The arrangement of these centres, areas, furniture and the teaching aids were entirely based on Kayla's criteria. However, sometimes she had to make adjustments due to lack of space. Her focus for the setting was to provide a structure, a routine for the students so that, "...the child knows where they should go for whatever activities". Kayla's idea of providing structure for the students started from the time the students came to the preschool. The physical setting as shown in Figure 4.3 was organized in such a way that it lent a hand to establish this structure.

For instance, the students walked in and out of the classroom only through the entrance marked 01, unless they were going to the playground. Then they used the door next to Kayla's table marked 08. After entering the class, the students sat on 02, a chair to take off their shoes and then they put their shoes in a cubicle in 03, the shoe rack. Each student had his/her name on the cubicle. On the wall they were able to see photographs of themselves and their family members on the soft board with a yellow frame and a black background. These photographs were mounted on cardboard frames decorated with cartoon pictures by the students themselves. There were hooks on the bottom yellow frame for their school bags. After hanging their school bags the students were free to walk around or play with toys of their choice until Kayla called them to the Technology Centre, C for Morning Circle.

At the Technology Centre the students sat on plastic chairs for Morning Circle. They sat in the shape of a broad U, with the furthest student sitting an arm's length away from the teacher. When there were too many people walking outside the classroom or if the students seemed distracted, Kayla pulled the three-panel flannel board, to block out the distraction. After the Morning Circle they stacked their plastic chairs and moved to the centre of the classroom. According to Kayla, "The middle of the classroom should be empty for activities" (T1/INT/05). This area, marked I in the diagram, was reserved for Physical activities. Broad red and black

tapes were stuck on the floor in straight and zigzag lines respectively. The students walked on them. There were also red plastic mats joined to one another and laid on the floor. Kayla made them walk on the tape and the mat during Physical activities. Then, whenever they felt like it the students walked on their own. Even students like Zhi, who always had tantrums, walked on the tape while grumbling. According to Kayla, “Even like all this black lines last time my students they come to school they will walk you don’t have to tell them they will walk they know already, somehow they walk they follow” (T1/INT/09). So the students knew without being told that the tapes and the mat were for them to walk on.

After Physical activities, the students went over to the Dining area for their Break. They had their meal at the dining table marked 04, left their plates and glasses in the wash basin in the kitchen and washed their hands in the sink marked as 05 in Figure 4.3. However, the dining table also doubled up as the place to do “messy” art work involving water colour as stated by Kayla:

...if messy I always use the dining table and that’s why I put my pusat creativity estetika as well as ruang makan there because the sink is there you see, so all the art work have to deal with like water colours or what I will do that area plus makan. So normally if they need to wear like their apron or what then that is their work area dirty area. But water colour or art and craft I always do it there (dining table) and writing or what I will do it here (round table). (T1/INT/09)

So the students had no qualms about donning their aprons and sinking their hands into water colours because they had been doing such activities on the dining table.

Their next station is the Self-Help Skills Centre B, to brush their teeth and bathe. They brushed their teeth at the row of sinks marked as 06, passed urine in the toilets next to it and then went to the bathroom to bathe. After bathing, the students stood in front of the mirror to towel themselves dry and wear fresh clean clothes. Kayla or Medha rolled their used clothes and towel into a bundle and gave it to them to put into baskets on the floor under the board, 07. Each basket had a laminated photograph of the student attached to it for easy identification.

Then the students went to H, the Cognitive and Manipulative Centre for Cognitive Activities. Here they sat at a round table for Cognitive activities. Just before going home they went back to the Technology Centre for the Closing Circle. During Closing Circle all of them sit on the mat. After that, Kayla said goodbye to them before they went home through the same door they had entered in the morning. As the students moved from one activity in one centre to the next in another, it became obvious that they were moving in an orderly anticlockwise direction.

Implementing Instruction

Kayla stated that implementing a lesson plan had its hitches even if planned in detail because she could never guess what went on in the students' mind. During the weeks of observation I noticed that Kayla followed the web she had designed for the activities. According to her, carrying out the activities depended on two factors; students' behaviour which dictated how and to what extent the planned lesson was implemented, and the working relationship between the teacher and her assistant.

Kayla's web looked neat, with all the activities divided into specific components; and the daily lesson plan had the components arranged in a hierarchical manner with the time frame, albeit as a guideline. But implementation was neither

compartmentalized nor hierarchical. Kayla's teaching cut across the components with a flexible time frame.

She had developed a specific structure to her teaching of the components which, repeated over time, had developed into a routine that she was keen on establishing with her students. She also believed in providing instruction according to the ability of the students; engaging them in activities; making sure they enjoyed the lessons; and rewarding them for performing well. Kayla assessed the students while providing instruction but it will be discussed in the next section under the sub-title assessment.

Integrated Teaching

Integration of a few LOs or components or themes in one activity was common in Kayla's classroom instruction. Although these integrations were planned they were not written explicitly in either the lesson plans or the web. The lesson plan and the web showed that the components and the LO were neatly compartmentalized. In reality they were not since integration was the order of the day. Stated in Kayla's words, "...you can come up with activities that integrate the components. Sometimes you can integrate more than two components" (T1/INT/20).

Referring to the web for the theme 'Vegetable' (Appendix I), washing the vegetable is an activity under the component Moral Education, for the LO 1.1.1 *Mengamalkan sikap menjaga kebersihan* (To practice cleanliness). When Kayla instructed them to wash and cut vegetables, Language was integrated into the activity; as they cut vegetables, the Physical component was incorporated. So there was an integration of three components in this one activity.

Integration of components was obvious during Morning circle. She started by asking students the name of the vegetable she was holding. When Danny could

not give it, Kayla told him the name and as she gave him the potatoes one by one, she sang a song. Likewise she took the potatoes back from Danny as stated in the extract below:

Then what is this, potato. Teacher sings potato song. Teacher sings, one little, two little, three little potatoes as she gives Danny the potatoes one by one. Then teacher takes the potatoes back one by one again from Danny as she sings. (T1/OBS/22)

Kayla had incorporated the name of the object, potato; numbers one, two, and three; and music in the form of a simple song in this activity. The same activity continued with other vegetable as explained below:

Then teacher gives the brinjals to Danny again and tells him, give Jordan. Then to Jordan teacher tells, give Danny. He doesn't, so teacher tells him again, give Danny. He does. Teacher tells Danny to give Jordan. Then Danny gives Jordan. Then Jordan gives teacher. (T1/OBS/22)

As the activity continued, Kayla told Danny to give the brinjal to Jordan. Students learnt a social skill, to recognize their friends, and they also learnt to follow instructions. This activity also incorporated fine motor skills, as students had to hold and give the potatoes one by one. So she integrated five components in this activity. Physical component: when the students had to handle the vegetable. Cognitive component: with the inclusion of numbers. Language component: when the names of the vegetables were stated. Social component: when the students had to pass the vegetable to their classmates and finally aesthetics component in the form of a song.

Besides learning outcomes and components, themes were also integrated in the activities in a variety of ways. It was consciously done in the songs during

Morning Circle; Kayla always sang songs related to the current theme and the themes that she had already covered with the students. For example, singing songs like '*Angkat Tangan Kanan*' (Lift your right Hand), 'When you are Happy and you Know It' when teaching other themes after she had completed the theme 'Parts of the Body'. She always made it a point to identify and point out the various parts of the students' body as she sang the song during Circle time and while carrying out Self-Help Skills such as brushing teeth, bathing, eating, and putting on and taking off shoes. Things in the classroom were also always pointed out to the students or the students were instructed to take the things and pass to the teacher, the assistant or their classmates during Physical and Cognitive activities. Names of food were always mentioned during Break and family members were also constantly pointed out to the students as they looked at their photographs when they came into the classroom every day. Worksheets of themes covered were also given to the students as revision when they had completed work related to the current theme or if they did not get an opportunity to do it at the time when that theme was taught.

Integration of LO and components was also obvious in the teaching materials she used. The worksheets used for writing alphabets had the alphabets together with a picture of the object whose name started with the letter written on the worksheet, integrating the Language and Cognitive components. Worksheets for matching identical pictures had strips of sand paper connecting them to integrate Cognitive and Physical components. Decorating a birthday cake with the various decoration paraphernalia and coloured Smarties integrated Cognitive, Physical, Social and Emotional components.

Kayla practiced integration across the curriculum, integrating components and themes as she went about teaching the students. During Morning Circle she covered Aesthetics with simple songs for greeting and according to the themes;

Physical through the actions she got the students to do for the songs and while handling the theme-related teaching aids; names of the objects and instructions covered the Language theme and finally making eye contact, calling students by name fulfilled the Social and Emotional component. Likewise Language component is integrated during Physical activities; Physical, Language and Social and Emotional components during Self-Help Skills; Physical and Language components during Cognitive activities; and finally Aesthetics, Physical and Language components during the Closing Circle.

The instruction structure and the integration were established as a routine through daily repetition, a strategy Kayla fervently championed for teaching preschool students with learning disability.

Established Routine

Her delivery was structured, yet flexible. It was structured because she adhered to a set routine. It started with a Morning Circle which she ended with a soft introduction to the theme of the week. Then it was Physical Activity followed by a twenty to thirty minutes break. Then the students went into the Self-Help Skills centre to brush their teeth and bathe. All of them sat down to do some Cognitive Activities after that. The day ended with a Closing Circle and a Goodbye session. It was flexible because the activities for each component depended on the moods of the student. No rigid time limit was set to complete the activities. However, the structure was sometimes altered to accommodate certain activities such as Art which the students did immediately after the Break and before bathing.

The flow of her lesson in Kayla's own words:

...my routine is what I actually plan is after circle time we do some learning first say like pictures or pictures learning or getting to know the

theme more discussing on the theme that we learn and then we go on physical or physical either fine motor or gross motor because sometimes gross motor so some times gross motor they might also get dirty you see so when they do this they eat and then cleaning up and the *pengurusan diri* (self-help skills) comes in so the changing clothes comes in and after that when they are clean and fresh again I can start the group work or activities where they can sit down together because they are all clean already last year I follow this and then like about fifteen minutes or twenty before I end the class again I have another circle time and that's how I end my class every day and towards the circle time they need to shake hands to the friends, all the teachers all the friends so things go very smoothly. They know already by March also they kind of know their routine everyday the same thing goes on and on...

(T1/INT/05)

The stipulated time for the preschoolers was from eight o' clock in the morning up to half-past eleven but most of them were in the classroom by half-past seven. They always came into and left the classroom through the main entrance. As soon as they entered the classroom they sat on the chair placed next to the door, took off their shoes and left them in personalized cubicles in the shoe rack. After hanging their bags on the designated hooks, the students were greeted by both Kayla and Medha. Sometimes the mothers had to prompt the students to greet the teachers. After the traditional Malay greeting "*salam*" while holding the teacher's right hand and kissing it, the students were allowed to do what they wanted until the Morning Circle.

Zhi liked to arrange things like the toothbrush or colour containers. But his interest only lasted for about two weeks before it changed. When I was there he liked to go into the storeroom so Kayla used to keep it closed because he came out covered with dust which caused rashes on his body. Sometimes he would go into a tantrum a few minutes after he had arrived at the preschool and it would continue for about half an hour. Jordan went to the mattress and sat there until he was called to join in the Morning Circle. Jary walked around the classroom unsteadily. Sometimes he held on to a toy which he had picked up from the shelves. Danny who was always the first to arrive had biscuits and a glass of Milo for breakfast. Sometimes he finished the biscuits just in time to join in the Morning Circle but at times he finished eating earlier and played with a big red car in which he could sit. Shah was usually late, coming to school at almost nine o'clock on most of the days, missing the Morning Circle altogether. But on the days she came early, she helped Kayla arrange the chairs and got Jary and Jordan to sit on the plastic chairs for Morning Circle because she considered herself a teacher.

During my second phase, I noticed that the new students Deni and Mint went straight to the computer as soon as they put away their shoes. Vince liked to play with the toy animals. Hanis just sat where his mother had left him. He did not like to crawl around. Zhi had stopped walking around. As soon as he put away his shoes, he took off his clothes, put them on the water play container and went into the red bath tub in the bathroom. He turned on the tap and played in the water until Kayla called him.

By eight in the morning Kayla had arranged the plastic chairs in front of the television in the Technology Centre. Morning Circle was the first activity of the day. While arranging the chairs, she called the students. But sometimes she had to physically bring the students to the area. Kayla sat on a sturdy blue metal chair,

back facing the television but close enough to switch on or off the CD player inside the television cabinet when necessary. The students sat in a broad 'U' in front of Kayla, on lower plastic chairs. The distance between Kayla and the furthest student was just an arm's length. When all of them were seated, Kayla started the session. She had some puppets on the shelves. These puppets had fixed names; the tiger was known as Tiga, the bee was Bamby Bee. Shah, Danny, and Deni were often instructed to take them from the shelf for Morning Circle. Kayla put on the puppets like gloves and used them to greet the students.

Three songs Good Morning, *Selamat Pagi* (Good morning) and *Apa Khabar* (How are you?) were sung every day. Kayla sang the song as if the student was singing it to greet his/her friend. She opined that it was good to warm up the students with songs before starting the day's lesson. She made the students stand one by one next to her but slightly in front with their back facing her so that she could put her right arm around them to hold their right; and her left arm to hold their left. The students were either prompted or helped to move their hands while she sang the song. Holding them like this also prevented students like Zhi from running away. For instance Kayla sang as if Zhi was saying good morning to everyone by inserting everybody's names into the song. She also brought their hands together by way of greeting. Once Zhi had greeted everyone, he sat in his chair and the next student would go and stand next to Kayla to greet everyone. This would go on until everyone had greeted their friends.

Then it was the *Apa Khabar* (How are you?) song, equivalent to asking how are you but in the form of a song. This was done in pairs. If it was Shah's turn to ask her friends '*Apa Khabar*', she would stand next to Kayla and ask her friends one by one and each of them would reply to her, as shown in the following extract:

Shah ‘sings’ to Jary who is seated on the chair, *Apa khabar, Apa khabar, Apa khabar* Jary (How are you? How are you? How are you, Jary?) Kayla holds Jary’s hands when he ‘sings’ the reply *Khabar baik, Khabar baik, Khabar baik*, (I am fine. I am fine. I am fine, Shah). At the same time Kayla makes Jary touch Shah’s face. Then Shah shifts to face Jordan to ask him next. (T1/OBS/02)

After that Kayla sang songs related to the themes such as *Angkat Tangan Kanan* (Lift your right Hand) and *Dua Mata Dua Telinga* (Two Eyes, Two Ears), when she was doing ‘Parts of the Body’; and This is a Ruler, This is a Pencil when the theme was ‘Things in the Classroom’. Usually she repeated these songs during other themes as well. After singing the theme-related songs and while still sitting at the Technology Centre, Kayla conducted simple activities involving the theme which she referred to as “introduction to the theme”. When the theme was ‘Parts of the Body’ this activity comprised matching parts of the body to a figurine. She had the students match pictures, match the real objects to the pictures and pass the objects around. After the soft introduction to the theme, the students stacked up the chairs that they had used and were free for a couple of minutes while Kayla went about organizing the Physical activity which came after the Morning Circle, anytime between 08.45 and 09.00 in the morning. They were usually held inside the classroom but sometimes she did take them out into the playground for a change.

After the Physical activities, when the students were exhausted Kayla gave them a few minutes to walk or sit, and then it was break time. After washing their hands at the wash basin the students sat at the rectangular dining table at about half past nine to eat their meal. Kayla and Medha had their snack together with the

students. Then one by one the students left their empty plates in the sink before Kayla took all of them into the Self-Help Skills Centre and closed the door.

Usually it was brushing the teeth, urinating and bathing after eating but on one or two occasions I observed Kayla doing some art work with them immediately after the break. They bathed after that because the art work was a messy affair involving water colour and large manila cards. But on most of the days it was straight to the Changing Room to take their toothbrush. Shah, Danny, Deni, Mint, and Vince were able to go into the Changing Room to take the small cup which held their toothbrush and paste to brush their teeth. Teacher gave Jary his cup. Zhi had already taken off his clothes and entered the red tub. He did not brush his teeth unless Kayla did it for him. They brushed their teeth at the sink in the Self-Help Centre. Hanis sat on the platform at the tap and brushed his teeth.

Hanis, and Jordan left the room after brushing their teeth and urinating but the others took off their clothes and entered the bathroom where Zhi was playing with the water in a red tub. They scooped water from the tub with a dipper and used the shower cream to have a bath under the teacher's watchful eyes. Kayla instructed the high functioning students like Shah, Danny, Deni and Vince to use the shower cream to clean the various parts of their body that she named. Then they either stood under the shower or scooped water with the dipper to remove the soap and stepped out of the bathroom. At the same time Kayla had bathed Jary and sent him to Medha, who had come to the Self-Help Skills Centre after cleaning the dining area, to wipe and dress him. Shah, Danny, Deni and Vince came out and dried themselves with their towels. Assistance was given to wipe their hair. They could also dress themselves. The dirty clothes and used towels were rolled up and given to them to put inside their baskets. Kayla rubbed some Vicks vapour rub on their noses and for Jary even on his chest. Now the students were clean and fresh for the next

item in the lesson plan which was Cognitive Activity and the time was about a quarter past ten.

Kayla took them to the round table for Cognitive Activities but during the second phase when the number of students had increased to eight, she carried out the Cognitive Activities at the rectangular dining table. The table was pulled towards the centre of the room, closer to the round table. Cognitive Activities comprised prewriting, writing, pasting, and matching. The students were engaged in this until a quarter past eleven.

However, if the students lost interest in what they were doing, were cranky, or tired and sleepy Kayla took them to the Technology Centre at about eleven o'clock for the Closing Circle. During this, unlike the Morning Circle, the students, Medha and Kayla sat on the floor. Kayla sat with her back facing the television and the students sat in a broad 'u' in front of her. Medha sat with the students, usually between Jary and Hanis. The Closing Circle comprised singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and/or reading stories.

When it was almost half past eleven, Kayla put away the instruments and sang the song from the cartoon series Barney, I Love You, You Love Me. As Kayla sang the song, 'I Love You, You Love Me, the students moved nearer to hug her. But, if they did not, Medha pushed them towards Kayla. They hugged and were hugged in return by Kayla and Medha. The lesson for the day was over. The students walked around or played with the toys while waiting for the parents to take them home.

Kayla firmly believed that the students should have structure in their life. Establishing a routine in the classroom was her way of providing this structure. It was important for her to follow the routine because she wanted her students to recognize it. In fact her goal for Jary was just to know the classroom routine. She

had a fixed order in her lesson implementation but once in a while it was changed to accommodate art work. Not only the lesson flow but also the places in the classroom where the activities took place were fixed to accommodate the structure. Her earlier experience had enabled her to set the routine from the day they first came to the preschool for the present batch of students.

According to Kayla, all the students except for Zhi and Jary had become familiar with the routine after some time. Shah who came late quite often went to arrange the plastic chairs for Morning Circle because that was the first activity of the day. Often times Kayla had to explain to her that that activity was over and she had to join in the Physical activity that was taking place when she walked in. She added that a routine once established helped the students know what was going to happen and reduced stress.

However, it was not so with Zhi who only joined the group when Kayla called him or physically forced him to sit with them. The only time he acknowledged the routine was during break when he sat down to eat. At other times he just walked around the class, mumbling strings of unintelligible words. But, Kayla said Zhi's behaviour changed a great deal after she had managed to establish a specific routine for him. As soon as he came into the classroom she made him take off his clothes, roll them and leave them on the covered sand pit and then bathe in the red tub. Once this routine was established, he had fewer tantrums and responded whenever she called him to do some work. Jary on the other hand had to be led from one activity to the next but he went without making much fuss.

The structure only mentioned Morning Circle, Physical activities, Break, Self-Help Skills, Cognitive activities, Closing Circle and Goodbye. But the web and the daily lesson plans had nine components, Physical, Cognitive, Malay Language, English Language, Self-Help Skills, Social and Emotional, Creativity and

Aesthetics, Religious Knowledge and Moral Education. Kayla did not neglect any of the components; she just integrated them with the other components as described earlier.

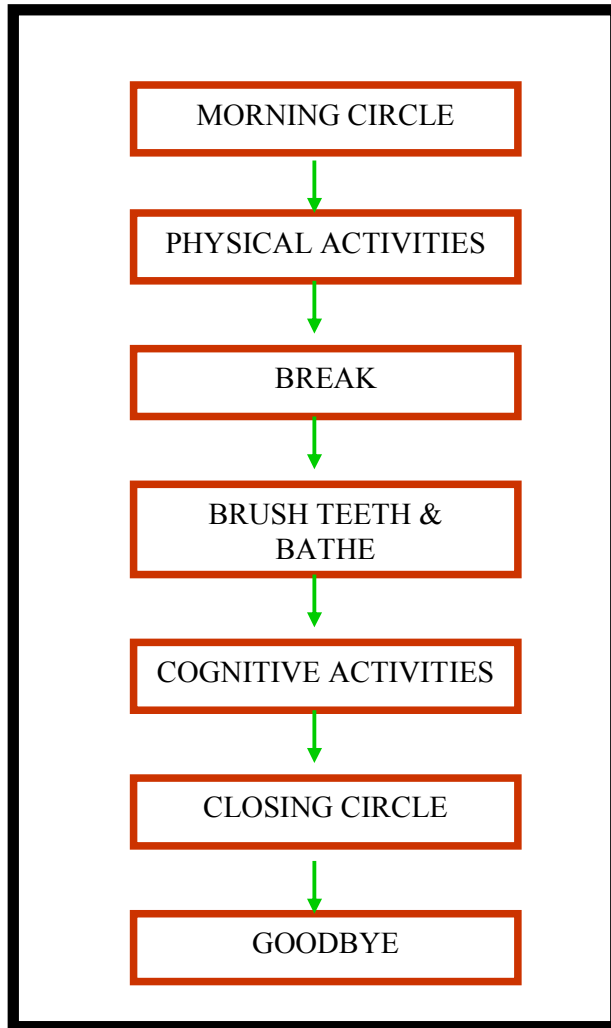


Figure 4.4 Sequence of daily instruction in Rivers Preschool

One-To-One Instruction

One-to-one instruction was provided to assist students achieve the LO stated in the lesson plan. When Kayla had only five students in her class from January to April she did not find it too difficult to provide one-to-one instruction according to the ability of the individual students. Moreover, she only had to cope with Zhi's

temper tantrums because Jordan did not have behaviour problems until towards the middle of the year. But from May onwards she had eight students of varying levels and abilities in her enrolment. There were at least seven students in her class on most days of the week. She had students who urinated and passed motion in the class. She had Zhi and Jordan who usually displayed temper tantrums throughout the day. Despite these inhibiting factors Kayla managed to provide instruction according to their abilities.

There were times such as during Morning and Closing Circles and Physical activities where all the students performed the same activity but made sure that each student performed the activity individually. During Morning Circle, Kayla made sure that the students greeted her and the teacher assistant individually and that they greeted each other by holding hands and saying the names. Sometimes a struggling Zhi, a crying Jordan and a not too sure Jary were held by Kayla to greet their friends. Medha also helped to hold their hands to show them how to return the greetings.

One-to-one instruction was also provided when Kayla carried out activities to introduce the theme towards the end of the Morning Circle. These activities usually involved holding and passing real objects, matching real objects to pictures, matching identical or similar pictures, or placing the pictures in the correct place. During the theme 'Things in the Classroom', Kayla put some laminated pictures of things in the classroom such as chair, book, and table in a row on the flannel board. She had some similar and identical pictures in her hand. She called the students one by one to match the pictures she gave them to the pictures on the board. After singing a song related to the picture in her hand she gave the picture to Jordan and told him, "Jordan put." (T1/OBS/12). She guided him by telling the name of the object in Chinese and by pointing to the picture on the flannel board. Sometimes she held his arm and helped him put the picture next to its twin on the flannel board. The

amount of help given to students during this session depended on the level of the student.

This form of instruction was also evident during Physical activities, high performing students were allowed to do the activity by themselves with minimum supervision but the moderate performing students and Jary, the only low performing student were given one-to-one instruction. In addition these activities were modified slightly to accommodate their abilities.

During Cognitive activities the students still sat in groups, apparently doing the same activity. However, upon closer inspection differences in the work carried out by the students became obvious. Whether the students did the same or different work, techniques providing instruction according to the ability was conspicuous. Kayla knew what each student was capable of doing so she made appropriate adjustments either in the work or in the amount of assistance given to the student.

Kayla had specific aims for the students which she did not write anywhere, but the worksheets she prepared depended on these aims and the students' ability. For instance, Shah and Danny were high functioning so when it came to writing she made them write more letters with less guidance in the form of dots on the worksheet. However, Jordan, Jary and Zhi were required to write only one letter and in addition they got more assistance. She realized that Danny could tell the numbers by rote but she taught him the numbers because she was not sure whether he understood the value of these numbers.

Even beginning to teach numbers depended on the ability of the students. Normally she started teaching her students the concept of numbers much later in the year but seeing that Shah and Danny were high functioning she had already started them. They also did more work compared to Jordan. Like when they were learning the number one, she had many different activities for them. But she was cautious not

to bore them. Students did different work with the same pictures. Shah and Danny wrote the initial letter of the name of the object in the picture but Jordan used the same picture for learning numbers.

Sometimes the amount of work given to the student was reduced. For instance in her planning she had intended to make the students write the alphabets T and K, but only Shah wrote these two letters. The others like Jordan wrote only T or not at all. Again, Kayla did things during the delivery that were not included in the planning. For instance, Shah, Danny and Deni wrote more alphabets than Jordan for any theme. If the student could finish the work, Kayla quickly prepared more for the student. The extract below explains this:

This also for Shah and Danny I am trying to do the repetition, the letter I don't want to change the letters yet so I try to see whichever letter (word) that is that I can use with T and K because they are still in T and K whereas Jordan he still can't do this stage yet as simple as two dots you see so one is the simplest for him but I think he still cannot associate one with one definitely he still can't but here I am looking more on joining the two dots that one also he is not very good because he still drags the first dot until...the end. If I don't stop him then he will keep on dragging his pencil down. (T1/INT12)

Group instruction is used for various activities in the classroom especially during Morning Circle, self-help skills, cognitive and physical activities.

Individualised Instruction

In Kayla's classroom individualised instruction was interspersed with one-to-one instruction according to the ability of the student. The cognitive activities

implemented in the classroom catered for the individual needs of high functioning students like Shah, Danny and Deni, preparing them for special education primary school. They could write letters and digits, recognise numbers, words and pictures. They were also able to bathe and feed themselves. Kayla continued their bathing sessions in school for two reasons. First, so that they could all sit down for cognitive activities clean and fresh after their meal; and, second, because self-help skills came as part of the package. These three students were instructed by Kayla to soap and wash themselves, whereas the others were helped. They were also instructed to get dressed by themselves.

Individualised instruction was also provided to Jary, who although six, had just learnt to walk six months before joining the preschool. His steps were not steady. Losing his balance and landing on the floor were frequent events. So Kayla always engaged him in physical activities to strengthen his muscles. He was also bathed and assisted to put on his clothes. The whole act of putting on trousers was broken down into basic steps and Medha ensured that he mastered one step before going to the next one. Jary was also assisted during meal times. He was taught how to feed himself with a spoon. Since he had the tendency to use both hands, Kayla always held one hand during meals. However, frequent fits and long absence from the preschool did not permit him to go beyond the first couple of steps.

Although Kayla had objectives for providing individualised instruction in certain components for the moderate functioning students, Zhi, Jordan, Hanis, Vince and Mint she was not able to concentrate on these objectives. Kayla's objective for Zhi was to make sure that he could sit at the table or be engaged in an activity continuously for five minutes but until September he had not learnt to sit in one place for even five minutes unless it was to eat. Similarly her objectives for Jordan and Hanis were to improve on their social skills, for Vince was to focus on his

speech skills and self-help skills for Mint. But she was unable to concentrate on these objectives due to time constraint. She added that the number of students in her class was also not conducive; all the students needed her attention. So she opted for the next best solution, which is to provide one-to-one instruction that catered to their abilities. Hence, they were also given academic work in preparation for attending primary special education school the following year.

Sometimes the needs of high functioning students like Shah and Deni could not be catered due to the same reasons. For instance Deni showed interest in books but since he was the only one interested in reading, Kayla could not always concentrate on that activity. According to Kayla Shah, Deni and Danny had achieved all the LOs in the Self-help Skills component but she still had to do them in class because, "...it is part of the package," (T1/INT/12).

Learning through Play

Play as a teaching strategy was used in Rivers Preschool. Shah, Danny and Deni enjoyed their activities at the playground, water and sand play but only Shah was really able to enjoy the pretend play sessions with the dolls and the tea sets. Shah also enjoyed being rolled on the gym balls as Kayla sang nursery rhymes.

Kayla tried to turn the activities during the Morning and Closing Circles into a game. The students took turns to do certain activities or pass objects to each other. Play was also used during Physical activities. They took turns to walk on the tapes pasted on the floor, competed to gather stationary scattered on the floor and pretended to buy vegetables.

The students were taken to the playground at least twice a week for physical activities. Kayla allowed the students to do what they liked at the playground. Shah, Danny and Deni enjoyed the swing, see-saw, slide and the doll house. They ran in

and out of the dollhouse chasing each other. Zhi never played with the rest of the students, preferring to wander by himself. Sometimes he sat at the edge of the playground. He would go into a tantrum if disturbed. Since Kayla and Medha had their hands full catering to the others, they always let him stand at his favourite spot at the corner of the playground. Jordan had to be coaxed to sit on the see-saw since he was afraid of anything new. Sometimes Kayla and Medha helped Jordan and Jary play on the see-saw or slide.

There were two other activities that Kayla carried out at the playground; playing with the parachute and blowing bubbles. Kayla put small balls or air-filled balloons in the centre of a colourful piece of cloth spread on the ground like a parachute. The students and teachers held the edge of the parachute to bring it up and down, at the same time ensuring that the balls and balloons did not fall off. The students enjoyed watching the balls or balloons going up and down. Blowing bubbles was a simple activity enjoyed by the students but not all of them could blow. So Kayla blew the bubbles for them to burst.

Kayla had water play and sand play in her repertoire of activities. These activities were slightly structured. She instructed the students to look for things she had buried in the sand or put into the water. Shah was able to look for the things but the others just played with the sand or water. The students had their bath soon after these activities.

She organised field trips for her preschoolers but only students whose parents could accompany them were included in the trip. I had the opportunity of observing Kayla and Medha take four students to the park across the school during the first phase of data collection. They walked to the fish pond in the park. She gave the students food to feed the fish. Then the students walked back to the preschool. Besides field trips, Kayla also invited mainstream preschool students to come for a

day with their teacher. Kayla organised games which included students from both the preschools. Although it took the mainstream students some time to warm up to their counterparts, they managed to play together since there were presents for everyone.

Kayla also organised birthday parties for the students. Parents provided the cake and some extra food. Everyone stood around the cake. The birthday boy or girl blew the candles and cut the cake. Then they helped themselves to the variety of food laid on the table. Parents always bought the cake and some extra food. Everyone, including Kayla and Medha bought presents for the student who celebrated the birthday.

Students as Active Participants

Students in the Rivers Preschool were always involved in some activity. Students were not allowed to remain quiet or inattentive for long. Jordan who liked to be left alone to continue flapping his hands was always called to pay attention. Sometimes he went into a tantrum when Kayla called him to join the others for Cognitive activities. Zhi's tantrums too did not deter Kayla from calling them to do the work that she had set out for them.

Kayla always called the students' by their names to make them pay attention to whatever she was saying to them. Sometimes she held them and turned their face to make them look at her to make sure that they were involved in whatever activity they were doing. Kayla was always talking to her students. Shah was the only student in the class who was actually capable of holding a conversation but that fact did not deter Kayla from talking to the others. Continuous stream of instructions were aimed at the students to carry out the activities even though Kayla knew that she had to help them do the activity eventually.

Shah, Danny and Deni were able to respond to simple instructions and could carry out activities with minimum supervision, unlike the others who had to be guided closely. The three of them were allowed to play with the toys of their choice after completing their worksheets.

Shah enjoyed dancing and teaching. She regarded Danny, Jary and Jordon as her students. Sometimes Kayla and Medha too became her students, especially when she got into her dancing mood. They humoured her endeavours to be their dancing teacher. During Morning Circle, she liked to help Danny, Jary and Jordan do the action for the songs since she knew all of them. Danny liked to play with a red toy car. He liked to pretend that he was driving the car around the classroom. Deni's interest was in the computer. He could do the letter and number matching activities that Kayla had taught him. However, Kayla had to be careful because he deleted some of her files and printed pages of unwanted information. So, she always had an eye on him when he was at the computer although she was teaching the others.

Repetition was a method that Kayla used to ensure active participation. She capitalised on the repeated activities during Morning Circle to engage the students in the singing and greeting activities.

Repetition

There was a lot of repetition in Kayla's classroom. Specific phrases and songs were constantly repeated to help students recognize transition in the routine. When Kayla sang, 'Sit down and cross your legs' the students knew that they had to go towards the Technology centre for the Closing Circle.

Specific phrases were constantly repeated when giving instructions to the students. When the students came to school in the morning, Kayla called them by name and said, "Jary, *salam cikgu dulu.*" (Jary, greet your teacher). The student

went to Kayla and greeted her. After they had completed the Physical activities she said, “Ok wash your hands.” The students walked towards the basin, washed their hands and sat at the dining table for their meal.

Activities were repeated for students to acquire specific skills. Certain learning outcomes were repeated through activities to help students acquire the skills. For instance, students were encouraged to walk on the red and black tape pasted on the floor as well as on the red plastic mats arranged in a rectangular shape on the floor. Walking on the tape and mat helped them walk in straight lines. Besides that, the texture stimulated the soles of the feet. Joining dots to match identical pictures is a prewriting activity carried out throughout the year but the pictures varied according to the theme of the week.

Music, songs and actions, and content words were repeated for the students to become familiar with them. Kayla used a lot of songs and actions in her teaching. In fact she started the lesson with songs and action during Morning Circle. The first song was always the Good Morning song. The students stood next to her, one by one, and shook hands with the person whose name was mentioned in the song. The second song was the ‘*Apa Khabar*’ (How are you?) song, they had their arms extended and they touched the face of the person they were asking ‘how are you’. Then she put her index fingers, one on each knee, before singing the song ‘Two Little Dickey Birds’.

She also used the students’ names in the song besides calling them repeatedly to pay attention. Jordon, Jary and Zhi were the most repeated names so Shah, Danny, and Deni could say these names easily whenever Kayla pointed to them. Shah could even call these three boys when she wanted them to play with her. ‘Everybody Do This’ was another song where the students performed simple,

repetitive actions such as clapping, jumping, feet stamping, and ear/nose pulling. Even Jary was able to follow after a few repetitions.

Songs that were related to the theme of the week, where specific vocabulary was repeated were frequently used. For instance the song, '*Angkat Tangan Kanan, Golek, Golek, Golek*' (Lift your right hand, turn, turn, turn) required the students to lift their right hand and move it in a circular motion. When the song and the action were repeated, the students were able to do the action independently or with a little prompt after some time. Other theme-related songs repeated with action were, 'This is a pencil, write, write, write', 'Pat a Cake', and 'Squeeze the Lemon'. The song, 'If You are Happy and You Know It' was a hit with the students. Having heard the song a number of times they could associate the words with the actions although they could not sing the song. Vince and Deni pushed their nose forward into Kayla's fingers, held like pincers, when she sang, "If you are happy and you know it pull your nose, pull, pull, *aduh! Sakit nya*" (Oh dear, it hurts). In fact when Deni hurt his nose while bathing he said, "*Aduh sakit nya*" (Oh dear, it hurts.) Incidents like this strengthened Kayla's belief that repetition helped the students improve their learning.

Other songs that were often repeated were 'Everybody Do This Just like Me', 'Two Little Dickey Birds' and 'If You are Happy and You Know It', both in English and Malay. Kayla had taught the students specific actions they could imitate, looking at Kayla or with a little prompting from Kayla or Medha. In addition to songs and actions Kayla also used musical instruments such as castanets for the students to play in time with the music on the CD during Closing Circle.

Content words were also repeated since she adhered to a single theme. For instance, when the theme was 'Vegetable', Kayla showed the students vegetables and introduced them in the songs for Morning Circle. The same vegetables were

used during Physical activities. Then pictures of the vegetables and worksheets with pictures of the vegetables were used for Cognitive activities.

Managing Behaviour during Implementation

Kayla agreed that behaviour management was a must if she wanted the lesson to go on smoothly so that the other students would not be affected. She acknowledged that behaviour problems did increase her stress level and disturbed her teaching. Sometimes she forgot what she had intended to do after handling Zhi's tantrums. But as the years went by and her experience increased she was better able to manage students' behaviour problems. She had different strategies for different students. She studied them during lesson implementation, identified why the problem occurred and came up with appropriate strategies to overcome the problem. It was easier to handle them when there was something they like, opined Kayla. Vince liked animals, Deni and Mint liked computer so by giving them what they liked she managed to keep their behaviour in check.

Managing Zhi was a big problem especially during the first few months. On his bad days, he screamed and hit himself. He would not sit down for even a few minutes while she was teaching nor would he join in the Physical activities. He only sat down for meals. She had tried a couple of ways to make him sit down during activities. She used paper rolled up and tapped it on a chair as she called him to sit for specific activities. But when he sat on the chair nothing was done so he got up and moved away.

Kayla knew that he liked water, so as a last resort she would take him into the bathroom, take off his clothes and pour water. He liked to sit either in or on the red tub and play with the water. When he was called after some time, on some days he came immediately but on other days had to be dragged out, wiped and dressed.

Since he liked to walk about, Kayla used to take him around the preschool before starting the lesson to calm him but he got used to it and expected to be taken around every day, which was not so practical for Kayla so she stopped it. Then she also tried to run with him around the preschool whenever he started screaming and crying. He used to stop crying while running but continued when they stopped running but this also was not a practical strategy. Earlier she was hesitant about letting him play with water but towards the second half of the year she noticed that if he played in the water as soon as he came into the class he was more amenable for the rest of the day. Kayla attributed Zhi's improvement in behaviour to:

Perhaps it is also maturity and getting used to the class environment and his routine is also like he comes to school he bathes. We also don't really *paksa dia sangat* (force him). Kan. *Kita panggil dia datang ok lepas itu you can go* (We call him to come and let him go when he obeys). You come a while, you go. (T1/INT/33)

Jordan had been with Kayla for a year and a half before his behaviour deteriorated. His mother asked Kayla not to tell him to go to the toilet to pass urine but to cane him if he urinated in the class but she refused, telling her, "...if I remember I will ask him to go you know, so that he knows the place to urinate is in the toilet" (T1/INT/03). Kayla never used the cane on her students even if she had to wipe the urine off the floor every day. Sometimes, when she did not have enough time to teach she let Jordan and Zhi do what they wanted so that she could concentrate on teaching the others. But Kayla felt that by leaving Jordan she was giving positive reinforcement to a negative behaviour because she knew that he did not like to do work. She had spent one month being nice to him, soothing him when he went into a tantrum, but later she had decided to be stern with him. So she had

decided that even though he threw a tantrum he still had to do his work, he could not run away from it. During reflection about the incidents in the classroom Kayla decided to give Jordan a shower every time he went into a tantrum. She tried it out in the class the next day and it worked, so she would do that.

The other students only displayed behaviour problems occasionally and they just sulked or cried for a while. Kayla did not exactly restrict their movements around the classroom. She allowed them to walk on their own but made sure they sat down in one place during certain activities like the Morning Circle, Break, Cognitive Activities and Closing Circle. So when Vince first came to the preschool he liked to walk around and at the same time mess the place. He squeezed paint out of the tube, left the balls and other things that were in the shelf on the floor after looking at them. So Kayla decided to train him. She said, "Every time he goes to places that he likes to mess up I will pull him back to the circle centre and give him something to do." (T1/INT/33). Moreover, Kayla found that he liked animals so every time she pulled him back she gave him the plastic animals or books on animals to look at and weaned him off that behaviour. She lamented that she was unable to do that with Zhi because he only liked playing with water.

Kayla believed in the 'Antecedent-Behaviour-Consequences' principle of behaviour modification. After class she reflected on the incidents to identify the antecedent of the students' behaviour in order to learn from the situation. One day there was a power struggle between Shah and Kayla. Shah wanted Danny to play with her, whereas Kayla called Shah first and then Danny to do some Cognitive work. When Shah refused to come, Kayla pulled Danny away from the trampoline where they were both playing. Danny came with her and sat down to do his work but Shah threw a tantrum. Kayla's assumption that Shah would follow Danny was wrong. Reflecting on such incidents not only helped Kayla improve her behaviour

management strategies but also her lesson delivery skills. She realized that Shah liked to be treated as a 'teacher' T1/INT/12).

Giving the students what they wanted was another strategy for behaviour management. Kayla said, "Vince the same thing when he came he tried to take lot of things from other people so now it is like we let you eat whatever you want." (T1/INT/28). But some problems arose because of Kayla herself. For instance, she knew that Hanis liked to be the first to do a new activity. He got angry and showed irritation if he was not allowed to be the first. Kayla did not treat this behaviour, she just ignored and allowed others to be first to show him that he could not always be the first. Nothing was done to make him realize that he could not always be the first to do an activity other than telling him sternly that he had to wait but I wonder if he understood what had been said to him because he still insisted on being the first.

Kayla also practiced Sensory Integration to overcome behaviour problems. Kayla told Zhi to touch Jary's hair, which had a brush-like texture. To make Zhi participate in the Morning Circle she had to hold both his hands and legs and make him do the action. She did not like to use the cane even though the mothers told her to do so.

Assessment in Instruction

The bulk of Kayla's assessment work was done during lesson implementation. In fact it started from the time she implemented her lesson for the students, which was from the first day of school; but she did not document the results until the students were more familiar with the environment. Kayla was well aware that the practice was not totally in line with the requirements of the authorities. "...we are supposed to assess the child with the *Kit Penilaian* (Assessment Kit) that I showed you with the checklist and that is the kit assessment

on the first day or first time they come here.” (T1/INT/12). But she preferred not to assess the students when they first arrived at the preschool. She preferred to instil discipline and order in the students from the beginning. She believed that it would be difficult to control the students otherwise. Moreover, she was also not in favour of the Assessment Kit provided for this purpose. In addition she found it difficult to carry out assessments when there were students with severe behaviour problems, as in the case of Zhi this year. “...I find that the kit is not suitable one thing, second thing is like this year the child comes in like four at the time at the same time and with Zhi like that you can’t like sit down one to one to a child to assess the child.” (T1/INT/12). Instead she practiced an indirect assessment of the students through interviews with the parents to get information about them.

Interviews with Parents

Parents were interviewed on the day they first brought their child to the preschool. Her questions to the parents were directed to get information pertaining to allergies, behaviour problems, weaknesses and the strengths of the child, likes and dislikes, child’s attachment to particular persons in the family and about the family in general.

...and then especially on what are the difficulties in handling the child that is very important I feel you know because I do not know the child when the child comes in, so normally I will interview them say on showing tantrums, and then like certain food that they can’t take, that triggers (the tantrums). (T1/INT/12)

Her interview questions were not only aimed at gathering information about the child but also to learn the expectations of the parents, like for instance what they

didn't like the child to do in class. Kayla elaborated this by saying that Jordan's mother did not want him to drink water from the school, or bathe in school because he, according to her, was not used to cold water. Kayla felt that it was important for the parents to tell her what they wanted for their child. However, she also informed the parents that she would not be able to assess the child in the specific skills, in Jordan's case bathing, a self-help skill since he did not bathe in school. Hence, his report for that skill would be blank, to which Jordan's mother agreed, said Kayla.

Kayla observed her students to assess them. She emphasised and spent a lot of time on observation because experience had taught her not to accept unquestioningly the information provided by parents and the medical report. Many a time she had discovered discrepancies between the information provided by parents and the medical diagnosis, and her observations. So Kayla preferred to observe the child for a period of time, sometimes up to three months before recording the results of the first assessment in the checklist.

Observation during Implementation

Her assessment was based on the observations she carried out while teaching them from the day they enrolled. She taught the students the LO that were in the Curriculum Specification. She observed the students to gauge if they had mastered the LO through the activities she had designed. Kayla placed a lot of importance on observation during implementation. "So in my observation I see that if there is improvement then it is fine, if there is no improvement then I need to change my strategy." (T1/INT/12). Observations helped Kayla discover if the student has shown improvement in the LO that she was teaching him/her through a specific strategy. If the assessment showed positive results, she would continue using the strategy to teach the skill; but if the results were negative, she would change her strategy to

teach the student. A lot of these assessment results are stored in her memory and reflected upon at the end of the day. “You see whatever I observe in the class, I admit that I don’t jot down. But when I go back I do reflect and sometimes at night I will think how I can help the child.” (T1/INT/12).

After documenting her first assessment results in the checklist, Kayla observed the students continuously to gauge progress or lack of it. Through these assessments, Kayla derived at the annual goals for each of her students. These goals served as a guideline when she planned individualized instruction within the activities in the daily lessons for each of her students. But these goals were not documented.

The state Education Department had provided her with evaluation forms which were identical to the ones used to assess the mainstream preschool students. But Kayla did not use them because she felt that they were vague and not detailed enough for students with special needs. Kayla preferred to write short notes on what the student could and could not do whenever she could spare the time after preparing the activities and the teaching aids for the next day’s lesson. She used the checklist to assess the students constantly. However Kayla did not assess the student by making him/her do the skills stated in the checklist. Since the LO was incorporated into the activity, Kayla observed the student to see if he/she could achieve the LO; and then drew the appropriate stars against the specific LO in the checklist.

While teaching the concept hot and cold, Kayla assessed Danny to see if he could identify the different colours by asking him to sort the colours into different bowls. Not all the activities could be assessed in a straightforward manner like the colour sorting. Sometimes Kayla had to interpret the students’ achievements through the activities and the worksheets. For instance, Shah, Jordan and Zhi had completed a piece of colouring work. Shah had coloured inside the circles; Jordan had coloured

all over the circle; and Zhi had coloured all over the paper. Kayla's conclusions were, "he (Jordan) knows that's a circle and he needs to colour although the colour is out... Zhi, he still doesn't have the concept yet whereas Shah can do all the circles." (T1/INT/03) She wrote the comments on the worksheets and kept them for future reference. She found it difficult to assess if the students understood abstract concepts like hot and cold, especially since some of them were non-verbal. Then she looked at their facial expression, to see if the difference in temperature had registered in their brains. Sometimes discussions with parents also revealed if the students had achieved a LO. Jary's father informed Kayla that after having allowed him to touch a hot pot, he had noticed that he never touched another pot even if it was not hot.

Sometimes Kayla was confused as to recording the results of the assessment in the checklist. Students like Jordan, Vince and Mint were able to do the activity if instructed in Chinese, their mother tongue; and Zhi who refused to do the activity when she was doing it would do it at his own time and pace. So she wondered if she should record that the students had achieved the LO or otherwise.

Comments and remarks related to assessment were written on the worksheets done by the students. This information was used to update the checklist. So she made sure that the students completed their worksheet. She had told Medha to hold the students hand lightly when helping them to write or colour and to stop moving if the student had stopped. Towards the end of the year Kayla reduced the support given to students, to let them do the work independently so that she could assess them. She looked at the work done by the students and made her conclusions. Besides her memory, the worksheets and the short notes, she also depended on Medha for feedback.

While assessing students through observation Kayla constantly discussed with Medha what the students could and could not do. Although Kayla admitted, “I agree it is a bit interrupting the flow of the lesson but if I do not tell her then and there, and I keep the information to tell later I forget it.” (T1/INT/17). She discussed the assessment results with Medha to make her become aware of the students’ developments and levels. In return Medha would be able to help her when she completed the checklists for each student. Kayla also acknowledged the fact that her assistant would sometimes be, “...closer to that particular child than me so they notice things that I do not see.” (T1/INT/17).

The teacher assistant’s observations were also taken into consideration when recording the assessment information.

Documenting and Using the Results

A checklist containing all the LO in the Curriculum Specification was used to record the assessment results. Against each LO, Kayla placed stars, one, two or three according to the student’s achievement in that specific LO. The results for each LO were recorded at three different times of the year. Then Kayla used the checklist and the short notes to write an overall report on the students’ progress or the lack of it. This report was prepared twice a year, mid and end of the year. The mid year reports were sent to the headmaster for his signature and finally given to the parents. The parents read the report, sign it and return it to Kayla. Instead of going through the report with the parents, she instructed them to go over it at home and clear their doubts with her the following day.

Then towards the end of the year, Kayla put both the mid and the year end reports in a file and gave them to the parents to give to the primary school where their child was enrolled. The Rivers Special Education Primary School supervisor

was also given the year-end report so that she was able to gauge the performance level of the students for placement into the various primary classrooms.

Worksheets and things that the students had made during the year were returned to the parents. Sometimes she had to return some of them in the middle of the year when the individual student's file became too full to accommodate any more corrected worksheet.

Although Kayla was required to see the parents twice a year formally; she did not do so because she discussed with them daily when they came to pick their child up after school. She reported to the parents what the child had done on a daily basis. Sometimes the parents did not agree with her reports saying that their child was not like that at home. But, Kayla stood firm by what she had observed. She explained to these parents that the results were based on her observation of the students in the preschool, and what the child was capable or not capable of doing at home were beyond her control.

Besides assessing the students, she also assessed her activities, the strategies she used to teach, and the teaching aids especially the worksheets. All three were assessed through observation. There were times when she noticed that that her students were not able to do the work that she had prepared for them so Kayla had to change the activity to suit the students at that moment. Assessment of teaching strategies that brought about positive results encouraged her to repeat the strategies with the students. Assessment of worksheets had helped her to improve on them. Kayla stated that sometimes she noticed the mistakes only when the students were doing the activities or the worksheets even though she had tried to plan it carefully.

Assessment during implementation has helped Kayla establish and try out different strategies for managing the students' behaviour.

Case Two: Lakes Preschool Classroom

Marla's classroom instruction like Kayla's comprised planning, implementation and assessment stages in the same order. Prolonged engagement in her classroom revealed that the focus of instruction in this classroom was, to follow the students' lead. Hence the lesson plan was frequently not adhered to. Marla incorporated the skills she wanted the students to achieve, into the activities she implemented in the classroom. Marla assessed the students as she introduced the relevant skills into the activity the student was engaged in at that moment. The assessment information was transferred into a checklist when time permitted. Students' progress was also discussed with the parents when they came to drop off or pick up their child. Progress reports, based on the information in the checklist, were given to the parents twice a year. The following paragraphs provide detailed description of how instruction was provided in the Lakes Preschool Classroom.

Context

It was half past seven in the morning; Marla has exchanged her long skirt for a pair of track-suit trousers. As Marla greeted the students and their parents, she would also talk to the students who were playing with the toys on the floor. She engaged with them in their play with a toy, or instructed them to share it with a friend. She also conversed with the parents. One or two parents had long conversations with her everyday. Two of the students' mothers, remained in the classroom for the whole duration, and also conversed with Marla while she was with the students. Besides Marla, the mothers also talked to the students, giving them instructions and teaching them the names of objects. In addition, the teacher assistant Danya added her opinions and thoughts to the daily conversation which revolved around what the students were doing and how they were doing it. On a

given day, there would be four adults and seven students in the classroom, for breakfast which started at 8, which was either prepared by Danya or ordered from the canteen. Teachers from the mainstream and primary special education were also frequent visitors to the preschool classroom. Time for formal lessons to begin varied between 8.15 and 8.45, depending on when the students finished their breakfast. However, there was a change during the second phase of observation. Marla stopped providing breakfast early in the morning. Instead she took them to the canteen at 9.30 instead. Since the students were in the preschool by half past seven, Marla had instructed the parents to fetch their children at eleven o'clock instead of at half past eleven.

Lakes Preschool Classroom

The Lakes Preschool classroom was also not without the same inconveniences the Rivers Preschool classroom faced. The room housing the toilets was narrow and small, and only two or three students could enter at any one time. So after meals Marla could not take all of them into the bathroom to brush their teeth at the same time. She usually took them in groups of three, leaving the rest in the classroom under the teacher assistant's supervision. This meant that a lot of time was wasted as the students waited for their turn.

A door separated the kitchen from the main classroom but an opening in the form of a window allowed the students to climb into the kitchen easily. Even though Marla locked the door she could not do anything about the opening because it did not have a door. So the students climbed through the opening to get into the kitchen.

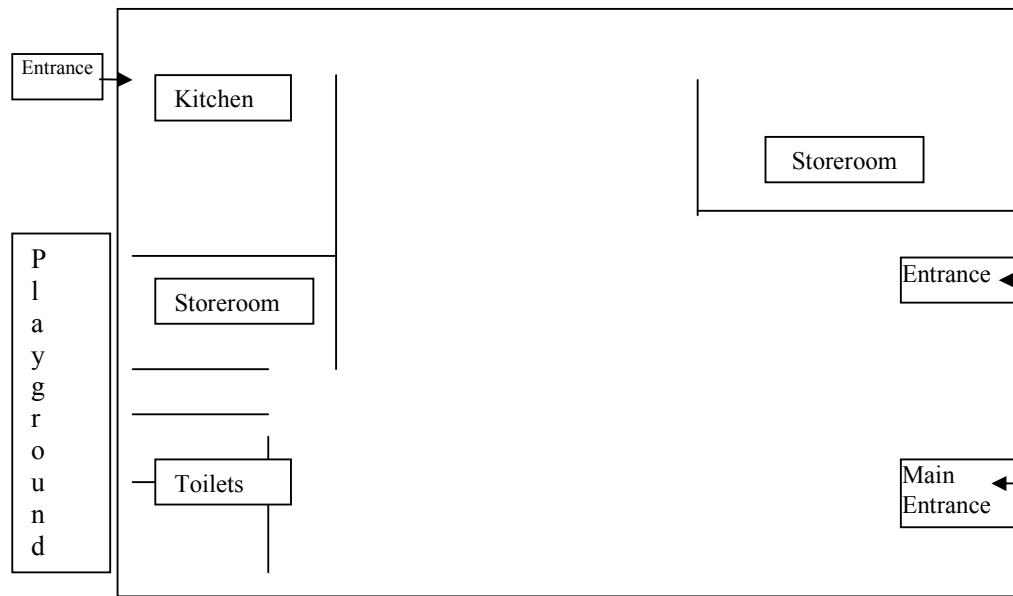


Figure 4.5. The floor plan of Lakes Preschool Classroom

The floor plan of Lakes Preschool classroom differed from that of the Rivers Preschool. Figure 4.5 shows the various parts of the classroom. At the bottom right is the main entrance to the room, used by the students. The toilets were at the extreme left corner of the room. Next to the toilet is a storeroom. The toilets and the storeroom shared a short and narrow corridor. The kitchen is another room at the top left corner of the classroom. The kitchen has a door which opened into the school field. The preschool playground is a fenced area in one corner of the field. However, it could not be used because there was a big tree in the middle of it with several red ant nests. Opposite the kitchen and to the extreme top right corner of the classroom is the second storeroom. Like in the Rivers Preschool, furniture, computers, television and teaching material lined the four walls of the classroom, with the middle portion kept empty for the students to move around.

The occupants of this preschool classroom are Marla, the teacher; Danya, the teacher assistant; and their nine students. Detailed descriptions of these people are given below.

Marla

Marla is a plump motherly figure in her mid forties. She has five children. Her youngest child, a girl, was in Form Two. Her four boys were in college. Marla started her teaching career as a temporary teacher. After completing her teacher training course in a local college, she had taught English, Mathematics and Malay Language in a mainstream primary school from 1990 to 2000. Then in 1996 she started teaching remedial classes. In 1997 she was appointed as a district trainer, for teachers who taught remedial classes, until 2004. Her achievements with students in the remedial classes were so well known that when she transferred to her present school, the headmaster insisted that she taught the weakest students in year six, so as to improve the passing percentage in Malay Language, in the public examination for the Year Six students. Despite her success in remedial teaching, she opted for a change when her current school opened a class for preschool special education. She had become interested in children with special needs due to her social activities, and felt that her vast experience in handling remedial classes would benefit the preschool CSN.

Marla's hard work and contribution had not gone unnoticed by the officers at the Special Education Department in the MOE. She was selected to be one of the training officers for the preschool programme, especially for the development of computer assisted learning modules for preschoolers. In addition, she was also selected to go on an educational trip to New Zealand. Upon her return, she presented a paper on the teaching strategies used by the New Zealand educationists, at a

seminar for local preschool special education teachers. Like Kayla, she was also called to meetings held by the Special Education Department, for her ideas on ways to improve the services provided for this group of children. Her personality was an added asset for instructing preschool CSN.

A person with a pleasant demeanour, nothing that happened in the preschool classroom seemed to annoy her. One morning, during my first week in the preschool, I saw Marla standing outside the classroom talking to a parent as she held on to a student. I learnt that Danya, her teacher assistant who held the key to the preschool had not arrived yet, and the time was 7.30. Patiently Marla walked up to the school office on the second floor while holding the student's hand to get another set of keys. Due to problems with the keys, she finally had to get a parent's help to force open the door. Despite the predicament, never once did she berate Danya nor get irritated with the situation. Marla maintained her composure even when her students managed to run out of the classroom. She ran and caught them quickly even though she found running physically strenuous. She did not scold them for running away. Neither did she scold the person who had left the door open. Her disposition was sometimes taken for granted by Danya and the two mothers who stayed in the classroom for the whole session. Instead of assisting Marla implement instruction, both Danya and the mothers sometimes took matters regarding instructional strategies and behaviour management into their hands. Time and again Marla had to inform them to follow her lead.

Marla was also involved in the activities taking place in the mainstream classes. She represented the school at district-level meetings regarding strategic planning activities. Mainstream and primary special education teachers were always walking into the classroom to talk to her. True to her character, she did not turn away anybody even though it disturbed her work.

The Teacher Assistant

Danya is Marla's teacher assistant. This tall and thin young lady in her early twenties took up this job after completing her form six education. She has plans to further her studies. She was caring and close to the students especially to Ash and Mim. She was in the preschool by 7 in the morning. She prepared breakfast for the students and served it to them at about 8 o'clock. She cleared the breakfast dishes and cleaned the dining table when the last student and parent had finished eating. Then she joined Marla and the students who were seated at the table for Cognitive activities. About forty minutes later, she entered the kitchen again to prepare the second meal which was served at ten o'clock. She served the food and helped the students to feed themselves. However, she did not cook on most days, so she helped Marla take the students to the canteen, which was about 50 meters away from the classroom. At the canteen, they took turns looking after the students and ordering the food. Kir and Fikri's mothers helped to take care of the students while at the canteen and also in the classroom, during meals.

Danya sat with Marla and the students at the table when the latter was teaching. Danya was always seen teaching the students, sometimes using the material which Marla had prepared, but at other times taking the liberty to prepare the worksheets by herself. Watching both Marla and Danya during classroom instruction gave one the impression that there were two teachers teaching two different sets of lessons to the students. The communication gap between Marla and Danya with respect to lesson implementation, did not exhibit the smooth flow in lesson implementation observed in Kayla's preschool. Danya's frequent absence from the preschool caused problems for Marla because she was unable to carry out certain activities, that required the preparation she had instructed Danya to do the previous day. In addition, Marla was left to handle the students by herself.

At 11.30, when the students had left, Danya would put away the toys, sweep and mop the classroom. She then had her lunch and went to the school office to work until it was time to leave at half-past four in the evening.

The Students

Marla had nine students in her register. Two of them, Riz and Onn, attended class only once or twice a week. However, during the second phase of my observation which lasted four weeks, Riz was always absent and Onn came on two days only. The number of students each day was also fewer during the second phase, due to either health or transport problems. As was the case in Kayla's preschool, the students' disabilities were stated in their medical reports. But details about the functioning level of each students, whether high, moderate or low, and their character were provided by Marla. Table 4.2 provides the details of the students in her classroom.

Table 4. 2

Information about the students in Lakes Preschool

Name	Age	Gender	Type Of Disability	Level/Characteristic	Behaviour
Ash	6	Male	Down syndrome	Moderate functioning Has speech and is able to answer simple questions. Interest: liked to play in water	Liked to throw things. Runs away from the class or the teacher. Hardly sat down. Liked to hit the other students
Fikri	6	Male	Down syndrome	Moderate functioning Incoherent speech. Interest: liked to sing holding a mike	Quiet. Close to Haz who had been his classmate in the Community-Based Rehabilitation centre. Mother sat in the class with him.

Name	Age	Gender	Type Of Disability	Level/Characteristic	Behaviour
Mim	6	Male	Down syndrome	Low functioning No speech Interest: -	Did not speak.
Am	6	Male	Mental Retardation	Moderate functioning Has speech and is able to answer simple questions and carry out instructions.	Did not display tantrum. Pleasant student.
Han	6	Male	Mental Retardation	Moderate functioning No speech. Interest-toys	Liked to play alone. Threw things when in a temper.
Riz	6	Male	Autism	High functioning Has speech but does not talk. Interest: computer	Comes only once a week. Maid sits in the class with him
Onn	6	Male	Mental Retardation, Hearing Impaired	Moderate functioning Hearing impaired so wore a hearing aid Interest:-	Came only once a week. Mother sat in the class with him
Kir	6	Female	Mental Retardation, Partially Blind	Moderate Partially blind in one eye. Interest: singing	Mother sat in the class with her. Liked to sing.
Haz	6	Female	Down syndrome	High functioning Has speech. Is able to answer simple questions and carry out instructions Interest: Singing	Liked to sing. Cried often when she did not get what she wanted.

Planning Instruction

Marla stated that her planning included writing the lesson plan and preparing the teaching material. As required by the school administrators, she wrote her lesson plan in a record book but she stated that preferred to have a file for each student. She added that she intended to ask the headmaster to allow her to print individualised lesson plans and file them. *“Saya lebih suka buka fail untuk setiap murid. Ada ruang untuk tulis reflection dan impak. Dalam buku ini tak cukup tempat. Boleh tulis satu lesson sahaja untuk semua orang (T2/INT/01)”* (I prefer to open files for each student. there is space to write the reflection and impact of the lesson. There is not enough space in this book. I can write only one lesson for the whole class). Marla lamented that the limited space in the record book enabled her to write only one lesson for the whole class whereas the printed versions had more space to write the reflection and the impact of the lesson.

Planning, she said, was important because it allowed for continuity of the lessons, so that the students would be able to see the relationship between the lessons from one day to the next. She added that it also helped her to come up with specific targets for consecutive lessons, in deciding whether she should increase or decrease the difficulty level of the lessons. According to Marla, she also planned lessons for the days that she had to go away for courses, so that Danya could carry out the lessons together with the help of the relief teacher sent to the preschool. However, Danya informed otherwise. During Marla’s absence, she would select and photocopy some worksheets that Marla had kept in a file, to be given to the students to do. The worksheets were usually on joining dots to form lines or alphabets and colouring pictures. Marla also stated that since her students arrived and left on time she did not have to worry about what to do with them after 11.30 in the morning. In the course of second phase of data collection, I noticed that some students came as

late as 8.30 and left as early as 11.00. One boy, Mim always left late. Danya was responsible for keeping an eye on him, which included giving him his bottle of milk. He usually slept until his father came to fetch him at one o'clock.

Marla's focus was on the lesson plan, activities, teaching materials and the arrangement of the physical setting when planning for instruction. Like Kayla she did not have specific criteria related to selecting the theme or the LO when writing the lesson plan. Her criteria for designing the activities and selecting teaching material were based on the students' likes and dislikes. In addition, Marla's activities, selection and preparation of teaching materials were usually not planned done in detail before its implementation. She invented the activities and selected the appropriate teaching material as the day's lesson went on, in other words they were done in an impromptu manner during implementation of instruction. She would decide on a certain activity while she was sitting with the students and singing songs. She would then set about getting the materials needed for that activity.

The detailed explanation of the focuses and the criteria for planning instruction in Marla's classroom follows.

Planning based on Curriculum Specification

Marla's procedure for writing the lesson plan was a straightforward process. As shown in Figure 4.6, her first step was to look at the time table to check on the components she had to teach that day. She then selected the LO from the Curriculum Specification. Finally she designed activities to assist the students achieve the selected LO.

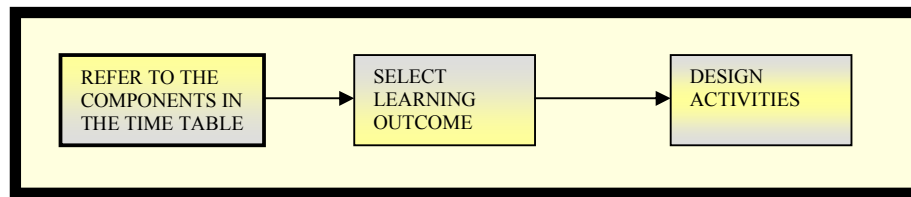


Figure 4.6. Steps involved in preparing lesson plans in Lakes Preschool

Marla's lesson plan depended upon a time table that she had prepared. The time table stated the days and times when she would teach the components of the Curriculum Specification for each day of the week. She reorganised this time table at least three or four times a year, according to the components that she wanted to concentrate at that time. Time allocation for the various components differed, in the beginning and the middle of the year. For instance, she wished to concentrate on Social, Self Help Skills and Physical components during the first three months of the year, so more time was allocated for these three components. As the year progressed, the time allocation for these two components were reduced, and increased for components related to academic ones, like Cognitive and Language components. Towards the end of the year, more time was spent on language related activities like speech, prewriting, pre-reading, and writing of alphabets. She said that she intended to add a time slot in her time table, under the Language component, for the television programme Sesame Street after she had trained them to watch television.

However, neither her time table nor her lesson plan showed any differences in the time allocation for Social, Self Help Skills and Physical components as she stated. Further, her Cognitive activities were limited to joining dots for the letter A.

The time table was still flexible, she stated, adding that it was just a guide because she could not always adhere to the time allocation nor the arrangement of

the components as stated in it. Triangulation of findings from document analysis and observation showed that she rarely adhered to the components or the time allocation as stated in the time table. In fact, there was little connection between her lesson plans and her implementation; in addition her lesson plans were sometimes written a day or two after the lessons were implemented solely because she needed to send the record book to the headmaster to be attested. At such times, she either depended on her diary or her memory to write what she had done with the students earlier during that week. But most times she just repeated the LO that she had written up, the week before that.

Marla averred that her current lesson plan depended on the impact of the previous day's lesson, the students' ability and capability, assessment, and the objective for that day. So she would write the lesson plan for the following day after she had completed the day's lesson. She said, "*Saya tulis lesson untuk hari yang berikut pada hari ini. Saya selalu balik pada pukul 3 atau 4 petang. Siap lesson plan, kemas kelas, filing, buat worksheet dan alat mengajar .*"(T2/INT/01); (I prepare the lesson plans one day ahead. I always go home at about 3 or 4 o'clock in the evening. Complete the lesson plan, tidy the class do the filing, prepare the worksheet and teaching materials). Having referred to the time table, she selected the LO for the components of the day, designed the activities and finally prepared the teaching materials.

She would have liked to write up the activities planned for individual students based on their assessment results, but could not do so because of the space constraint of the record book. So instead, she recorded just one activity for the whole class. But, the activities that she wrote in the record book differed from those she carried out in the classroom. When these differences were brought to her notice, she usually stated that she made the changes due to the student's interests, and would

note it under the 'Remarks' column in her record book. Sometimes the activities she designed were so vague that they could encompass anything and everything.

During the first few months of the year Marla concentrated on Self-Help Skills and Physical components because she felt that by continuously repeating these two components, the students would eventually be able to put on their t-shirt or shoes, brush their teeth, and bathe. She would not teach the skill if the students were already able to do it, preferring to go on to higher order skills.

The Curriculum Specification was her guide and source when writing the lesson plan so that she did not diverge from the LOs stated in it. She added that even her method of teaching in the class was controlled by the activities in the Curriculum Specification. Marla asserted that she referred to the LO that she had taught the previous day and gauged how the students had fared in achieving them. She would then repeat the LO if the students had not achieved it, or select a new LO if they had mastered the earlier one. She added that she did not believe in repeating the LO that the students have mastered but would rather go on to teach the students a new LO that they had not yet mastered. However, there was no evidence of documentation, neither during nor after implementation to show that she had assessed the students in specific LOs to determine whether they had achieved it or otherwise.

Although Marla stated that her lessons were anchored in the student's achievement in the LO, it was impossible because the LOs were selected for the whole class. She could not select a new LO when a few students have mastered it or continue teaching the same LO because some students had not mastered it. In addition, analysis of LOs selected for a specific component throughout a month indicated that the same LOs were repeated.

Teaching Materials for Free Play

Marla used teaching materials during classroom instruction, like toys, books, pictures, and puppets, and worksheets. All these things were either provided by the authorities or bought by her using the allocation provided by the MOE. The worksheets she used were selected and photocopied from various workbooks, and arranged in a clear file holder.

She neither prepared these teaching materials nor tailored them for a specific activity. All students used the same materials, including the worksheets. The most frequently used teaching materials were the toys. The students picked up toys they wanted to play with as soon as they came to the preschool. They were allowed to do so, and would play with a toy, then leave it on the floor to pick another which caught their interest. Marla used the time they played with the toys to inculcate some LOs from the Social and Emotional component. The LOs that she concentrated upon during these free play sessions were ‘learning to and share with friends’, communication, and building confidence. She selected the LO according to the needs of the student. For instance, Han always liked to play by himself and did not share the toys with other students. He would beat the students who went near him. So if another student wanted to play with the same toy, Marla used the opportunity to encourage Han to share the toy. She sat with them to play with the toy. She pointed out the parts of the toy and let them touch the toy together.

Since the students were allowed to play with the toys, Marla made sure that the toys as well as the other teaching materials were safe to use. So she checked all the teaching materials provided by the MOE to ensure that they did not pose any threat in that area. During her inspection she had to pack and store some of the materials supplied by the MOE because they were not safe for her students. Examples of materials which did not live up to her safety criteria were marbles, tiny

plastic animals and Lego sets. She also made sure that the water colour paints she used for art work was safe because her students liked to put things into their mouths. In addition to being harmful, these materials were a waste of good money and could have been used to buy more appropriate teaching material, lamented Marla.

Activities were Meaningful to Students

Marla used contextualised teaching so that the students were able to make associations and eventually generalise. She preferred to teach them to put on their trousers after they had used the toilet; put on their clothes after a bath; line up at the wash basin to wash their hands before eating; and say thank you after receiving something. One day when Onn and his mother were at the door, Marla gave Kir the door keys, instructing her to give the bunch to Onn's mother so that she could open the door. Albeit slow, Kir managed to give the keys as instructed.

She also managed to make instruction giving and receiving skills look like a game when she got the students to participate in simple instructions as shown in the excerpt below:

Teacher: *Fikri ambil satu kertas. Fikri bagi Ash kertas.* (Fikri take this piece of paper and give it to Ash.) Fikri follows her instruction. Teacher: *Ash cakap terima kasih.* (Ash say thank you to Fikri) Ash does not say anything. Danya sits next to Ash. Teacher: *Han bagi Riz kertas.* (Han give the paper to Riz) He gives it. Teacher: *pandai.* (clever) Teacher: Riz give paper to Haz. He gives it. Then teacher: Riz give Mim. He gives it. Teacher: Mim *cakap* (say) thank you.

(T2/OBS/02)

Marla liked to teach Language by using words which were familiar to the students. For instance she said TV for television. She added that if the students used to say shower for bathing and potty for going to the toilet she would also use the same terms because, an article that she had read off the internet advised teachers to use terms familiar to the students. However she tried to use the terms, TV and television so that the students would learn both. What was important to her was that they were able to recognise the object, television.

She asked the students to identify the table, the chair. Then she had simple activities involving the furniture like telling the students to sit on the chair or arrange the chairs. She liked to talk to the students about things which were connected to what they have learnt or to what they were currently doing. For instance, when they were learning about things in the classroom, she told her students to put the book on the teacher's table. Even meal times were not spared. She taught them the names of the food and the cutlery they used. Sometimes she also sang songs related to the food they were eating, such as the watermelon song on the day they were eating that fruit.

Then when they had had a bath she gave them step by step instructions, in simple language, on how to wipe their body and put on their clothes. She used simple and easy phrases or sentences. She was not too keen on using grammatically correct sentences which were long and complicated. According to her, instructions should be short and simple so that the students could understand easily.

Marla questioned her students' constantly and helped them provide the answers too. When the students said something to her, she always had a reply for them although sometimes she could not make out what they had said. Marla explained that it was important to give them a reply in order to encourage them to talk. She said:

I nak bagi dia apa dia feel that kita ni dengar cakap dia walaupun kita ni try to faham understand apa yang dia nak cakap kan I nak biar dia rasa dia diappreciate dia cakap. At least sebab I nak biar dia cakap kalau sikit dia cakap kita diam saja nanti dia pun tak ada ni kan nanti dia pun tak balas apa-apa. Sebab my students kalau kita selalu cakap-cakap nanti lama-lama dia akan bercakap. Dia akan rasa seronok bercakap. (T2/INT/10)

(I want them to feel that we are listening to what they are saying although we are just trying to understand what they are saying. I want them to feel appreciated. At least they will talk a little if we answer them. If not they might not say anything. My students, I feel that if we keep on talking to them one day they might talk. They will be happy talking.)

Instead of teaching abstract concepts such as clean and dirty, Marla used opportunities when they arose. For instance, when Am who was lying under the table came out, she saw that his hands were dirty so she told him, “Am *basuh tangan*. (Am wash your hand) *Tangan ini bersih ke kotor?* (Is this hand clean or dirty?) *Ini dirty*. (This is dirty) *Pergi basuh*. (Go and wash.) He walks towards the kitchen. Teacher gives him directions to wash at the wash basin in the classroom. Teacher: *basuh sini*. (Basuh sini) He follows (T2/OBS/02). Not only did she point out clean and dirty to him she also gave step by step instructions to wash his hands besides teaching him that a dirty hand had to be washed. She used simple, precise and short sentences when giving instructions to the students.

Marla liked to implement activities which were able to help students comprehend the concepts or the skills they had to acquire. For example she used boxes of different sizes to teach the concepts big and small. She brought a big box

and made the students go into it and play and then showed them a small box into which they could only put their pencils. Marla kept repeating to the students that they could sit inside a big box while the smaller one could only hold pencils. Even other concepts such as short and long were taught in a similar manner. She made them tie long ribbons around their own waist whereas shorter ribbons were used to tie around the doll's waist. While doing the activity she also kept repeating to them the different functions of both the ribbons in relation to their length.

Activities Designed to Fulfil Objectives

Marla felt that the activities she carried out in class should fulfil the objective of the activity. During one lesson she played a Karaoke CD which somebody had given her for free. The students enjoyed themselves dancing to the music although they were distracted by the picture on the screen. But since Marla's objective for the activity was for the students to move parts of the body she did not mind the students looking at the television. Sometimes she took the students to the field to play. She would use a partially-deflated ball. According to Marla she gave them the ball for the students to focus on as they ran and was not to teach them a game of football. In addition, the ball which had little air prevented the students from running far. She stated that, *"Itu memang I ambil yang lama kita tak nak bola itu jauh, nanti dia jauh pergi kan, kalau dekat dia tak tahu the right ball untuk play soccer so yang itu just for kicking, running."* (T2/INT/07); (Yes I purposely chose an old ball so that the students would not go far. Anyway the students do not know the right ball for soccer. This ball is just for kicking and running). She also gave the students a lot of colouring work. According to Marla, she was able to study the students' social and emotional level by looking at the way they coloured. This information would enable her to handle the students better during activities in the classroom.

She stated that she took a lot of time to ensure that the activities were suitable, could be carried out in a day, and that the students were capable of doing the activity. Marla felt that once the students were good in physical and self help skills, they should be allowed to go on to actual academic skills like writing the letters 'L' and 'T' which were easy to write or recognising letters. She felt that students should not be allowed to play too much because the preschool was not a nursery. She added that she could convince teachers and senior assistants to include the preschool CSN provided they were able to perform the skills in the pre-academic component, such as being able to read simple words. So for her previous year's students, she had prepared a portfolio of what they could do to show the primary mainstream and to convince them to take them into Year One.

Marla said that she liked to design activities based on the assessment she made regarding their character from the colouring work they did. She had studied the students and had their character in mind when she was teaching them. So she applied different ways of teaching for different students. For example, by looking at Ash's work she knew that she should use varying approaches in teaching him in a day because he got bored quickly. Information such as this though, was not always obvious in her planning but showed in her implementation.

Physical Setting Aids Easy Movement

Marla's main concern in the organisation of the classroom was that the students should have ample space for easy movement inside the classroom. The students moved suddenly and quickly from one place to another so the room should not be cluttered. They should not knock into furniture as they walked inside the classroom. She always made sure that the middle portion of the classroom was empty for the students to play.

She lamented that due to the structure of the classroom and the size of the furniture, she had had to make a lot of adjustments, especially when using the bathroom. The bathroom was too small for her to get all the students in, when teaching self-help skills like brushing teeth after meals and bathing. In addition, lack of proper space prevented her from having the water play container and sand pit permanently inside the classroom. She had to make time to set the equipment up and put them back in their place whenever she wanted to carry out these activities.

Marla was not specific about maintaining a structure in the use of the physical setting but repeated observations identified a loosely-held structure. The term loosely-held is used because Marla did not enforce the structure during implementation. In addition, most of the students were never at the same place during a specific activity. The activity would be taking place but the students who had completed the activity or were waiting for the teacher's attention moved to other places in the classroom. Marla allowed them to move around the classroom as she provided one-to-one instruction. When she had finished with one student, she let him or her walk around while she concentrated on another.

The students came into the classroom using the main entrance marked as 01 in Figure 4.7, which shows the physical setting of the Lakes Preschool classroom. After leaving their shoes and bags on the shelves next to the door, they went to 02 where the toys were kept. The students played with the toys until breakfast was served at the dining table, 04. The next activity for the day was Cognitive or Language and Communication component which was always carried out at the table marked as 05. Then the students either went to the canteen for their break or were served again at the dining table marked as, 04. After the meal, students entered the bathroom to brush their teeth and/or bathe. They then spent the rest of the time playing computer activities, or singing and dancing, or just playing with toys of their

choice in the areas marked as 02 and 03, the Technology Centre or 07, the Play Centre.

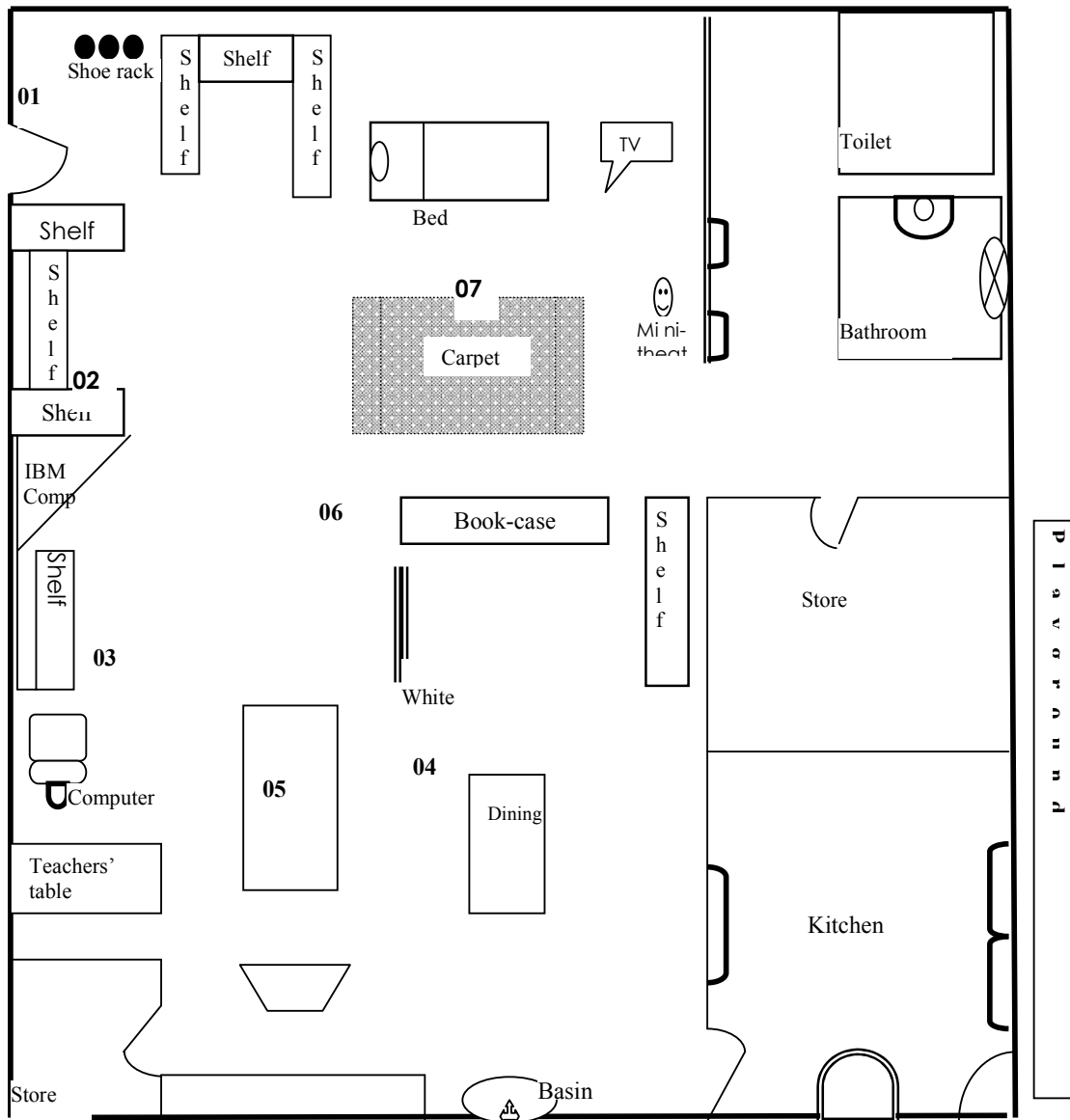


Figure 4.7. Physical Setting of Lakes Preschool Classroom

Implementing Instruction

According to Marla, taking the cue from students was important when implementing instruction. Consequently, the nine students in her classroom were usually engaged in doing different things at the same time due to her adherence to this idea. She had to make a human barricade comprising herself, Danya and the two mothers if she wanted to keep all of them in one place for a certain activity. The students gathered to sit at the table when they had to complete worksheets. At these times, the four adults sat next to students who were inclined to run away. Despite such measures, Ash managed to escape and had to be constantly brought back to his place.

Marla's daily classroom instruction started with free play. Then the students had breakfast; after which they, sat down to do some worksheets, either joining dots or colouring. Marla and Danya would run after the students to get them to complete the worksheets. It was then time to go for religious class. Close to the time for their break, Marla and Danya walked to the religious classroom to take the students to the canteen. After the break, students walked back to their classroom to clean themselves and continue with activities related to aesthetics and creativity.

Marla concentrated on integration of components; and strategies that she used were free play, one-to-one instruction, instruction according to the ability of the student, and learning through play.

Integrated Teaching

Integration of LO and components in one activity were evident in the Lakes Preschool although the lesson plans were hierarchical in fashion. Integration of components was apparent when the students came to the preschool, during free play, meal times, cognitive activities, and when they were leaving for home.

Marla maintained constant conversation with her students throughout the day. When the students came to the preschool in the morning, she greeted them and allowed them to play with the toys of their choice. During Free Play Marla made it a point to integrate an LO from the Social and Emotional component. She liked to sit with the students for about fifteen to twenty minutes to tell them about the toy they had taken or how to play with it. While playing with them she talked to them, asked after their family members she always talked to one student about the others in the class by telling them to call, look at, give or take something from one another. She tried to make them aware of each other. She also included the mothers in these types of activities. In addition she encouraged them to play in pairs and small groups whenever possible by giving them toys to pass to others or to take toys from one another.

Meal times were more opportunities that Marla used for integrating LO and components. Religious knowledge, Self-Help Skills and Moral education were integrated while the students were eating or playing. The students were instructed to wash their hands before and after eating. The boys were asked to recite prayers before having their meals. Students brushed their teeth and had a bath in the preschool. However these activities were not carried out on a daily basis for every student. The students who liked to play in the water always ended up having a bath, but the others did not even brush their teeth or go to the toilet. Moral education was not taught specifically to the one non-Muslim student in the class but was incorporated during meal times. Marla always told them to clean their hands before and after their meals and talked about being clean to the students.

She would also integrate LO from the Social and Emotional component while doing activities related to Physical components. She said that during certain

activities, like jumping across the chain, they learnt a lot of social skills like taking turns, stating opinions and gaining confidence as shown in the extract below:

... Siapa yang lompat dulu siapa yang lompat dulu dia dah boleh voice out dia punya opinion ka mana level tinggi rendah let them kalau dia kata rendah kita buat rendah biar dia buat rendah, jangan force dia mesti that level juga dia mesti lompatkan mungkin dia tak capable lagi dia tak confident because this is the first timekan mungkin next time dia boleh tinggi. They adjusted themselves.

(T2/INT/08)

(The person who jumped first was able to voice his opinion about the height of the link chain, if he says lower, we will lower the height, do not force him to jump at the level that we set, he cannot jump maybe because he is not confident, because this was his first attempt. Maybe he will be able to do next time.)

She opined that “...*perkembangan social saya tak ambil satu komponen satu subjek terus. Dia in between, dia sekali diintergrate dengan BM intergrate dengan kognitif... (T2/INT/05)*” (I do not teach social development component as a single subject but insert the skills when teaching the Malay language or the Cognitive component...). She spent a lot of time on improving the social and emotional skills of her students so the relevant LO was also integrated during Cognitive and Language activities. Students were frequently instructed to pass and collect worksheets.

Marla also integrated LOs from the Physical component – tearing -, with the Creativity component for art work. Marla stated that “Take a few skills for a day. Don’t choose too many skills. Take one skill and integrate the components. For

instance the skill is physical, tearing, but done in Creativity component (T2/INT/07).” Marla meant that she selected the LO from the Physical component but wrote it in the Creativity column in the lesson plan because it was an art activity. Students tore the coloured paper into different sizes and then pasted them on art paper. So the students carried out one activity which encompassed two LO from two different components.

Impromptu Activities

There was no explanation in the lesson plan or any other documents about the activities that Marla was going to carry out in the classroom for each of the LO. Marla’s way of carrying out activities in the classroom, was to first look for the teaching materials she needed for the activity as she talked to the students, Danya and the parents. Then, having collected the things that she wanted to use, she informed Danya and the parents what she was going to do. Sometimes, these activities, when carried out in the classroom were simple and easy to execute; however, disorder was obvious if these activities were carried out in the field as stated in the example.

The students were engaged in free play Marla was instructing Danya to get the necessary teaching aids like small balls, baskets and cones. The students were instructed to put on their shoes and taken to the field. While at the field, Marla was busy arranging the items for the activity, Danya and the two mothers had to stop the students from picking the things that Marla had arranged in specific rows. Then Marla explained to Danya and the mothers what she expected them to do. The students disturbed the things that Marla had arranged. (T2/OBS/07)

A combination of spontaneity and lack of communication between Marla and her teacher assistant Danya, caused the students to be taken suddenly from one activity to another.

Marla instructed Danya to take out the water play equipment and fill it up with water after which she left for the office to settle some matters. Having filled the containers with water, Danya allowed the students to play with the water in the tubs. However, when Marla returned she instructed the students to go into the classroom for another activity.

(T1/OBS/07)

Sometimes the impromptu activities were decided by the students. For instance, the students started to play with a musical instrument *kompang* (a flat drum) on one day. So, for the next half an hour the activity involved the students walking around the classroom, holding a *kompang* and hitting it.

Free Play

Free play was important for the students to like the class, said Marla, so she let them play with the toys when they came into the classroom early in the morning. Marla's students were given a free hand when it came to selecting toys during Free Play. When the students walked into the classroom in the morning, each of them selected a toy from the shelves and played with it. Some of them played with three or four different toys during the Free Play session which lasted from twenty to forty minutes, depending on the moods of the students and the schedule of the lesson for the day. Students also threw the toys at one another or in no particular direction.

Therefore the classroom floor was sometimes littered with toys. The parents would usually still be with the child or talking to Marla at this time.

During the free play sessions Marla went from one student to another to ask what he or she was doing with the toy and suggest ways of playing with the toy. Sometimes she got two or more students to play together using similar toys. Students who threw toys all over the classroom were encouraged to pick up the toys they had thrown. Marla spent a lot of time talking to the students about their likes, dislikes and their family members during the free play session.

Loosely-held Routine

Students walked into the classroom from about half past seven onwards. They took off their shoes, left them outside the classroom and walked in through the door with their bags. As they walked in Marla and Danya would greet them in the Malay language. They put their bags on the shelf which was next to the entrance on their left, before going into the classroom. Some students brought a change of clothes and towel in their bag. Sometimes as in the case of Mim, there would be biscuits and a bottle of milk. After putting away their bags, they went straight for whatever toy that grabbed their fancy. Students continued playing until they were called to breakfast.

Breakfast was either cooked by Danya or ordered from the canteen. The food was served on the low rectangular table next to the kitchen. Marla, Danya, Fikri's, Onn's and Kir's mothers, sometimes Riz's maid and the students sat on the floor around the table. After breakfast some of the students took their plates and glasses to the sink in the kitchen and walked over to the table assigned specifically for academic work to do some colouring or writing work. As one by one they completed their assigned work, Marla would let them play with toys of their choice. Sometimes

they went to play even without finishing their work, and then Marla or Danya would have to coax them back to the table.

On fixed days of the week the Muslim students went to the religious teacher's classroom for religious lessons, after breakfast. If Kir was in the class, Marla taught her Moral Education. Then Marla, Danya and the two mothers and Kir walked over to the religious knowledge classroom to collect the rest before going to the canteen for a break at 10 o'clock or the students returned to the classroom to eat the food prepared by Danya. However, the canteen was a frequent choice because Marla wanted Danya to be free to help her with the students. Marla or Danya had to hold Ash while walking to the canteen to prevent him from running away but the others could be allowed to walk on their own. There was change in the meal times from the month of May. Marla stopped providing the students breakfast in the morning and took the students to the canteen at 9.30 instead of at 10 o'clock. She made this change because the parents were taking the students home by 11 o'clock in the morning instead of the usual 11.30

At the canteen they washed their hands and sat on the long bench in the canteen. Food for nine students was served on the long table. Marla guided the students to say the prayers after which all of them ate the food. Marla, Danya and the mothers usually shared the food with the students because rarely would all the nine students be present on any one day. The students ate using forks and spoons but Fikri and Kir were fed by their mothers. Then the students washed their hands and walked back to the classroom. After removing their shoes, two or three of them took their toothbrushes and walked into the bathroom. The rest played with toys until it was their turn to go into the bathroom to brush teeth. Ash always bathed after brushing his teeth. Sometimes Marla took them one by one into the bathroom to bathe. They would be instructed to towel dry and dress themselves up. After that

they would all sit down either at the table or on the floor for some cognitive work or sit in front of the television for singing and dancing. Then one by one the students would leave after bidding the teacher goodbye.

Marla did not follow a fixed routine in her classroom instruction, and the lesson flow moved according to the students. Although she had the lesson plan, it was not adhered to strictly; sometimes what she did in class was totally different from what she had planned. She did not refer to the lesson plan during the day. Sometimes it was Physical activities after the breakfast at 8.00 in the morning but at other times it was pre-academic activities. Self-help skills like brushing teeth and bathing were also not carried out everyday. It depended on the time they returned from the canteen. She went about teaching as if she had memorised the activities in the lesson plan but triangulation between document analysis and observation showed differences between what she had planned and what she did in the classroom.

Nonetheless, she felt that it was a preschool and not a nursery for the students to just come to and play; they must needs learn something, be it formal or informal. She said, “At least everyday *ada benda yang dia belajar formal ke tak formal, bukan pergi sekolah dia main-main* (something that the students learns, whether it is formal or informal, he does not come to school to play) it’s not a nursery it’s a school (T2/INT/07).

The flow chart in Figure 4.8 represents the structure in place. The constant activities are the free play and the meal times. The activities which took place in between these two were constantly changed.

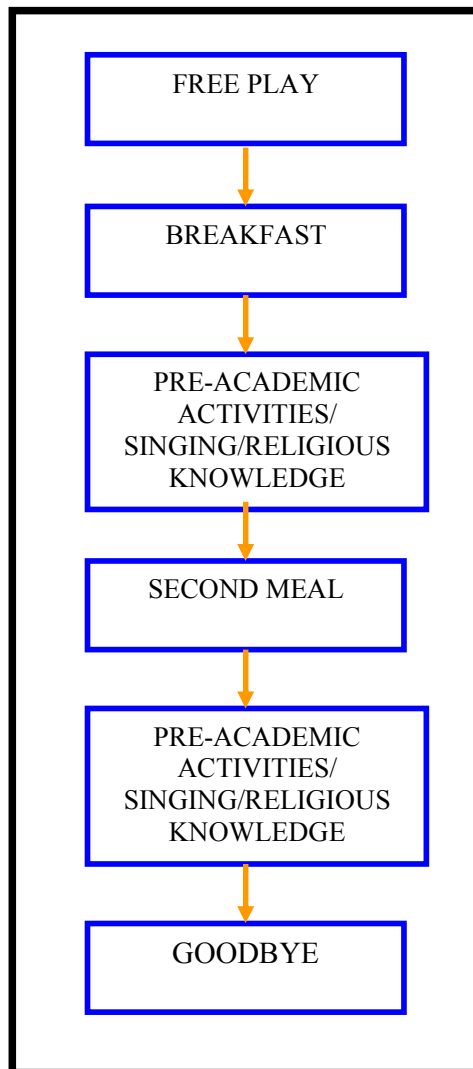


Figure 4.8. Sequence of daily instruction in Lakes Preschool

Although not strictly adhered to, the routine explained and depicted in Figure 4.8 was kept to, most days. However, there was no clear demarcation between the components although her lesson plan had activities for each component. Then again, during observation I noticed that the learning outcomes of the various components appeared at different points in the whole day's lesson. There were a lot of ad hoc teaching instances brought about by the students' own activities in the classroom,

since Marla liked to use whatever activity the students were engaged as an opportunity in to teach a skill or learning outcome.

One-to-one Instruction

Marla gave all her students the same worksheet. When all the students were seated at the table, both Marla and Danya sat with one student each and guided the student in joining the dots or colouring. When the student had completed the work, Marla and Danya helped other students. But Marla constantly called out the student's names to make them pay attention to the work that they were doing. Since she had nine students she got the help of the parents to provide this one-to-one instruction especially during the beginning of the year. They helped the students hold pencils, and according to her, the students learnt faster. Marla stated that compared to her first batch of students, she could start doing writing activities sooner with her second batch because they learnt to hold the pencil faster. She said, *“Lepas itu the second year bila I ajak parents masuk buat activity itu cepat I nampak dia punya positive cepat sebab they will help pegang... (T2/INT/07).* (After that in the second year when I invited the parents to do the activity I saw the positive effects because the parents will help them to hold...) She decided on getting the parents to help after her trip to New Zealand, where she saw the support group working together with the teacher to help the students. She stressed that:

...seorang pembantu tak cukup sebab bila nak buat tulisan dia mesti nak individual bila kita nak buat individual budak ini dah pergi itu I experience so second year I try bawa as a support group bila I pergi NZ I tengok dia orang buat support group buat kerja macam itu kan.

(T2/INT/07)

(One assistant is not enough because when they write they need individual attention so the second year I tried to bring in the support group. When I went to NZ I saw them using the support group.)

Marla added that she allowed the parents to help in the class for three months after which she did not require them because the students would have learnt to hold the pencils. However, I noticed that this was not so because even during the middle of the year, Fikri and Kir's mothers continued to sit in the class throughout the lesson. They left the class only if they had personal errands to run. Marla even told Danya to stop cooking so that she could help her provide one-to-one instruction. She told Danya, "*kalau you rasa penat tak payah masak.*" (If you feel tired you do not need to cook). The most important thing they learn something in school (T2/INT/07). So the students walked to the canteen at half past nine everyday for their meals.

Besides providing this one-to-one instruction during writing activities, Marla's individualised instruction also included talking to the students at the pace they could follow. Since her teaching concentrated more on Self-Help Skills, Language and Social and Emotional activities; she spoke to them individually, imparting the steps leading to the acquisition of the skills in short, precise and simple language. The following extract is an example of how she provided individualised instruction to Am who had just had a bath.

Teacher tells Am, *lap badan Am, lap* (wipe your body, Am). *Keringkan badan* (Dry your body). Am *mari sini* (Am, come here) she calls him. Ties the towel around him. Am puts powder for himself, then he puts for the teacher. The towel drops. *Ambil towel* (Take the towel). *Tutup* (Cover). *Malu* (Shame). She ties it around him again. She puts the t-shirt

on the head and directs him to pull it down. *Satu tangan.*(One hand)
Tangan yang lain. (The next hand.) Am struggles to put it on, teacher
 helps him. *Tanggalkan towel.* (Let go off the towel.) *Ok kita pakai*
seluar. (Ok we now wear trousers.) He sits down. Puts on the trousers.
Pandai Am (Clever Am) *boleh pakai seluar.*(can put on trousers.) She
 folds the towel for him. Gives it to him. *Ambil towel.*(Take the towel.)
Masuk dalam beg.(Put in the bag.) *Mana beg Am?*(Where is Am's bag?)

(T2/OBS/04)

Marla's daily teaching also took the student's character into consideration. Marla felt that her knowledge of her students' character helped her a great deal in teaching the students. For instance, she used her knowledge of the students' character when distributing work to them. When she wanted to give the students worksheets she would always first hand it to Haz and Ash because she knew that they could not sit too long. Only after settling them would she distribute to the others. Sometimes she made use of these two to distribute the worksheets. She opined that by keeping these two occupied, she managed to avoid unnecessary disruptions caused by behaviour problems. Usually Mim was the last to receive the worksheets because Marla knew that he could be left alone to play on his own until she had settled the others. After distributing the work to the students she kept calling out to the students to make sure that they were doing the work and not daydreaming Am. Although Am was a better student, she never left him on his own because she knew that he needed to be prompted constantly.

Catered to Students' Interests

Besides character she also took mood, likes and dislikes into consideration, to the extent that she was willing to forego the routine or the planned activities if the

students were not inclined to do them. For instance, if she saw the students enjoying themselves in whatever activity they were engaged in at that time she would not make them stop that activity just to continue with her lesson plan. She said, “Macam memberus gigi I tak buat sebab (Like brushing teeth, I do not do because he gets) carried away by dia punya (his) excitement melompat kadang (jumping sometimes) bila kita tengok dia seronok (when he see him happy) sebab baru (because then) jadi kita pun kadang (we are also) leka bukan leka tapi (relaxed but)have fun dia lompat (at his jumping) ... (T2/INT/08).” So she let the students continue the activity until they wished to stop. In spite of having students like Ash who liked to run away when taken out, she still had activities like blowing soap bubbles and water play outside the classroom because she knew that all of them liked these activities. She liked to end the day with activities that students enjoyed like singing and dancing so that they would want to return to the preschool the next day.

She even told the mothers who sat in the class to allow their children to walk around the classroom but the mothers were not keen; preferring to do something related to academic work. Ken’s mother insisted that he should always be occupied doing activities related to academia such as reading and writing. So when the mother was not there she encouraged Ken to explore the classroom. Marla said that Ken, a student with hearing impairment, laughed and managed to say a few words on the rare days when his mother left him in the preschool classroom.

During the art lesson students were allowed to use the water colour paint and become messy. In spite of the cleaning work after the activity, Marla said that these types of activity made the students creative and she could assess them for further teaching.

One of her students, Riz a high functioning student was allowed to learn lessons on the computer from the time he walked into the class until he left because he liked to use the computer. However, he came to the preschool only once a week.

Marla also tried to get the students to play with the things that they made in the classroom during other activities. She got the students to link plastic parts to form a chain as part of a Physical activity. Then she used the same chain to teach a Cognitive concept, long and short. Finally she used the chain for them to jump over and crawl under, again another Physical activity. She said that, “*Supaya dia tahu benda yang dia boleh buat boleh main with that dia buat itu bukan buat simpan tapi they can play with the benda yang dia dah buat... (T1/INT/08)*” (To let them know that they can play with the things that they have made, the things are not just for storing after doing but for playing). Not only in the activities but also in teaching materials, her criterion was student centred.

Her activities sometimes followed the students’ choice of toys, books; or what Marla had in mind rather than what was in the lesson plan. for instance if the student picked up the ‘*kompang*’ a musical instrument then the activity for the next half an hour would be students hitting the *kompang*, then walking around while hitting it, following the direction that the teacher showed while holding it.

Repetition

While teaching, she assessed her students. When she saw that her students were still not able to wash hands, she repeated the LO. The same could be said for pressing something out of tubes like the toothpaste or gum. So she designed more activities where students had opportunities to practice these skills. She said that she would increase the students’ use of gum so that they would get related practice to help them in pressing the toothpaste.

She always repeated the instructions. She also continually repeated the names of things around them for the students to remember. She repeated activities like reciting the prayers before eating while holding their hands in the correct position. She encouraged the students to follow her when she recited. Besides the prayers, she also often repeated the names of the utensils used for eating such as the plates, forks, spoons and bowls. Repetitions such as this while talking to the students helped them remember the names of the objects as well as internalise some of the skills. Marla reinforced what the students had learnt in class with repetitions of similar exercises on the computer. She had organised the activities on the computer to match the one that she did in the class. For example, after learning alphabets she got some of the students to practice using the program Letter Machine. She tried to relate the lessons she had taught in class to the ones in the computer as much as possible. She explained that:

...selalu ambil programme yang related to apa yang dia belajar macam kita belajar cognitive besar kecil kan so they are doing size dalam computer saiz itu yang large, medium, medium shoes itu dia tingkatkan dia punya vocabulary dekat computer so normally I akan kait kalau ajar number dia akan belajar yang numbers.

(T2/INT/11)

(...always take something that is related to what he is learning in the class, cognitive, big or small, so they are doing size in the computer. large, medium, medium shoes, he is able to improve his vocabulary. I am able to relate it to what he is learning in the class. I can relate it to number if he is studying numbers.)

Even family members were not spared when it came to repetition and conversation topic. Family members were always brought into the picture when

Marla talked about them in the class. She encouraged the students to do work by telling them that they can show their work to their sister or mother. She also talked to them about members of the family they liked. Marla liked to tell Ash to show his work to his sister Akila.

Managing Behaviour during Implementation

Marla had the patience of a saint and the voice of an angel to go with it when it came to managing her students' behaviour problems. During my sojourn with her I hardly heard her raise her voice even though there were times when the students' behaviour tried her patience. For instance, when a student climbed onto the table she would not shout. Patiently she walked towards them as she talked to them calmly. She believed in training the students correctly from the beginning. Then they would always use the correct method because they would have made an association; the next time they climbed onto the table, they would come down slowly but if we had made them jump by shouting, every time they climbed they would also jump down, she said.

She believed that one of the ways to manage the students was to make them follow the classroom rules from the first day of school. She said:

...first day normally they get used to school learn . I kata ya lah (yes) tapi mesti ada (but must have) procedures mesti ada (must have) rules yang budak boleh ikut (that children can follow on) the first day tak boleh main-main (cannot play on) the first day dah start holding the pencil dah start colouring. (T2/INT/17)

However, not all her nine students displayed behaviour problems. In fact, none of them had behaviour problems like Kayla's students. Ash liked to run away,

throw things and scribble on any surface; and Han liked to throw things. All the others just sulked or cried for a while when something happened. But, most of the times Marla's knowledge of the students' character helped her prevent untoward behaviours from happening. And if it did, she tried to stop them quickly by talking to the students and diverting their attention.

According to Marla she was able to prevent potential behaviour problems from occurring because she made it a point to understand her students' characters. So she studied the students' character from the first day they came to the preschool. She gathered and stored information about the students in her memory. She learnt about who should be attended to first, who can be kept waiting, who can work alone quietly and who was able to disrupt the whole class. Having gathered this information she acted accordingly when giving work in the class. Marla always selected the student she wanted to teach first when giving a group activity so that they would not disrupt the rest of the class. She left the quieter students to play with the toys while she concentrated on the energetic ones. She would call on the quiet ones, once the active students were involved in their work

For example, her eyes were always on students like Ash and Han who would misbehave at the slightest provocation. She believed in physically holding the leader of the class, Ash. She always settled him with work before attending to the others because if left alone, he would immediately go under the table or the bed or scribble on any flat surface with a colour pencil, pen or even crayon. The other boys would then follow him.

She was able to judge when they were tired; and when she should give them a break from the activity. That reduced the chances of misbehaviour due to tiredness or boredom. She always looked out for signs that showed that the students were bored.

She would stop whatever the students were doing and took them out to blow bubbles with soap water, an activity that they enjoyed. She liked to do activities which the students liked to prevent unwanted behaviours. Whenever Kir refused to get up from her place or do the work assigned to her, Marla always sang a nursery rhyme which Kir would also sing along. Immediately Kir would listen and do what is required of her. She also ensured that a disruptive student like Ash was always kept occupied. When it was time for break she would, "...tell him to *susun mangkuk, sudu dan garpu*. (arrange the bowl, spoon and fork.) Then I talk to them, I ask them questions. You must use the opportunities to teach them." (T2/INT/01). So besides keeping his behaviour in check, she also taught him by talking to him and asking him questions. She also made Ash clean the surfaces that he had scribbled on.

Marla also turned certain incidents into a game. Ash, liked to throw whatever he had in his hand. One day he lifted a box, which had a lot of small toys inside it, to the centre of the classroom when only he and Mim were left after the others had gone home. Marla knew that he was going to throw the things out of the box. Danya scolded him and pointed a ruler at him. But Marla said, "*Tengok dalam kotak*. (Look into the box.) *Ada apa dalam kotak?* (What is there inside the box?) *Mari kita kira benda yang ada dalam kotak*. (Let's count the things inside the box.) She counted and he counted after her (T2/OBS/02)." Marla succeeded in changing the activity into a game. However, there were times when she could not prevent misbehaviour from happening; at times like that she tried to distract the student's attention.

Instead of making the wrong behaviour the focus of attention, Marla liked to divert the student's attention to something else when he/she started to misbehave. For instance, when Ash went into the kitchen to take something, Marla would go towards him, ask him a question about something else and at the same direct him out of the kitchen. At another instance, when Ash began to cry when his father wanted to

leave him in school. Marla asked him questions about his bag and diverted his attention so that his father could leave. Once when Mim started throwing things all over the place she told him, “*Tak mau baling-baling* (T2/INT/03).” (Do not throw.) Marla always tried to talk the students out of their temper tantrums. When Ash got bored with his Lego pieces with which he was building a house and started throwing them, Marla diverted his attention. She pointed to the house he was building and told him to make it higher. So from throwing the Lego pieces his attention was directed to making the house he was building, longer. When Ash took a ball to throw, Marla immediately held his hand and asked him, “*Main ball ya?*” (Do you want to play ball?) (T2/OBS/10), even though she knew that, that was not his intention. Another example was when Fikri was at the computer. She wanted to take him with the rest of them to the field so she distracted him from the computer by asking questions such as, “Teacher: *ini apa ni? Ini computer.*” (What is this? This is a computer). (T2/OBS/06), and then she switched off the computer while he was looking at her. So Fikri did not throw a tantrum.

She also tried to reason with the students. When Ash used the duster on his face she told him that it was smelly and showed him how to use it correctly, that was to clean the board. She instructed the students to replace the things that they had taken or thrown their proper places. She also ensured that the students followed her instructions. But sometimes Marla did resort to using threats, as I noticed during my second phase of observation. Marla and Danya used a certain girls name to threaten Haz so that she did her work. There were also times when Danya used rulers to discipline the students but Marla was not in favour of it, at all.

Assessment in Instruction

Marla assessed the students when they first came to school. Usually the parents sat with the students as she assessed them. According to her, parents interfered in the assessment, helping the students whenever they could not do the activity because they were afraid that their child would not be accepted into the preschool if it could not do what was asked. She added that the parents would insist that their child could perform with a little prompting from them. Since she could not convince the parents not to interfere, the following year she decided that she would test the students in a separate room without the parents' presence.

Marla felt that testing after teaching was important because that was the only way to know if the student has mastered the skill. In fact she said that she followed the 3T method that is, TEACH-TEST-TEACH. So after the initial assessment, she taught the students what she had planned for them. Then she tested them to see if they had mastered the skills. She would teach the skill again, only if they hadn't.

Observations during Implementation

Like Kayla, Marla's main form of assessment were observations when the students were involved in doing activities, to see if they have acquired or are able to perform specific learning outcomes. Sometimes during one activity she could assess the students on several LO simultaneously. Tearing coloured papers into small pieces to paste on the art paper was one such activity. She could assess if the students could tear, press the tube to take out the gum and paste the torn paper on the art paper. There were certain Learning Outcomes for which she would take them away individually to test, even though she felt that assessment should be held in context. But she made sure that the student was in the mood to be assessed. She waited for the student to be ready before she assessed them. She said that if the

student was not ready he would be stressed or bored as explained in the extract below:

So that dia tak stress sebab sebelum dia rasa penat you kena stop sebab bila kalau dia rasa penat dia tak nak lagi (he is not stressed because before he is tired, you have to stop because if he feels tired he will not repeat) it's a bad experience for him. (T2/INT/09)

She made the students do certain activities like jumping on the trampoline, and then she made mental notes as to who could jump from the trampoline, who could do it without assistance, who could land on both their feet. Assessments were also carried out when the students were eating in the canteen. For example she gave Mim a glass of juice to see if he could drink using a straw. She bought ice creams for the students to assess if they could lick. She said that sometimes her students who were able to do certain actions like lifting the leg during the singing sessions refused to do so when she asked them at random. She opined that the students were able to understand the instructions but did not want to do as told because they thought it weird to be lifting their legs for no reason.

Marla also assessed the students by asking them to do simple instructions. Through these instructions she found out if the students could recognise the different furniture in the classroom. *...I actually I nak tahu dia tahu tak meja guru kita punya focus meja guru dia tahu tak meja guru.* (I want to know if he knows which is the teacher's table) My focus is on teacher's table. (T2/INT/06)

She also made them paint with water colour paint to assess their character and ability. She said she used this information when teaching them in the class. For instance, she gauged Han's character through his art work. She knew that he liked to focus on only one thing at a time. In fact Marla could explain each student's

character by referring to the way he/she had used the paint on the art paper. However, her knowledge of the students' character was not clearly put to use while teaching them because all of them were usually engaged in the same work. Marla said that to save time in teaching she would first test the student's ability. For instance, she gave all the students the different types of fasteners like buttons, zips and Velcro. The student who was able to use the fasteners was not taught that specific one. Riz could fasten the small buttons so he was exempted from practicing with even the big buttons based on the assumption that he should be able to do so. Then again there were skills that she would first test on Haz a high functioning student. If she could not perform a particular skill then Marla did not waste her time testing the others students, again based on an assumption that if the best student could not perform a skill then the others also could not do it.

One area which she focused on as a result of her assessment was the Social and Emotional component. She made sure that the students could sit together and play; share the stationery and toys and apologise when they hit each other. She concentrated on the student who lacked in social skills by making him/her engage in activities which involved the other students.

Documenting and Using the Results

Marla wrote comments on the worksheets done by the students. Since all the students did the same worksheets, these comments included information on how much help was provided to help the student complete that worksheet as well as observations she had made when the student was doing the worksheet. She also added comments under the 'impact' column of the lesson plan. She said that the comments that she wrote daily under the 'impact' column helped her decide on which student to focus the next day.

She used that she used the comments in the worksheets and the lesson plan to complete the checklist for each student. It was necessary to record three assessment results in the checklist. Since the dates were staggered over the year, she had to depend on her memory, when she wanted to grade the students according to the 'Star System' in the checklist.

The checklist was used to write the overall progress report for each student. Marla included the report in the students' profile which was sent to the head teacher for approval. The parents were also informed about their children's overall performance. However, the parents were aware of their children's progress because they met Marla on most of the days when they brought their children to the preschool. The profile also included the student's worksheets. She used the profile to convince the mainstream primary school to include the students she thought were suitable for inclusion into Year One.

Case Three: Islands Preschool Classroom

Sheila's classroom instruction hierarchy began with the planning stage followed by implementation, and the assessment that was carried out during implementation. The focus of instruction in this classroom was to prepare the students for primary one in the special education primary school. High functioning students were given academic work so that they could be placed in one of the better classes. The moderate functioning students were given academic work that would help them cope in primary one. Instruction for the low functioning students just centred on disciplining them, to ensure that they were capable of sitting at the table without walking around the classroom. Assessment focused on gauging the students' performance level in each of the Learning Outcomes. Sheila used the checklist to document the students' achievement. She asserted that she gave the parents' yearly progress reports but admitted that she was unable to do so during that year due to time constraints. The following paragraphs provide detailed description of the Islands Preschool Classroom context, and how planning, implementation and assessment were provided in the Islands Preschool Classroom.

Context

It was seven in the morning; Sheila and the teacher assistant were the only occupants of the Islands Preschool. Sheila was walking around collecting her teaching materials, and at the same time talking to teachers who were passing by the classroom. The teacher assistant was having her breakfast while preparing the ingredients for the days mid morning meal. Students walked into the classroom one by one, with or without their parents. The students were greeted by Sheila and the teacher assistant at times; usually if and when their parents instructed them to greet the teachers. Sometimes the parents had discussions with Sheila about their child's

progress or the lack of it. There was a lot of one way dialogue between Sheila and the students, however, the students with speech were encouraged to provide answers for the questions posed. One or two of the students shared the teacher assistant's breakfast but this was not a regular event. The students sat at their designated places at the table for the day's lesson to begin. Class commenced at eight o'clock in the morning. This early morning scenario was repeated during the two phases of my data collection.

Islands Preschool Classroom

The Islands Preschool is neither as close to the mainstream blocks as the Lakes Preschool nor as isolated as the Rivers Preschool. But, the mainstream students hardly came by the preschool as was the case in the Lakes Preschool. However, a few mainstream teachers came to use the toilet facilities just like the teachers in the other two preschools. Next to the preschool is the fenced playground with a swing, a slide, a see-saw and a doll house.

The Islands Preschool classroom floor plan, as shown in Figure 4.6, was also different from the other two preschools. The preschool was divided into three areas, the classroom proper, the kitchen and the toilet. There were two entrances into the classroom, one at each end of the room. One door was open but the grille gate was always kept locked. The top right corner of the room which accounted for one quarter of the whole classroom, was partitioned off with opaque glass boards which were about three feet in height. Sheila used this enclosed area for dining and storage purposes since she did not have a storeroom. The kitchen and the toilets were separated from the classroom proper by a wall which formed an arch in the middle for access. An arched window also connected the dining area to the kitchen. The

toilet was at the extreme right corner of the classroom. The toilet had two cubicles and two wash basins for the students to brush their teeth.

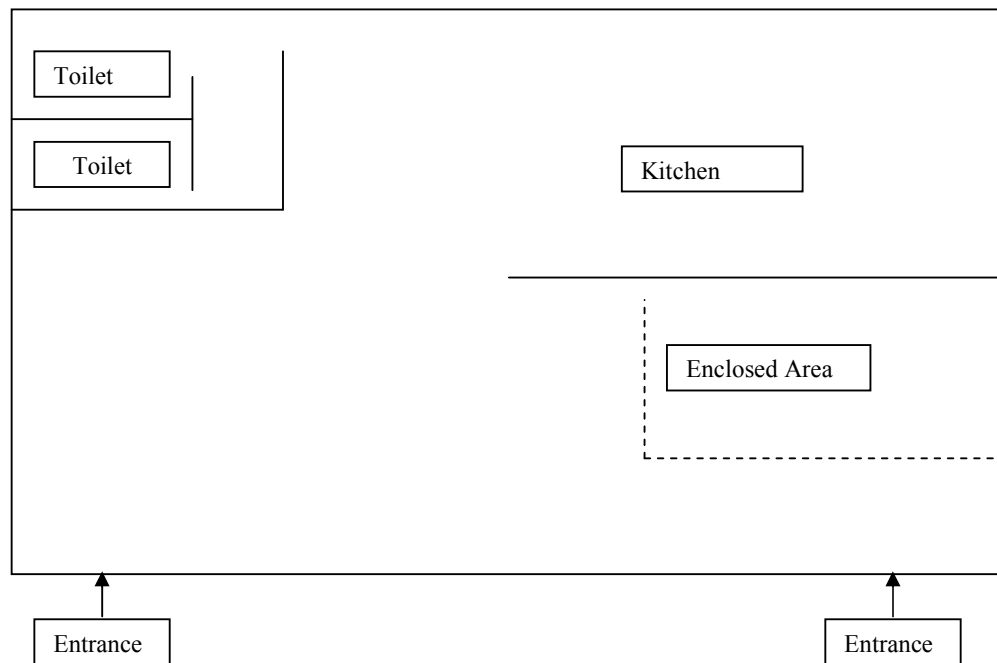


Figure 4.9. The floor plan of Islands Preschool Classroom

The occupants of the Islands Preschool are Sheila, the teacher; Jayshri, the teacher assistant; and their eight students. Detailed descriptions of these people are given below.

Sheila

Sheila was a total change from the other two participants in terms of age, experience and academic qualification. Tall and slender Sheila was always filled with youthful exuberance to carry out classroom instruction. Never a moment went without her saying something; be it instructions to the students, making remarks to

the teacher assistant or passing comments to the teachers who were walking along the corridor outside her classroom.

Sheila received her diploma in teaching from a teachers training college. Her interest in teaching children with special needs started when she took Special Education as one of her elective subjects in the college. After her training she was posted to a primary school for children with hearing impairment, where she taught mathematics which was her option in the teachers training college. The experiences gained at this school encouraged her to accept her present post, that of teaching preschool CSN.

Sheila stressed that preschool teachers for CSN had a lot on their plate. They had to attend to several matters, "...I have to prepare the reports, after that I have to think of teaching materials for them, then there are different types of reports..." (T3/INT/11).

Smartly dressed Sheila was sometimes in two minds about certain things. For instance, her involvement in the mainstream activities according to her, disrupted her work in the preschool but at the same time she agreed that it was necessary for her to know what was happening in the school. She agreed that some of the courses that she had been attending, pertaining to the preschool had managed to confuse her. She had her set ways of carrying out instruction.

Sheila attended courses conducted by MOE and the State Education Department but often these courses left her confused. When she was first exposed to the programme by MOE,

...yes they gave us the course but in my mind I could not picture what was required of me, because the preschool class has not existed yet. When we have started teaching then we can understand the concept. But the courses

did not focus on teaching and learning strategies, instead they focused on classroom management and after that on the records in the programme.

(T3/INT/11)

So she ended up providing instruction according to her understanding. One day the students and Sheila sat in a circle on the floor. The students watched her as she made a lorry from coloured paper. Having made the lorry, she got up, told the students to take their places at the table. When asked why only one lorry was made, she replied that it was a group activity designed for the Social component. Sheila added that when attending courses she was motivated to follow the strategies introduced by the experts in the field. However the spirit to do the activities waned when she could not carry out the activities suggested during courses due to the students' disabilities.

Sheila stated that she used the curriculum to plan and implement instruction and then she assessed the students on what she had taught them. Sheila stated that, "*Curriculum, penilaian dan pengajaran. Dari curriculum kita akan ajar, dari ajar itu kita nilailah.*" T3/INT/14) (Curriculum, assessment and teaching. From the curriculum, we teach, from what we have taught, we carry out assessment." T3/INT/14) However, there were differences between what she said and what she did in the classroom because her instruction in the classroom focused on academic activities.

The Teacher Assistant

Sheila's teacher assistant, Jayshri, or as Sheila called her Kak J, was two years senior to her. Small built and quiet, she had a dry sense of humour. Jayshri came early to school to prepare the ingredients for cooking. Then she had breakfast

with the students who came as early as 7.00 in the morning. When the rest of them had arrived, Jayshri sat with Sheila to help her teach the students. At about 9.30 she left the group to prepare the meal. Like Medha, Jayshri preferred to cook for the students rather than take them to the canteen for two reasons. Firstly, the canteen was quite a distance away so it took time to walk there and back. Secondly, Ris, a boy with Cerebral Palsy could not walk that distance nor manage the steps along the way. However, Sheila and Jayshri took the students to the canteen once in a while to get them used to it, because they had to buy their food when they attended the primary school. In addition, they also made the trip a treat for the students. They used a wheelchair to take Ris then.

Jayshri helped serve the food to the students. She also fed one of the students who could not feed himself. After the meal, Jayshri together with Sheila's help, cleaned the kitchen and the dining area as soon as the students had finished eating. She then assisted Sheila in teaching them until it was time for them to go home at half past 11.00. Sheila and Jayshri got along well. They knew how much to give and take with each other so that the lesson had a smooth flow, but it was obvious that Sheila was always in control.

The Students

During the first phase of data collection, Sheila had five students. Ris, Min, Lan, and Fami came daily but Yan and Chun came only once a week. Then Thira and Riza joined the class and Yan became a regular student coming five days a week. However, Chun still came only once a week. Table 4.3 provides the details of the students in her classroom.

Table 4.3

Information about the students in Islands Preschool

Name	Age	Gender	Type Of Disability	Level/Characteristic	Behaviour
Ris	6	Male	Cerebral Palsy	High functioning. Has speech. Able to do work independently	Well mannered.
Min	6	Male	Autism	High functioning. Has speech. Able to answer simple questions	Well mannered but cried once in a while
Yan	6	Male	Autism	Moderate functioning. Has speech, mostly repeats what is said	Liked to walk around
Lan	6	Male	Mental Retardation	Low functioning. Incoherent speech	Liked to play with pencils
Riza (registered in October)	6	Female	Mental Retardation	High functioning. Able to hold conversation	Well behaved
Thira (registered in September)	6	Male	Mental Retardation	Moderate functioning. Has speech and understands simple instructions	Cried a lot but was afraid of Sheila. Wanted to see his mother all the time.
Fami	5	Male	Autism	Low functioning. No speech	Pleasant child. Walked around the classroom the whole day
Chun	5	Male	Cerebral Palsy	Moderate functioning. Has speech. Can memorise letters, opposites of words and digits.	Cried if his mother moved away from him.

Planning Instruction

Her planning involved writing daily lesson plans, preparing the teaching material and arranging the setting of the classroom. Sheila like, Kayla and Marla the prepared lesson plans. These plans had already been saved in her computer to be printed out for every day of the week. She liked to plan lessons before hand if she had to go for courses which lasted a week or more. Although she prepared the lesson plans, Sheila was not much in favour of another teacher teaching her students. She opined that they might not know how to handle her students. Moreover she felt that they might use techniques which were not suitable for her students.

Usually for two days I will worksheets for them, but if one week I will not. I don't allow the replacement teacher to teach because I know how I teach, the students might not master, and moreover the teachers are just replacement. They don't know about these students.

(T3/INT/06)

So even though the lesson plans were prepared, they were more for administrative purposes and not used in practice. The replacement teachers did whatever they wanted to do, of which Sheila did not really much. She thought that they did colouring. On the other hand if she went off for one or two days, she prepared worksheets for the students to do. These worksheets were based on lessons that the students had already done so it was like a revision, which the teacher assistant and the replacement teacher could do with the students.

When both Sheila and Jayshri were involved in school functions she spoke to the parents, "... I don't tell them not to come. I will inform them about the activity, and also tell that both Jayshri and I were involved in the activity. I tell them that I don't know what to do with the students if they

come to school. Then the parents will inform that they would keep the student at home... (T3/INT/11)

During implementation Sheila carried out the activities in the lesson plan according to the various components. If she managed to complete a specific activity before the stipulated time, she would sit with the students, either doing nothing or just playing with them until it was time for the next activity. Although the number of Muslim students in the Island Preschool warranted an Islamic Religion teacher, they did not have one. So, during the periods allocated for this subject Sheila got them to sit on the floor to watch whatever programme that was playing on the television at that time or played with them. However, prolonged engagement in this preschool disclosed that Sheila did not believe in carrying out activities related to Creativity and Aesthetics as she had written in the lesson. She opined that students did not want to do academic related work such as pre-writing and numbers if instead they were given work related to Art and Craft on a regular basis. She felt that they enjoyed doing these activities so much that they were distracted from pre-academic work.

Sheila believed that good planning was necessary for smooth implementation of the lesson. She stated that, “Before doing the lesson plan we must think carefully. Planning is important.” (T3/INT/14) But, sometimes Sheila’s lesson plan had nothing whatsoever to do with what actually happened in the classroom. For instance, during the last two weeks of school, Sheila prepared the students for the transition to primary school by taking them over to the primary classroom and being there with them. But the lesson plan indicated that she was carrying out the activities for the nine components in the Curriculum Specification. Sheila stated that she could not write transition in her lesson plan because it was not an activity recognised in the

Curriculum Specification. Then at other times the lesson was not carried out as planned because she was involved with other duties such as preparing the back drop for Prize Giving day. During these times the students just did the worksheets that were prepared for them.

Sheila's sources for planning were her discussions with other preschool teachers during courses organised by the State Education Department and MOE. Her ideas for activities related to the Creativity component were derived from her Art classes during her teacher training days. The primary special education teachers and the mainstream preschool teacher from her school did not provide much input pertaining to classroom instruction. However, certain activities like Prize Giving Day were carried out together with the mainstream preschool students.

Sheila stated that she used the Assessment Kit to assess the students but she did not record the information nor did she use the information for preparing the lesson plans. She preferred to concentrate on providing instruction from the first day. As an initial step towards it, she focused on disciplining the students during the first few days. She made them get used to sitting at the table for definite periods of time. However, at the same time she prepared the lesson plans according to the format given by MOE.

Sheila's focus was on lesson plan, activities, teaching materials and the arrangement of the physical setting when planning for instruction. She had specific criteria for each, but sometimes they were similar for lesson plan, activities and teaching material. The detailed explanation of the foci and the criteria for planning instruction in Sheila's classroom follows. Planning based on Curriculum Specification

Sheila's lesson plans, activities and the teaching material were based on the LOs in the Curriculum Specification, but the physical setting of the classroom was

according to the Components. Sheila's steps in preparing the lesson plan comprised selecting the theme, then the learning outcomes from the components in the Curriculum Specification and finally designing activities for the learning outcomes as shown in the flow chart below. Then she prepared the teaching material for the activities.

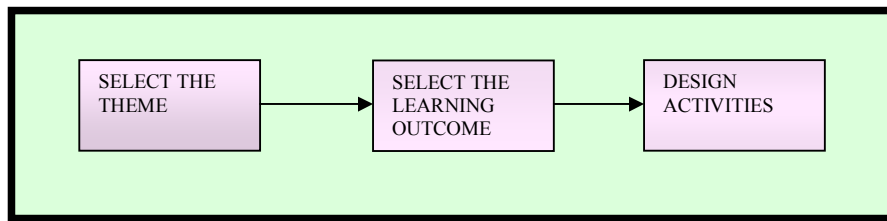


Figure 4.10. Steps involved in preparing lesson plan in Islands Preschool

Sheila's lesson plan was based on a theme but she had no specific criteria in selecting the theme, preferring to take the themes from the list provided. By October she had already completed all the 21 themes with her students and was doing a revision with them, repeating the themes that she had done in the beginning of the year because the students might have forgotten them. She spent about one to two weeks on each theme again depending on the ability of her students. If she was satisfied with their performance while doing that theme then she would only spend a week on it, otherwise it would be two weeks.

Her lesson plans focused on LOs related to Self-Help Skills and the Physical component in the beginning of the year until the month of May, after which her stress was on LOs connected to the Cognitive and the Language components. Her contention was that by the middle of the year the students had already mastered the Self-Help Skills so she did not have to do them any more. Moreover she had to prepare the students for the national level carnival held in the beginning of the year,

so she would concentrate on the Physical component. She also reasoned that the gym which she used for the Physical activities would be used by other teachers from the second trimester onwards, so she preferred to use it in the beginning of the year. Moreover the first three months were like a trial period for the students, so she did a lot of physical activities during that period.

As shown in Figure 4.10, Sheila selected the LO from the Curriculum Specification before designing the activities. Some of the activities that Sheila designed for components like Self-Help Skills, Social and Emotional, Aesthetics and Creativity followed the Learning Outcome literally. For instance, if the LO was to take off and put on shoes, her activity for helping the students achieve this LO was exactly that. The students took turns to put on and take off a pair of canvas shoes with Velcro flaps while sitting on the floor, although Sheila had instructed them to take off their footwear and leave them on the shoe rack outside the classroom everyday before coming into the classroom. When asked the reason for doing this activity Sheila lamented that not all the students wore shoes to school in spite of being instructed to do so. So she carried out the activity to assess if the students had mastered that LO.

She said that the LOs that she selected for the lesson plan were based on the students' strength, but that seemed implausible because she prepared only one lesson plan for the whole class. It would be difficult to prepare single lesson plans based on the individual strength of the students, although the implementation of the lesson in the class did seem to take it into account. If any of her students were able to achieve the LO that she had selected, then she would aim for a higher level LO for that particular student during implementation. She would not prepare a separate lesson plan for that student. Most of the LOs were repeated although the themes changed. If the students had achieved the LO, it is not repeated.

The physical setting of the classroom was divided according to the components in the Curriculum Specification. Sheila's classroom comprised centres for, Technology (C), Language and Communication (D), Spiritual and Moral (E), Creativity and Aesthetics (G), Cognitive and Manipulative (H). She opined that it was good to arrange the classroom according to the centres mentioned in the Curriculum Specification so that the students could go to the specific centres for the related activities.

Worksheets Catered for Students Ability

Sheila stated that the thematic approach provided her with a boundary, a guideline to planning the lesson. She added that it also reduced confusion among students by restricting the content taught to them. However, there were many instances when the theme was not depicted in her activities and teaching materials.

When Sheila referred to preparing material that was suitable for her students she was actually referring to the worksheets for the Cognitive and Language components that she specially prepared for Riz, Min and Yan, three of her high functioning students. The teaching materials that she prepared catered for the ability of her students because the books sold in the market were not suitable for her students.

She stated that the students would be happy if they could do the work they were given. Her philosophy was that her planning was effective and successful if the students were able to carry out the activity given to them and vice versa. So she took measures to ensure that the students were able to do the work she set out for them. For instance, her student Min did not like to write so she designed activities that allowed him to use the stamps with the alphabets and the stamp pad to print words on the paper. Sheila opined that the stamping activity encouraged Min to memorize

the words because he was happy doing the activity. She added that it would not have happened if Min had been forced to write the words.

On the other hand she also made sure that the students did not take advantage of her for doing so. She did not like to cater to preference when she was aware the student was able to do better. For instance, Riz, according to Sheila was able to spell simple words and numbers from one to twenty, but he forgot them easily especially after the holidays or if he missed classes. Although Sheila provided the spelling or gave him clues, she was inclined to scold him when he kept referring to her for the spelling of words when doing related exercises. Finally she gave him a list containing the spelling of the words from eleven to twenty to memorise again. She also felt that he had become lazy after having missed classes a few times. He also constantly asked to go to the toilet or for a drink of water, so she reprimanded him on that score too.

Sheila opined that she pushed students like Riz, Min and Yan in academic work because she knew that they were capable doing the work set for them. So they were always engaged in doing such exercises. Sheila documented the exercises in notebooks. She had two types of exercise books for these students, a long one and a short one in which she wrote all the work that she wanted them to do. The books were not specifically used for any one particular component but were used interchangeably for both Cognitive and Language. She concentrated on giving Mathematics work for Cognitive and learning letters and words for both the Malay and the English Language. When Sheila had to go away for training courses, she would prepare pages of written work, for both Mathematics and Language in the exercise books for all the three students. This work, which was not related to the theme of the week, would be based on previous exercises they had done so that the replacement teacher did not have to teach them over again.

According to Sheila, her activities should help prepare the students for Primary one. These were some of Sheila's opinions regarding designing activities for use in the classroom. Then again, she added that after being involved in the "interesting activities or fun activities or *seni* (art and craft) type of activities" (T3/INT/06) her students were not interested in doing Cognitive and Language component activities that involved writing in their exercise books. In fact, she claimed that they had become lazy after days of these fun activities. Hence, she did not like to do too much of the type of work that the students found interesting, like pasting and using coloured paper, because she had problems like getting Riz to do Cognitive and Language related work afterwards. She stated that Riz was not interested in doing the math and language work that she prepared in the exercise books for him; in fact he started giving excuses to go to the toilet whenever he was told to do so, especially when he saw that his friends were not doing the same work as he. So the other students were also not always given "fun activities". Her activities were more academic oriented for the high functioning students, while the moderate and low functioning students did simple work such as colouring and learning to follow simple verbal instructions.

However, the other students, who according to her were not able to do academic work, spent their time colouring pictures or doing some matching exercises.

Cost Effective Worksheets

Sheila did not spend much money for preparing her worksheets. The students had two notebooks, one for Language component and the other for Cognitive

component. Students did the work in their notebooks. The students had different types of exercise to do, depending on their abilities.

The high functioning students like Riz and Min, moderate functioning students like Yan, Thira and Riz had to write letters and numbers and do matching exercises. However, the amount of work and the difficulty level was determined by the students. Sheila wrote the first row of letter, digit or word in the book and the students were required to copy the letter, digit or word. Sheila also tried to cater to the student's preference, for instance, Min was given stamps and a stamp pad because he did not like to write. So his work was always related to Language and Communication component only. Sheila wrote words which he copied by using the alphabet stamps. He stamped the letters in boxes that have been drawn for the purpose.

The low functioning students had colouring work in their books. Since Sheila did not have much money to spend on teaching materials, she improvised by drawing all the necessary pictures. The pictures that the students used for the Creative component were also drawn by either Sheila or her teacher assistant. The pictures were related to the LO or the theme that she was doing with the students. She drew the pictures on A4 papers for the students to colour, or to do collage work with coloured paper or papier mache. Some examples of the objects that she drew for colouring were shoe and tomato; and carrot and clouds to do collage.

Since Sheila used free hand to write the worksheets, the presentation of the worksheets were affected. The digits, letters or words written in the notebook by Sheila were neither in a straight row nor evenly spaced out. Lines drawn to separate the digits, letters and words were not straight and the boxes that she drew were uneven in terms of size. The amount of work given in the pages was not evenly distributed. These hand made exercises were written in one colour only, black.

Activities were Meaningful to Students

Her activities were linked to real life to make them meaningful. For instance she taught the students how to use the dipper to pour water on themselves while bathing because of similar practices at home. According to Sheila, her activities were all linked to the students' daily life. She told them to put away the plates they used to eat into the wash basin in the kitchen. Only Ris was unable to do this. Whenever Ris wanted to go to the toilet, he would take off his trousers by himself and then either Sheila or Jayshri would hold his hands while he walked to the toilet and urinated. Then they helped him to walk back. He was left to put on his trousers by himself. The students were also taken to the canteen once a month because the following year they would have to go to the canteen for food so Sheila taught them to buy food, sit at the bench and eat, and put away the plate and glass after eating. She did not do it often because the canteen was far away, took up a lot of their time. Moreover it was difficult to carry Ris, who could not walk.

However, Sheila also engaged in activities which did not convey any meaning to the students. For instance, she taught them to put on their shirts for one whole week until she was satisfied that they could do so. She introduced a pair of canvas shoes and a shoe rack on which students have been leaving their shoes outside the door to the students who have been attending preschool for more than six months. She showed them how to put on and take off their shoes inside the classroom. She acknowledged that she did that particular activity even though the students are used to wearing shoes to the preschool.

The activities she used to expose the students to abstract concepts were not meaningful. For instance, Sheila used two apples to teach the concept clean and dirty. Both the apples were red in colour, but on the red apple she scratched some

black lines and said that the apple was dirty. She used pictures to teach the concept of day, night, hot and cold.

Physical Setting Aids Structure

According to Sheila, students spent about four hours in the preschool so the arrangement of the physical setting needed to take the students' condition into consideration. For instance, she had Ris who crawled on the floor. So she had to arrange the furniture in such a way that he was able to crawl from the table where he sat down to do work, to the dining area and the bathroom without knocking into the furniture. The centre of the classroom should be empty for the students to run about comfortably. Moreover if she were to block the classroom with book cases it would be difficult for her to wash the classroom or for the students to sit on the floor to do activities. She was not at all happy about the partition that covered one quarter of the classroom, which she was unable to remove since the structure was fixed to the ceiling of the classroom. So this area was used for meals and storing teaching materials.

Sheila did not state any specific criteria for arranging the physical setting. She liked to change the setting every year when she was bored with the arrangement but she always made sure that whatever changes she made was suitable for the students of that year. She would change the setting at the end of October just before the school closed for the year end holidays, on the premise that that if the current batch of students were comfortable with the changes then the following year's students would too. For instance, she had used the foldable flannel boards to erect a changing corner outside the toilets for the students to take off and put on their clothes after using the toilet. Previously all her students were boys so she was not too bothered about them doing so on the kitchen floor, but in late September a girl

had joined the class and it did not look proper for the girl to take off and leave her trousers on the kitchen floor, said Sheila. It was also partly done to put away things like the carpet so that it would not get dirty during the long break.

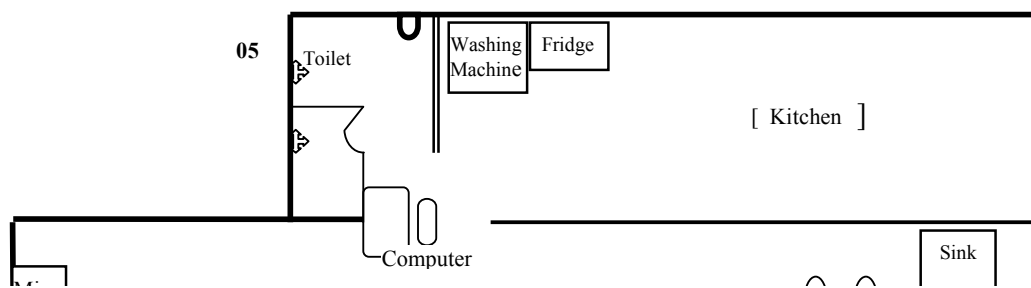
Despite stating that suitability was important, there were things which were not suitable for her students. The walls were filled with academic material like alphabets, numbers and charts with pictures and names of vegetable, fruits and vehicles. She added new things to the walls every year so her walls were full of alphabets, pictures and a calendar which was the latest addition but they were placed too high for the students to read. A white board where the students sometimes did matching activities was fixed to the wall about three feet above the floor, so some of the shorter students could not join in this activity. Since her soft board came after she had fixed the white board so she put it above the white board. This soft board which was about seven feet above the floor was where the students work was displayed, with their names written in bold capital letters. Sheila said that her students were able to identify their work when they stood near the white board, but taking the height into consideration it seemed to be a difficult task.

Nonetheless, there was a structure in the way Sheila used the classroom. Her students came through the main and only entrance into the classroom marked as 01, since the other door was always locked. Leaving their footwear on the shoe rack at the door, they head for the area marked 02, where there were two tables, a round and a square one. They sat at their designated places. Sheila carried out her pre-academic activities at these tables. Sometimes Sheila took the students to the area marked 03 to continue their pre-academic activities on the carpet. At 10 o'clock the students had their snack at the dining table marked as 04.

After the snack, the students washed up and used the toilet marked as 05 on Figure 4.11. Then they sat on the long bench next to the dining area, waiting for

Sheila. Meantime Sheila helped Jayshri clean-up after the meal. She also prepared the materials for the Art and Craft lesson. Sheila and Jayshri took the students to the middle of the classroom, the area marked as 06 to sit on the floor for the Art lesson. After that Sheila took the students back to the two tables 02 to continue doing the pre-academic work they had not completed or to do extra pre-academic work. The students were sometimes allowed to skip the second session of pre-academic work to play with the gym balls or on the trampoline until their parents came to take them home.

The areas that she frequently used were the two tables for Cognitive and Language activities; the floor next to the trampoline for Creativity component; the dining area for having their meals; and the area in front of the television for all kinds of activities including watching television.



Shoe rack

Figure 4.11. Physical Setting of Islands Preschool Classroom

Implementing Instruction

Sheila was of the opinion that the lesson implementation need not necessarily comply with what was written in the lesson plan. This statement contradicted what she had said earlier about planning being necessary for smooth implementation. As far as Sheila was concerned, the lesson plan was a document that she had to prepare, as it was required to be sent to the office at the end of the week for the headmistress's perusal and signature.

Sometimes I see that the lesson is very simple, all of them are able to do the skill, they can hit, and they can walk. Sometimes I don't follow the lesson plan. I just do what I want. I have informed the officer from the State Education Department. She informed me that it was up to me, whether I wanted to follow the lesson plan. But she advised me prepare the lesson because the school head wanted to see it. Teach what you want to teach.

(T3/INT/07)

Since she had had the officer's endorsement for what she was doing, she was quite brave. Moreover, in reality she had to prepare the students for Year One the following year. She was more interested in teaching what the students needed for Year One, so her implementation was skewed towards activities that concentrated on Cognitive and Language and Communication components for the high functioning students. On the other hand, the low functioning students were trained to sit at the table and not walk about when the teacher was teaching.

Implementing instruction in Sheila's words were, "For me, we see what the student cannot do, just focus on what the students cannot do. We give activities for LO that he has not mastered yet. Things that we have to teach, if the student can do, then we ignore them because he can do already, better for us to push the child to achieve what he cannot do. After he has achieved, then we can go on to more difficult work.

(T3/INT/10)

Sometimes the lesson plan had an LO which her students had already mastered. Some of the LO and the activities in the lesson plan were targeted at certain students only and the others were involved in totally different work.

Sometimes the activities that she carried out in the classroom were not related to the theme in the lesson plan.

Sheila had a structure when implementing the daily lesson but it usually followed the hierarchical nature of the lesson plan. During the first half of the year her implementation was based on the lesson plan format proposed by the Special Education Department in the MOE, but towards the end of the year her routine changed because the lesson plan format had been altered after a meeting at the state education office. Her instruction implementation leaned heavily towards catering to the students' ability; but other criteria like establishing a routine, integrated teaching were also attended to.

One-to-one Instruction

Instruction was implemented according to the student's ability, so assessment played a role in helping Sheila design appropriate exercises for each of her students. It helped her to group her students into three levels, high, moderate and low functioning and to make decisions on who could be "pushed" into doing Cognitive and Language activities; who should be given very simple work; and who should be given very minimal work.

Her high functioning students, Ris and Min were involved in doing only mathematics and Language worksheets the whole day. Sheila preferred to follow the Primary One curriculum for him because she felt that the preschool Curriculum Specification was no longer suitable as he had achieved all the LOs when he had joined the class the previous year.

Ris saya biasanya one day saya buat satu subject BM, BM dengan Maths, saya push sebab dia kita tak boleh push terlalu banyak saya input pun dia

tak boleh Riz you kena macam sehari dia buat matematik, matematik sajalah I mean dia slow buat tapi kita kena tumpu dengan dia lah. Biasa Ris saya buat maths dengan BM saja BM suku kata. T3/INT/06)

(Usually I teach Riz one subject a day, Malay Language and Maths, I push him to do the work, we cannot push him too much, he cannot take too much input, you can do one subject a day, if its mathematics, then only mathematics. I mean he is slow in doing the work but we have pay attention to him. Usually for Riz I do maths and Malay Language only, the syllables in Malay Language.)

Min was asked to copy words and digits but not in written form. He was given stamps and a stamp pad with which he stamped out the words in his exercise book. Although Sheila included Yan in the moderate level group, she made him copy out words and digits and say them repeatedly because he could write and had a good memory.

According to her, students who were not interested in “studying” like Lan, ought to be trained to do skills more related to Physical development such as helping to rearrange the chairs before and after class. She did not like to force the students who were not interested in studying into doing Cognitive activities. So her activities were focused on providing work that the students were able to do, but on newer skills in that area. She had two students who were five years old but only one came everyday. Chun, who came only once a week, was able to speak and memorise. So Sheila made him memorise simple antonyms the alphabets and numbers. On the other hand Fami who came everyday, was left to his own devices because her

assessment of him revealed that he could neither “study” nor understand instructions so she did not want to bore him by forcing him to join in the activities. She just wanted him to be able to sit at the table while the others were doing their work. This was not the case with Ris who had also joined when he was five. Sheila had ensured that Ris had achieved most of the LOs in the Curriculum Specification the previous year, so she insisted that he did academic exercises in the current year to prepare him for Year One. Therefore she did not want him to join the Aesthetics and Creativity work that the others were doing. However, sometimes she was forced to include him in such ‘fun activities’ because he would not pay attention to his work.

Fami who was five years old was there everyday. Among the other six-year olds, she stated that Ris and Min were high functioning students and the rest Yan, Riza, Thira, and Lan, ranged from moderate to low functioning students. But sometimes Yan and Thira did the same work as Min and Ris. Sheila preferred to do one-to-one with the students as she felt this strategy would help the students follow instructions easily and stay focused on what she was doing with them. She added that the students would also be more cooperative and would not try to evade from learning. The written work that she prepared for the students in the exercise books, took individual differences into consideration.

During Cognitive, Language and Communication, Self Help Skills an Art and Craft, Sheila provided one-to-one instruction as much as possible. She sat with the students, especially Riz, Min and Yan and taught them how to do the work that she had prepared for them. Riz had been with Sheila since he was five years old. She claimed that he had achieved all the LOs stated in the Curriculum Specification so she was now following the LOs in the Primary one curriculum for him, concentrating on Cognitive and Language and Communication components. So his work did not even follow the theme of the week. It was basically written work on

Mathematics, Malay and English Languages, but only at one subject a day because he was slow. Sheila made some contradictory remarks about Ris not following the activities in the CS. She first said that he would be bored if he did what was in the CS; a few days later she said that sometimes she did not do the “fun activities” with the other students because Ris would be distracted and would want to join in. When he returned to school after being absent for a few days, Sheila gave him an exercise where he had to write the word forms of digits 11 to 20. When he was unable to do it, Sheila helped him by giving him part of the letters of the digits but at the same time reprimanded him for having forgotten the spelling.

Her one-to-one instruction took the students’ preferences into consideration. For instance, Min did not like to write so he was given the stamp and stamp pad for him to stamp the letters in his book. She said that by stamping the letters he was able to memorise the word that he had stamped out, but if forced to write it, he not only refused to, but would also refuse to memorise the word. Min was also not interested in colouring. He liked matching and pasting activities so she gave him such work and she gave him different types of exercise saying that he got bored fast.

Sheila was aware that the students should be allowed to make choices and learn to do the activities by themselves. She stated that she allowed them to take the balls to play after the break, and also let them do their own work at art and craft. But during implementation, I noted that the students’ active participation was controlled or guided by Sheila through her one-to-one instruction, especially during the art and craft activities. If the students had to paint a picture, Sheila would dip the brush in the water colour paint and hand it to the students one by one, to colour the picture. The others watched and waited for his turn while one student painted the picture at a time.

During Cognitive and Language activities, the students received one-to-one instruction on completing written work which catered to their ability. All of them including Sheila and Jayshri sat at the square or round tables, which were next to each other during these activities. Sheila handed out the work that she had prepared for them in the exercise books, one by one. As she gave them their book or worksheet, she instructed them on how to do it. As she moved to the next student, Jayshri would move in to supervise the student who had been given the work. When the students improved, Sheila gradually withdrew the amount of support she gave them.

Established Routine

A typical day in Sheila's classroom started with students coming with their parents as early as seven in the morning. The first to arrive would be Min whose mother had to drop him at the preschool, before going on to her own school. Greetings were sometimes exchanged between the students and the teacher and teacher assistant, who were either sitting or walking around the classroom at that time. Sometimes Sheila would insist that they greet her after they had taken off and put away their shoes or slippers on the rack. Jayshri would share her breakfast if the students wanted it, or gave them biscuits to eat. The students were instructed to sit at their designated chairs which had their names, written on a card and taped to them, at the square or the round table. Sheila and Jayshri sat with the students, talking about what had happened at home or asking simple questions concerning breakfast or their family members. While talking, Sheila prepared written work for the students in their respective exercise books or drew pictures for them to colour and paste. Lessons usually began at half past eight in the morning.

Sheila's instruction implementation followed the execution of the components as stated in her lesson plan. Initially she followed the format set by the Special Education Department so she started the day with Self Help skills followed by Language and Communication activities and finally with Cognitive activities. However, towards the end of the year the State Education Department had changed the format of the lesson plan for all the preschools for special education in state, so Sheila's classroom routine followed suit. She started the day with Cognitive, then Language and Communication and finally Self Help Skills related activities. The Cognitive, Language and Communication components had colouring and writing exercises whereas the Self-Help skills were always practical activities like brushing teeth, eating or dressing.

Since Sheila believed that her students had achieved all the LOs stated in the Self Help Skills component, she did not really focus on this component but sometimes incorporated certain of the LOs into her teaching as a form of revision. She preferred to let the students get all the Physical skills at home so that she could concentrate on the Cognitive and the Language components in school. She would always complete teaching these components before recess, because her students did not like to do serious work after break. According to her, they were unable to sit in one place to focus on their work, after break at 10 o'clock. So she made sure that the students completed the pre-academic work like writing, pasting and colouring exercises before then. If the students completed the work before time, they were moved to sit on the carpet to do more pre-academic work of different nature, like reading or matching pictures to words. At 9 o'clock, Jayshri would leave the group to cook the meal for the students, leaving Sheila to manage them. During this time the students were sometimes allowed to play with the gym balls or other toys and

they had to put the toys away after. Playing as they liked and throwing the toys around, interfered with her idea of instilling discipline in the students.

Five to ten minutes before break, Lan was instructed to arrange the chairs at the dining table. At 10 o'clock the students washed their hands and sat at table to have a meal of sandwiches, fried noodles or rice. After the students brushed their teeth, they went to the toilet. Bathing was an activity that they did only if it was in the lesson plan, or if a particular student really needed to have a bath to feel comfortable or if the student had passed motion. The students were either taken into the toilet one by one, or they went there by themselves. They were given instructions on how to bathe using the dipper; because that was the way they bathed at home. Sometimes she filled up the water play container with water and soap and allowed the students to sit inside it and play. Water play was either an individual or a pair activity considering the size of the container, stated Sheila. However, most days the students sat on the long bench while waiting for Sheila and Jayshri to finish their work, and proceed to Art and Craft work after brushing their teeth. Although Music and Movement was stated as the final activity of the day, it rarely took place. Towards the end of the day the students, Sheila and Jayshri just sat around on the carpet or on the gym balls, talking or gently teasing the students until it was time for them to go home, at about half past eleven. Sheila considered this session as a token for the students, to do something they enjoyed, especially for Ris, after having spent the whole day on and Cognitive and Language activities.

While following the new format, Sheila discovered that the students were not averse to doing art and craft work after the break, it was the writing the exercise books that they did not like to do. Since there was no religious teacher to teach the students Religious knowledge, Sheila also made use of that time period to carry out her activities.

Even though Sheila used the lesson plan as a time table, certain things could be considered as part of a routine in her implementation. The students had their own designated chairs; they did their writing and colouring work at the square and the round table; Lan would arrange the chairs before break; they said their prayers, ate their meals in the dining area and left their used plates in the wash basin; they brushed their teeth and used the toilet after the break; they sat on the floor for Art and Craft work and finally, would sit on the carpet, on the floor or played with the gym balls before going home at the end of the day. This routine was interwoven with the arrangement of the components in the lesson plan.

Ris and Min continued to do more pre-academic work until it was time to go home at 11.30 o'clock in the morning. When all the students had left, Sheila prepared the lesson plan for the next day. She printed out the lesson plan from the computer and wrote out exercises in the books for the next day's lesson. Sometimes she wrote these exercises while she was teaching the students in the class. She left the preschool at the same time as the mainstream teachers, that is at 1.10 in the afternoon. However, Jayshri left to work in the school office until half past four. Figure 4.9 is a graphical representation of Sheila's classroom instruction.

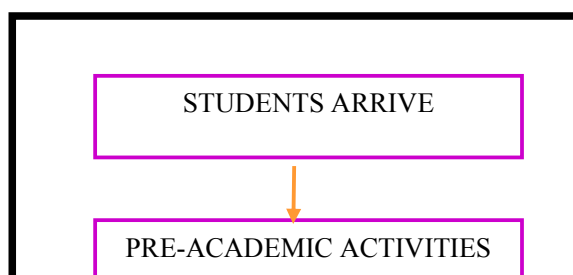


Figure 4.12. Sequence of daily instruction in Islands Preschool

Integrated Teaching

Sheila believed that the LOs and the components should allow for integration in the activities that she designed. The State Education Department proposed lesson plan format that she used, had a column just to indicate the components that she had integrated into that activity. Since she concentrated on teaching the students Cognitive, Language and Communication, Self Help Skills and Creativity, other components such as Physical, Social Emotional, Religious Knowledge, and Moral Education were integrated into the activities that were primarily used to teach the former group of components.

But at times she preferred to follow the hierarchy laid out in the lesson plan. For instance, when she had the activity for the Physical component, ‘sprinkle’, she had the students dip their fingers into a bucket of blue coloured water and sprinkle it

onto a piece of art paper. Though it looked like an activity related to Aesthetics and Creativity as well, she had a separate activity for that component, later in the day.

Even though Sheila practiced integration of components, there were times when she adhered closely to the LOs. For instance, the students were required to use a straw to blow a drop of water colour on a piece of art paper, as an activity for the Cognitive component. She could have incorporated this activity into the Aesthetics and Creativity component for that day, but preferred instead to do an entirely separate activity using water colours, for this component to achieve another LO.

Repetition

Sheila used repetition regularly especially with Yan and Min. Whenever the students finished the work they were doing, Sheila would ask Yan to show her the sign language for the words that she had taught him, sometimes four or five times in a day. Min was also encouraged to repeat a paragraph about a chicken when he was resting or had just completed his work. The five year old Chun also repeated the antonyms he had learnt on the days he came to school.

However, she had contradictory opinions about repetition. She did not repeat instructions nor certain matching activities, stating that the students had already achieved the LO in that activity since they were used to doing the activity. “Because I think my students if I force them many times they will be boring, just ask them once. Because in my syllabus I must teach them 1 to 5 but here they all can count 1 to 10” (T3/INT/03). According to Sheila, her students would be bored because she was repeating something that they already knew. But observation during implementation showed that her students did not know their numbers.

On the other hand she informed me that she had told the parents, especially Riz’s and Min’s parents to continue doing at home what she was doing in the school,

because repetition would improve them. She also acknowledged that with Ris she had to repeat at least once a week, what she had already taught him before. He tended to forget what he had learnt previously when he went on to learn new things. Sometimes she would need to show him an example before he could do the exercise.

Sheila said that when she was teaching the students how to put on their shirt, she made them practice it the whole week, until they were able to do it themselves. However, she taught the skill of putting on shoes only once, even though a couple of them could neither put on nor take off their shoes by themselves.

Controlled Use of Educational Toys

Most of the educational toys were neatly packed in plastic or wooden containers and stacked on the racks. The same went for the puppets and the musical instruments. Sheila said that her students had used them in the beginning of the year and were not interested in playing with them anymore. Actually, the students did like to play with the toys that were kept inside the containers. In contrast, the boxes of educational toys showed evidence that they had not been used because they had dust and lizard eggs in them when the students opened the boxes. After cleaning the boxes, Sheila immediately instructed the students to replace the boxes on the shelves whenever they took them out because she was keen on instilling discipline in the students. She stated that the students could take the toys only if she allowed them to do so.

The classroom was filled with the teaching materials sent by the MOE and the state education department, but Sheila said that she was unable to use many of them because they were not suitable. Examples of those that were not suitable or even dangerous were test tubes and tiny plastic toys. Some of the other teaching materials were so small that she was afraid that the students would swallow them. So

these things were packed and stored away. Sheila had also stacked in the corner of the classroom, some of the teaching materials that the State Education Department had sent because she did not know how to use them. She was afraid that she might endanger the students if she used the materials incorrectly.

There was material like the sand pit in the shape of a turtle that she could not use in spite of having two of them because a State Education Officer had told her that the sand she had was not of the correct type. Since she did not know where to get that specific type of sand, she could not do the activity. So she used one of the turtles for water play. But it was not big enough, so only one or two students could sit inside when it was filled with water. She usually had one or two students play in the water-filled turtle inside the bathroom, while she continued teaching the others in the classroom.

Transition

Within the classroom, Sheila used certain words to signal to the students that they were moving on to the next activity. Just before break, she would tell Lan to put out the chairs for them to sit at the dining table. Then she would say, “*Jum makan*” (Let’s go eat) and “*Pergi cuci tangan*” (Go wash your hands), and the students would know what to do. They would all go to the wash basin to wash their hands and sit at the table for their food.

Towards the end of the year Sheila took her students to the Primary One classroom to prepare them for the transition. She had realised that Ris and Min were not in favour of going over to the Primary school because they were afraid of the students in those classrooms. Min cried when she took him to the primary class so she brought him back to her class. However, she could not repeat it because the primary teachers had taken the primary students for camping.

Managing Behaviour during Implementation

Sheila was aware that behaviour management was important for teaching and learning to take place. Being a strict disciplinarian, she spent the early months of the year with the students just to “repair their attitude.” This included training them to sit at the table, playing with the toys only when she gave them time to play, putting the toys back in their places, and listening to instructions. Her students were able to sit at the table for the length of time it took her to complete the Cognitive and Language activities that she wanted to do with them. When the new student Riza would not sit at her place, Sheila tied her leg to the chair with a towel a couple of times after which just the mention of the word “*ikat kaki*” kept her seated. Only Yan would go to the Language and Communication centre to look at the mirror; the others sat at the table most of the times. They could all follow Sheila’s instructions and move from the table to sit on the carpet, and then to the dining hall or sometimes to the kitchen, to sit on the floor to do some work for a change. Lan liked to play with the big blue gym ball whenever he got the opportunity but readily joined the others when Sheila called him. However there were instances of students taking a toy here and there while moving from one place to another. However, they put them back when instructed to by Sheila or her teacher assistant.

But Sheila commented that this was not the scenario at the beginning of the year. They used to do what they liked and it had taken her the early part of the year to correct their behaviour. Now that they were disciplined, only did as she allowed them. According to her, if she allowed them to play on their own, they would end up throwing things around. Sheila informed me then that the students stopped taking the toys because they were bored playing with them, as they had played with them early in the year. However, during my observations I noticed that Yan did take out

toys but Sheila would quickly instruct him to put the toy away. She also continued trying out various strategies to stop Thira from crying as soon as his mother left him in the classroom.

First, she gave him 'time out' inside the toilet. When he cried, which was whenever he had completed his work and was doing nothing, she pointed to the toilet and asked him if he wanted to go into it. He then stopped crying. When that strategy did not work she threatened him with a bath, an activity which he did not like, and he stopped crying. But after some time when that strategy did not work, she resorted to pulling his ears, pointing to the clock and telling him that he could only go home at half past eleven. According to her, the strategies stopped working for him because he became used to them and even started to enjoy them. Sheila was very strict with Thira because she knew that his brother who was in the Year Two Special Education classroom could not be separated from his mother. She did not want the same thing to happen to Thira. She would discipline by having Thira and the other students sit on a long bench before scolding them for misbehaving. Frequently she used the word "*roti panjang*" when the students misbehaved, asking them if they wanted it. Sometimes she brought out the "*roti panjang*" which was actually a long ruler to hit on the table or the chair to bring the students to order.

Besides the 'time out' sessions and the "*roti panjang*", she also raised her voice to make the students listen to her and focus on what she was saying. Sheila opined that the students were able to understand the concept of anger if the voice was raised. All her students stopped what they doing to listen to her instructions, when she spoke loudly. She believed that she had to raise her voice frequently with Ris otherwise he would not do his work. Sheila was a keen believer in disciplining the students so that her teaching will not be disrupted. In addition she also believed

that her students had a better chance of being taught in Primary one if they were disciplined enough to be able to sit at the table without moving about.

Assessment in Instruction

When the students first came to the preschool Sheila assessed them using the Assessment Kit to determine if the students could recognise colours, and do basic matching activities with pictures and alphabets. Even though she used it, she was not in much in favour of the kit because the materials were too small for the students to hold. She insisted on an assessment as she did not believe what the parents told her what their child could do. However, the results of this assessment were not recorded. She started teaching the students and assessed them through observations during the teaching. Formal assessments, which were carried out four times in a year in the months of March, May, July and August, were recorded in the checklist.

Observation during Implementation

Sheila did not record her interviews of the parents when they brought their child on the first day of school. Observation was the main method for collecting assessment information about the students. Throughout the day, Sheila observed the students as they participated in the activities she had prepared for them, be it academic or arts and crafts, as part of her assessment process. Sheila assessed the students while they were involved in the activities. Sometimes she got the students to do the activity to gauge if he/she had achieved the LO. For instance she took Thira and Riza to the bathroom to ask them to bathe in order to assess their capability. She also used specific teaching materials, like picture blocks to check if the students were able to do matching activities besides observing them do the matching exercises in the class. It was during these observations that she decided if the student was able to “study” that is, if he could do the Cognitive and Language

related worksheets. If she thought that the student could not study, she felt that she need not stress much on Cognitive and Language activities but more on physical work like arranging chairs simple activities like colouring.

Her assessment of the students' work also prompted her to make the students correct their mistakes immediately. For instance, while doing worksheets in mathematics or language, if they had selected a wrong answer, she would make the students erase the wrong answer and write the correct one immediately. She said that if she just crossed out the wrong answer and returned the worksheet to the student, he would not know why it was marked wrong. If the student himself erased the wrong answer and wrote the correct one then he would know that it was wrong. She believed that the students needed to be told of their mistakes on the spot, for them to realise it was wrong. There were days when she concentrated on one student's performance, when she wanted to write an anecdote about him.

Besides gaining information about the students' level of achievement when they were performing the activity, she also commented on the worksheet. Her comments stated whether the student did the work with or without the teacher's help or on his own. The work was done in exercise books so she could easily refer to the comments. Sheila said that she also wrote comments pertaining to the students' performance under the 'reflection' column in the lesson plan.

Indirectly, she also assessed her own teaching. If the students were not able to achieve the LO that she had selected for them, she questioned the effectiveness of her teaching strategy or the choice of the LO for that particular student. This assessment helped her to make decisions pertaining to planning and implementation.

Documenting and Using the Results

Sheila was the only teacher among the three who had completed some of the forms suggested in the PSECLD programme even though she was not sure whether she had done them correctly. Writing anecdotes in the specified form was one of it. But, she was unsure if she was doing it the right way.

As she observed the students' she made mental notes of their achievements so that she could update the checklist when she found the time. Sheila did not have fixed intervals to update the checklist. She recorded the results in the checklist, as she gauged the student's performance in a specific LO. Sheila had her own rationale for grading a student's achievement in each LO. However, she agreed that the 'Star System' for grading the students was not accurate because it depended on the teacher's interpretation. According to Sheila, the reason why one teacher would award a student two stars of achievement in an LO, would not be the same as that of another teacher.

Although she conducted assessment four times in a year she only prepared the progress reports twice a year, the first one during the mid term and the second one at the end of the year. These reports were based on the checklist she used to assess the students, and were attested by the headmistress.

Having received the endorsement from the school head, she then gave the reports to the parents to sign before handing it over together with the Students Profile to the supervisor in charge of Special Education, for placement of the student in Year One. She discussed and explained the report to the parents and also gave them a portfolio of the work done by their children. Handing over of the reports was usually carried out during the end-of-the-year party she held for all students whose birthday fell between July to December. However, she was unable to do so this year because the report was not ready in time for the party which was held in October. So

she felt that it would be better to give the report to the Special Education supervisor straight away for the students' placement in Year One.

Cross case Analysis

At the end of the first phase of data collection it seemed as though classroom instruction at each of the preschools was very different from each other. The second phase of data collection too, did not contribute towards identifying similarities. However, upon repeated readings of the interview transcriptions and observation notes a pattern emerged. Coding and categorising the data, and writing up the individual reports brought forth concrete evidence on the similarities, and the differences, displayed by Kayla, Marla and Sheila in providing instruction for the preschool CSN.

Similarities were observed at the macro level where it was apparent that all three of them started instruction with the planning stage and went on to the implementing stage. They carried out assessment during implementation. Planning centred on preparing lesson plans and teaching materials, and arranging the physical setting of the classroom. During implementation they focused on carrying out activities using teaching materials and instructional strategies. They observed the students during this time to assess their performance. The results were documented in a checklist which was then used to write progress reports.

The similarities and differences discerned at the micro level related closely to the focal points of each stage, be it in the manner they were carried out or prepared. Detailed description and explanation pertaining to the similarities and differences observed at this micro level are provided, according to the focal points in these three stages of classroom instruction, planning, implementation and assessment.

Planning

As observed, preparing lesson plans and teaching material as well as arranging the physical setting of the classroom were the focal points of the planning

stage. Each teacher adhered to specific criteria when preparing the lesson plans, teaching materials and the physical setting of the classroom, some of which were similar among the three teachers.

One shared criterion was that they based the four focal points in planning on the Curriculum Specification provided by the MOE. The components in the Curriculum Specification determined the division of the physical setting of the classroom; the lesson plans were based on the LO selected from the components, activities were designed to teach the LO and the teaching materials were prepared to assist in teaching the LO. Nevertheless, there were differences in the steps they followed in preparing the lesson plan, designing the activities, in the way they prepared the teaching materials as well as the manner of their division and arrangement of the physical setting of their classroom.

The Lesson Plan for Daily Instruction

The steps each took to prepare the daily lesson plans varied among the three, although they each used a similar format. Kayla preferred to design activities and then select the LO but Marla and Sheila selected the LO before designing the activities. So Kayla's activities determined the LO to be taught, whereas Marla and Sheila's activities were determined by the LO they had selected. Kayla actually covers more LO than those written in the lesson plan while carrying out the activities; Sheila sometimes did the same and at other times strictly carried out one activity for one LO. Marla tended to write almost similar and general LOs in her lesson plan, across a week, and carried out activities which focused on a certain LO or parts of the LO.

The three of them agreed that the stress on the components varied during a year. During the first half of the year Kayla concentrated more on components like

Self Help Skills, Physical Skills, Language and Aesthetics and Creativity. Although the emphasis was on Pre-academic component and writing skills during the second half of the year as preparation for Year One, Kayla still carried on with the Self-Help Skills and Physical component activities. However the time spent on these two components were reduced as compared to the first half of the year. Marla said that she adjusted the time table to suit the time allocation for the components three or four times a year but in practice it was not obvious due to her ad hoc method of classroom instruction implementation. Sheila on the other hand said that she carried out activities concerned with the Physical component only for the first three months of the year. After that she concentrated totally on pre-academic skills, though she did carry out art work to cater to the Creativity component. Nonetheless they all three agreed that since there was integration of components in the activities, they really could not say that they were not teaching a specific component.

The three of them used the MOE specified format for writing the lesson plan. Kayla and Sheila prepared their lesson plans on the computer and filed the printed copies. Marla wrote the lesson plan in a record book as required by the school. Kayla in addition also prepared another lesson plan in the form of a web diagram. On the web she wrote the theme, the nine components stated in the Curriculum Specification and the names of the activities that she was going to carry out for each component. The web was displayed on the board and referred to as necessary. Both Kayla and Sheila filed their lesson plans after the school head had endorsed it. Marla's record book was always on her table, however, the lesson plan was sometimes written only after the lesson despite her statement that planning was important for providing instruction.

Designing Activities

The three teachers concurred that the activities should teach the LO in the Curriculum Specification. Kayla always made sure that the activities designed for the different components were united through a theme. If her theme for the week was Vegetable, Kayla made sure that the activities for the Physical, Language, Cognitive, Aesthetics and Creativity components were all focused on this theme. Sheila tries to use this thematic approach to design activities for the different components, but she often could not. She claimed she was not creative enough to design such activities. Even so, her activities for the Creativity component were based on the theme selected for the week. As far as Marla was concerned, the theme she chose weekly was just for the record book. Not once did her activities relate to it even though she said that she followed the theme.

Designing activities to teach the LO was deemed an important part of writing the lesson plan, because implementing the plan was all about carrying out the activities. On observation only Kayla was serious about planning activities for Morning and Closing Circles, Physical, Aesthetics and Creativity and Cognitive.

Sheila planned some activities for Cognitive and Creativity components, but not the others. Marla did not plan the activities before implementing instruction. Her activities were impromptu, and were extensions of what the students suddenly decided to do in the classroom. For instance, while rummaging through the cupboards, Ash came across the *kompang* (a musical instrument) which he took out to play. The other students in the classroom immediately took one each. So Marla made them walk around the tables as they played the instrument. She turned the event into an activity which the students carried out for half an hour. Since Kayla designed the activities before selecting the LO, she at least ensured that her activities managed to cover a few LOs from various components. Sometimes Marla and Sheila

managed to design activities to incorporate the LO but otherwise the activity was an actualization of the LO itself.

Kayla ensured that her activities were meaningful to the students. Even when she taught abstract concepts such as 'hot' and 'cold', she made it meaningful by getting the students to dip their hand in hot and cold water to take out coloured marbles. According to her just making them dip their hand in hot and cold water would not mean anything to the students. She preferred not to teach the abstract concepts if she could not make them meaningful. So concepts such as 'day' and 'night', 'sink' and 'float' were not taught to the current batch of students. Marla taught abstract concepts such as 'clean', 'dirty', 'affection' when the opportunity rose in class.

Sheila was not too concerned about making activities meaningful. She scribbled some black colour on a picture of a red apple and showed it to her students to teach the concept 'dirty' (T3/PV/03).

The three of them had different objectives when designing the activities. Kayla's activities for Morning Circles were to warm up the students and introduce the theme. The physical activities were to develop their gross and fine motor skills as well as improve their social interaction, finally, the cognitive activities she designed stressed on academic skills to prepare some of them for Year One. Marla's aim was to take up only activities in which the students showed interest as in the case of the *kompang*. In another instance, when her students linked small plastic parts to make a long chain, she used the chain for some high jump activities. Sometimes the students would be involved in two different activities at the same time. One group would be playing with the cooking set, while another group would be playing with small balls. However, neither of these activities was designed by Marla to provide instruction. Sheila's objective to provide instruction was to make

sure that students were prepared to attend the primary special education, so she designed activities that were based more on the cognitive component.

Preparing the Worksheets

The three preschool teachers exhibited similarities pertaining to worksheets they used during instruction implementation, and which they had prepared. The difference was in the purpose of the worksheet, and the manner of its preparation.

Kayla and Sheila on the other hand, prepared individual worksheets to cater to the differing abilities of the students in their classroom. Kayla prepared worksheets for activities such as matching similar pictures, writing numbers and alphabets, pasting, tracing and colouring. (T1/PV/07) High functioning students wrote numbers and alphabets whereas the low functioning students did matching exercises. Kayla's worksheets were colourful and attractive, made from recycled material, sand paper and pictures. (T1/PV/17) In addition she also prepared cards pasted with varying degrees of coarse sandpaper to help students feel the texture. The pictures that she used were always colourful and of varying sizes according to their use. Most importantly, her worksheets which were prepared to teach the selected LO were always related to the theme of the week unlike Sheila's.

Marla's worksheets were the simplest. She had one worksheet for all her students. (T2/PV/23) The worksheets were used for instance, for joining dots to complete straight and curved lines or pictures or for colouring activities. The worksheets were not related to the theme of the week.

However, the theme was far from Sheila's mind when preparing the worksheets. Her aim was to prepare her high functioning students for Year One in the Primary Special Education School. Her worksheets were related to academic work, catering to LOs which were actually beyond the scope of preschool. Writing

numbers, (T3/PV/03) doing simple addition, matching digits with their word forms and completing words with missing letters are some examples of Sheila's worksheets. She also prepared worksheets that allowed one particular student who did not like to write, to complete the exercises using a stamp and the stamp pad. (T3/PV/03)

Sheila's worksheets were also far different from Kayla's in terms of presentation. Kayla used A4 paper to prepare the worksheets. She used the computer to print lines and boxes on the A4 paper to ensure that each box was of the same size and the lines were of equal distance. Sheila on the other hand wrote the exercises into the student's notebooks, using a free hand to draw the boxes and lines. The end product had letters and digits of varying sizes written in rows which were uneven. In addition, Sheila also drew the pictures for matching exercises.

The Physical Setting

The floor plan and size of each preschool was different, but the teachers managed to organise the classroom into the nine centres, as required by the Curriculum Specification. The centres were labelled and filled with furniture, charts, educational toys, books and other teaching materials, pertaining to its name. For instance the Language and Communication Centre had books; the Technology Centre had the computers. The content of the charts that decorated the walls were too difficult to be of use to the students. Classrooms were packed with a lot of information. In addition, Sheila had alphabets, numbers, and other labelled pictures drawn on the wall.

Besides the teaching material, the three teachers also believed in displaying the students' work. The soft boards in Kayla's classroom were covered with worksheets that had been completed by the students. The boards were at eye level

but her students rarely looked at their work. Sheila's display board was too far from the floor for the students to look at their work. (T3/PV/25) She was insistent that they could see their work although she explained that there was not enough space to put up the soft board at a lower level. Marla hung her students water colour art work on a string tied across the classroom.

MOE had supplied books, musical instruments and toys for the students. These instructional materials were arranged on shelves and placed in the classroom. Kayla did not stop her students from playing with the toys when they came to the preschool in the morning or after the lesson was over. During lessons, she gave them the toys after they had completed their work. Marla allowed her students to take the toys whenever they felt like playing with them. She always instructed them to put the toys away after playing. Sheila kept the toys in plastic containers and bags. The musical instruments were neatly arranged on the shelf. Students were not allowed to touch these teaching materials unless she gave them permission.

As was the case with the teaching materials, some of the furniture was also not suitable for the students but the teachers always had the students comfort in mind so they would make appropriate adjustments to the furniture to ensure that the students would be able to use them.

Kayla had reasons for arranging the centres and the furniture in a specific order. The classroom arrangement should facilitate easy movement. She arranged the water play and the sand pit in the Self-Help Centre near the bathroom so that she could clean the mess created during that activity.

The common criterion among the teachers for the arrangement of the furniture and various centres was that the centre of the classroom should be empty for the students to move around easily especially if they had students who needed to crawl from one place to another. Marla and Sheila only adhered to this one criterion,

otherwise they arranged the classroom as they liked. They also changed the arrangement of the setting whenever they felt a need for a change. Sheila said that she liked to change the arrangement at the end of each year but stated that she would change it again if it did not agree with the following batch of students. The physical setting of Marla's and Sheila's classrooms depended a lot on their likes and dislikes rather than specific criteria like Kayla's.

Table 4.4 highlights the criteria that the three teachers adhered to when preparing the lesson plan, designing the activities, preparing worksheets and arranging the physical setting of the classroom.

Table 4.4

Focus and Criteria in Planning

Focus	Criteria		
	Kayla	Marla	Sheila
Lesson plan	Based on LO	Based on LO	Based on LO
Activities	Related to the LO Based on a theme Meaningful to the students Designed to fulfil objectives	Related to the LO Meaningful to the students Designed to fulfil objectives	Related to the LO Meaningful to the students
Worksheets	Based on the LO Based on a theme Catered for differing abilities User friendly	Based on the LO	Based on the LO Catered for differing abilities Cost effective
Physical Setting	Divisions according to the Curriculum Specification Empty middle area Provided structure	Divisions according to the Curriculum Specification Empty middle area Assisted in free movement	Divisions according to the Curriculum Specification Empty middle area Provided structure

Implementation

Lessons in the three preschools started at 8 o'clock in the morning, but students came in earlier. Parents usually lingered to talk to the teachers, especially in Kayla's and Marla's preschools. Kayla did not have any parents in her classroom. Marla had two parents stay on all the days in her classroom and sometimes there

were three parents and a maid. Sheila had one mother sitting in with her son once a week. Besides parents, mainstream and primary special education teachers also were frequent visitors to discuss matters and also to use the toilet facilities in all the three preschools. Kayla and Sheila provided one meal a day. These were prepared by their teacher assistants in the preschools.

Marla on the other hand provided two meals during the early part of the year. However, towards the middle of the year, she too provided only one meal and it was almost always taken in the canteen. Kayla had only two Muslim students in her class which did not qualify for a religious teacher as the minimum requirement quorum is five. The Muslim students in Marla's preschool went to the Islamic Religious teacher in a separate classroom for that component. Although the number of Muslim students in Sheila's class was sufficient to be eligible for a religious teacher, she did not have one. Kayla and Sheila continued implementing instruction in the other components during the time allocated for religious class.

Each preschool had a different atmosphere, during implementation of the instruction from eight to half past eleven in the morning. In Rivers Preschool, Kayla and Medha were engaged in carrying out one activity after another in an orderly manner despite the temper tantrums of one or two students. Medha knew the activities, the required teaching material and the order in which Kayla intended to carry out the activities. The teachers and the students were in a group most of the times, either standing or sitting, but working together.

The situation in Lake Preschool was different. The students were always on the move in the classroom. Marla and Danya had to keep watch to stop them from hitting each other, scribbling on the table or running into the toilet or kitchen. The students were instructed to carry out certain activities or reprimanded for misbehaving by Marla, Danya and the two mothers who were always in the

classroom. Sometimes conflicting instructions were given to a student at the same time. Implementation of the activities was not smooth and orderly as in Kayla's classroom, because Danya was not aware of what Marla had planned for the day. Discussions and instructions pertaining to the activity were given only minutes before it was carried out with the students.

Sheila and Jayshri worked as a unit in the Islands Preschool. Like Medha, Jshri knew what Sheila was going to do each day. Jayshri assisted Sheila in carrying out the activities which was mostly colouring, pasting and writing. As in Rivers Preschool, the teachers and the students in Islands Preschool were in a group most of the times, either working or playing.

Planning lessons beforehand ensured smooth implementation; and adherence to a plan made for efficient implementation. Kayla did not refer or adhere to the lesson plan instead she referred to her web diagram pinned up on the board to ascertain the activities planned for the theme. Kayla did not impose a time frame on the activities she had planned for a specific theme. Of paramount importance was to ensure that all the students participate in all the activities. The three teachers felt that the time allocation for each component specified in the Curriculum Specification was just a guideline.

Marla's lesson plans did not specify the activities that she was going to carry out in the classroom. In addition, there were days when she wrote the lesson plans a couple of days after she had actually carried out the activities. So there was no adherence to the lesson plan at all. Sheila followed her lesson plan. If she completed her activities before the allotted time, she either gave the students extra work, or talked and played with them until it was time for the next activity. However, Sheila confessed that after the first three months with the students, she concentrated on cognitive or academic related activities and did not follow the

lesson plan at all. Teaching CSN gave them the liberty to be flexible in implementing instruction because it was difficult to carry out all the activities that they had planned due to the fact that the students' behaviour was always unpredictable.

The focus of implementation was on carrying out activities. Similarities and differences are discussed based on the instructional strategies that are used to carry out the activities. cursory mention is also made of the behaviour management strategies that are used during implementation.

Instructional Strategies in Executing Activities

Integrated teaching, learning through play, thematic teaching, and smart learning are the four instructional strategies stated in the Curriculum Specification. Some of the common instructional strategies among the three teachers were integrated learning, learning through play, one-to-one instruction, and repetition. Besides these instructional strategies the three preschools had also established a specific routine in implementation as explained in detail in the descriptions of the three teachers. Teaching materials were used to complement and facilitate instructional strategies such as learning through play, one-to-one instruction, repetition and individualised instruction. The preschools had a good number of educational toys; computer assisted learning activities and books. MOE provided them with a special annual allocation to buy more teaching material. In addition, teachers also prepared worksheets. Kayla and Sheila were in control of when and how the students played with the toys before lessons started for the day and during activities. Marla's students played with the toys whenever they could escape from her while she was carrying out other activities in the classroom.

Integrated teaching was a favourite strategy among the three preschools. Components and their LOs were always integrated into the activities but were not always documented. The components which were carried out most explicitly in the preschool were the Language and Communication, Cognitive, Physical, Aesthetics and Creativity and Self-Help Skills. LOs from other components such as the Social and Emotional, Religious Knowledge, and Moral Education were most often taught as integrated components. Kayla integrated Physical, Social and Emotional, Aesthetics and Creativity, Language and Communication Components during Morning Circle.

Learning through play was another favourite strategy used in the preschools. Kayla took the students to the playground behind the classroom for Physical activities. She also organised group activities for the students to play together while at the playground. Kayla used toys to inculcate learning through play. She frequently used glove puppets during Morning Circle to greet the students. Toys were used during sand and water play to make the activities more meaningful by looking for similar toys. Her students played with toys of their choice until lesson started at 8 o'clock. Kayla switched on the computer for her student Deni, who was interested in computer assisted learning activities, as soon as he walked into the preschool. However, Kayla's students did not play with the toys when they were engaged in an activity. Kayla also engaged her students in sand play and water play. She always designed activities such as looking for similar objects in the water or hunting for things hidden in the sand.

Sheila and Marla took the students to the playground but they did not plan structured activities for the students to participate in. The students spent the time at the playground going from one plaything to another or just sat on the swing doing

nothing. Marla and Sheila's idea of water play was just to allow the students to play in a tub of water.

Marla allowed her students a free reign in playing with the toys that were placed in the shelves. Her students played with the toys of their choice as soon as they walked into the class. She allowed them half an hour of free play, but insisted that the students put away the toys in their respective places after playing with them. However, her students frequently moved away from the work they were engaged in to play with the toys.

Sheila on the other hand rarely used the toys. If her students took them, she immediately told them to put them back onto the shelf. She said that the students could play with the toys only when she allowed them. This was to instill discipline so that they would not have problems when they went to year One in Primary school. The toys were neatly packed and kept away. For instance, a box containing blocks had lizard eggs in them, indicating that the box had not been opened for a long time. The puppets were covered with a see through plastic and displayed on the shelf; clearly indicating that she hardly used them in the class. Musical instruments were neatly arranged on the shelf, untouched. The students had been trained so well that they rarely touched them.

One-to-one instruction was frequently carried out to cater to the varying abilities of the students in the classroom. The teachers and teacher assistants provided support to individual students even during group activities. Kayla and her teacher assistant provided one-to-one instruction during Morning Circle, Physical activities, Self-Help Skills and while doing the worksheet for Cognitive activities. Specially prepared worksheets assisted Kayla in providing one-to-one instruction to students. When her attention was on a specific student, she used educational toys to keep the others fruitfully occupied. Some of the frequently used toys were jigsaw

puzzle, the scribbling board, the sorting container and plastic alphabets. The toys given to the students depended on the level, ability and interest of the student. Kayla also gave each student musical instruments like the tambourine or the castanet during the Closing Circle.

Since Marla gave all her students identical worksheets, she provided one-to-one instruction for students who had problems in completing the worksheets. She provided differing amounts of assistance to each, for them to complete the work. She paid more attention to the moderate and low functioning students. In fact, she encouraged the parents to be present during the early months of the year to provide one-to-one instruction to the students, especially for writing. Sheila carried out one-to-one instruction when the students were doing Cognitive and Language components related worksheets.

Sheila prepared Cognitive and Language related work to provide one-to-one instruction for students according to their ability. Sheila used one-to-one instruction to carry out activities such as matching pictures to pictures and matching pictures to real objects

Kayla and Marla did not restrict their students' use of teaching material during such activities. They allowed them to use the water colours even though it meant that they had to spend time cleaning up the mess created by the students. This contrasted with Sheila, who always controlled the students' use of teaching material even during one-to-one instruction, especially when using water colour during Art work.

Repetition was a frequently used strategy in Kayla's and Marla's classroom. Selecting a theme to unite the LO, activities and teaching material provided Kayla with an easy method for repetition. Marla liked to repeat instructions to her students. Both Kayla and Marla repeatedly called the students' names to get them to focus on

the activities they were involved at that time. Introducing the students to each other by using songs was done everyday by Kayla during Morning Circle. Kayla's teaching materials were always based on a specific theme. Frequent use of these teaching materials supported repetition and the students recognised the names of the objects easily.

Sheila was not much in favour of repetition saying that her students would become bored if she repeated something many times. She would repeat the names of the objects two or three times only when she was providing one-to-one instruction to her students.

Task analysis and individualised instruction were rare, and not consistently carried out in the three preschools. There were times when the LO selected by Kayla fulfilled the needs of some of her high functioning students. Kayla prepared worksheets for individual students according to their ability. These worksheets provided individualised instruction because they catered to the specific needs of some of her students who were high functioning.

Marla spent a lot of time talking to her students whom she had earlier identified as having specific needs under the social and emotional component. She encouraged these students to play together and learn how to share their toys. Sheila prepared specific worksheets for her high functioning student Riz. She opined that he was able to do simple mathematics and match words to digits. According to her she was providing him instruction that met his needs and that he was able to the work. However, daily observations proved that Riz was incapable of completing the exercises without Sheila's assistance.

Marla stated that her students, Han, Ash, Fikri had problems in Social and Emotional Skills so she liked to use toys to play with them while instilling the related LO to help them overcome their problems. She instructed them to share the

toys with their friends. Marla catered to the individual needs of the student, in this manner. Sheila used worksheets to provide repetition for her high functioning student in Cognitive and Language and Communication components

Kayla and Marla used task analysis to help students who had problems in putting on their clothes. However, in Marla's case, it was not consistent. She would do task analysis as and when she liked.

Routine in the daily activities has been established in the three preschools, albeit not very firmly in Marla's. Kayla made sure that her students knew the routine at the first three months. She felt that the students displayed less behavioural problems when they were familiar with the routine. Even greeting the students in the morning and bidding them goodbye at the end of the day was part of the routine in Kayla's preschool. Marla was not as steadfast as Kayla and Sheila when it came to establishing routine. Free play and meal times were the activities that have been firmly established as routine in Marla's preschool. Sheila's routine started with the students sitting in their allocated place at the table for colouring work in the morning. Since she followed the activities stated in the lesson plan, Sheila can be considered to have an established routine.

The routine in Kayla's daily activities matched the specific places in the classroom where it was carried out, thereby establishing a structure. Students moved from one area to another for specific activities. This fixed use of the setting helped the students identify the place easily for the related activity. Her students recognised and headed for the specific areas in the classroom when one activity ended, or the signal for the next activity was given. She started the Morning Circle at the Technology centre; then moved to the centre of the classroom or the playground for Physical activities. After having their meal at the dining area, they went into the Self Help Skills centre to brush their teeth and bathe. Having done that, the students

moved to the Cognitive centre to do their worksheets and finally returned to the Technology centre for Closing Circle.

Marla's students rarely gathered in one place to complete an activity. Meal times were also not an exception. Students like Mim who did not eat and Ash who ate quickly ran to other areas in the classroom while Marla and her teacher assistant were still with the others at the dining table. Although Marla did not establish a routine in the use of the areas in the setting, the students knew the dining area, the bathroom, the toilet and the table used for cognitive activities.

Sheila too had established a routine in the use of the setting. Her students sat on their chairs at the tables in the middle of the classroom for colouring activities. Then they moved to sit on the carpet in front of the television for either Cognitive or Physical. They moved to the dining area for their meal. After that it was into the bathroom to brush their teeth. Since the bathroom had only two basins, the students took turns. As they finished, they sat on a long bench next to the dining area. They left the bench to sit on the floor for Creativity component and finally they returned to the table for Cognitive component related worksheets until it was time to go home.

Behaviour Management Strategies when Executing Activities

Kayla, Marla and Sheila had each, their own specific method to overcome behaviour problems. Kayla always tried new strategies to manage her one student who had severe behaviour problems. She tried one strategy for as long as one or two weeks with the student. She said it was easier to manage the behaviour of students who showed preferences for specific toys or food. She did not believe in using the same strategy for a long time if it did not work with the student. She also preferred to use evidence-based strategies that she had learnt during the special education

courses, seminar and talks that she had attended. Some of her methods were talking, hugging, and massaging.

Marla on the other hand preferred to take steps to prevent the behaviour. She too never raised her voice or used the cane on her students. She liked to change the beginnings of a negative behaviour into a positive one. For instance, when Ash started throwing balls from the basket onto the floor, she quickly told him to aim the balls into a pail that she put in front of him. Similarly, when Ash scribbled on the table and wall, she made him clean the pen marks with a piece of wet cloth. Like Kayla, she also liked to make use of students' preferences to prevent unwanted behaviours.

Sheila used her sharp and loud voice to control her students. She thought that the students must recognise authority, and know that they have to listen to her. She had no qualms about using the ruler to control students who liked to walk around the classroom or took toys from the shelves. Sheila was intent on disciplining the students so that they will be allowed to continue schooling in Primary Special Education which did not accept students who were not able to sit in one place.

The teachers' behaviour management strategies reflected their aims for using them.

Table 4.5 highlights the instructional strategies used by the three teachers for carrying out activities.

Table 4.5

The Focus and the Strategies used while Implementing Instruction

Focus	Strategies			
	Kayla	Marla	Sheila	
Carrying out Activities	Routine (Use of Physical Setting)	Routine (Use of Physical Setting)	Routine (Use of Physical Setting)	
	Integrated learning	Integrated learning	Integrated learning	
	Learning through play	Learning through play		
	Thematic teaching			
		Free play		
		One-to-one instruction (Catered to ability)	One-to-one instruction (Catered to ability)	One-to-one instruction (Catered to ability)
		Repetition	Repetition	
Behaviour Management	Individualised instruction	Individualised instruction	Individualised instruction	
			Transition	
	Multiple strategies	Preventing the behaviour	Multiple strategies	

Assessment

In principle, the method used for assessing students, the documents used for recoding the results of the assessment, and the utilisation of the results differed little among the three preschools.

Assessment Methods

Parents were interviewed when they first brought their child to the preschool. Parents are asked to describe their child's likes, dislikes and behaviour problems, and triggers to the behaviour problems. Kayla stated that sometimes the parents gave incorrect information about their child. Sheila too did not accord much importance to the information obtained from the parents. So, the teachers listened to the information but did not record it anywhere.

Besides these interviews, the three teachers also talked to the parents on a daily basis when they brought their child to the preschool. Some parents stayed for a long time to discuss their child's progress with the teacher, but some just dropped off or picked up their child and left soon after. Every morning, some parents informed Kayla what their child did after they had taken him/her home the previous day. At the end of the day, when the parents came to fetch the child, Kayla informed them of what he/she had done on that day and if he/she had displayed any behaviour problems. Marla also spent time talking to the parents and sometimes their conversations ate into the instruction time. Sheila rarely had long conversations with the parents. She only spoke to them if she had to give them information regarding the preschool. At other times it was just a cursory greeting.

However, the main method for assessment was observation. All three teachers observed students during implementation to gauge their performance in the activities. They made mental notes as they observed the students performance in a specific LO. They also wrote remarks on the worksheets completed by the students. The remarks contained information denoting how much assistance had been given to the student to help complete the worksheet, and what the student was able to do. Sometimes comments about the students' character and the teacher's perceptions

were also included. Kayla was consistent in writing remarks on the worksheet whereas Marla and Sheila

Kayla always discussed the students' performance with Medha before gauging their performance. During implementation, she would discuss what she had observed with Medha so that she would be reminded when completing the assessment documents. She would also ask Medha's opinion on certain matters pertaining to assessment of specific students. Marla and Sheila did not discuss matters pertaining to student assessment with their teacher assistants.

Documents related to Assessment

The main document related to assessment was the checklist in which all the LO as stated in the Curriculum Specification are listed. Teachers were required to record the students' performance in a particular LO three times during the year. Stars were used to denote the students level of performance; one star meant that the students had yet to master the LO; two stars meant the student has achieved the LO; and three stars meant that the students had mastered the LO. The checklists were kept in files and updated whenever the teachers had time, so the information depended on the teacher's memory and keen sense of observation during implementation. In addition to her own observation and short notes, Kayla stated that she also relied on her teacher assistant for the purpose of grading the students. She believed that discussing the students' performance with the teacher assistant enabled her to better assess them.

The teachers had to prepare two progress reports for each student, one for the midterm and the other at the end of the year. The teachers use the information from the checklist to write this one, or two, page report. The school heads check and sign the report before the teachers give it to the parents. Kayla allowed the parents to take

the reports home to read before discussing the content with her. If the parents disagreed with the contents of the report, she informs them that the reports are based on her observation and how the students behaved in school. Sheila informed that she always gave the reports to the parents for their reference at the end of the year but she did not do so in the year of the study because she could not meet the parents due to the public holidays before the school holidays. Marla also gave the progress reports to the parents for their reference.

Utilisation of the Results

When the teachers planned an activity, they intended it for all their students, irrespective of their ability to perform that activity. So, there were differences in the implementation. These differences were observed because the teachers used the information gained from their assessments of the students to provide instruction according to the students' ability and preference.

The type and amount of written work given to the students varied. The assistance provided to the students when they were involved in an activity differed. The teaching materials used for the students during the activities varied. However, neither the detailed assessment results of the students nor the difference in the way instruction was implemented to him/her was documented.

Ongoing assessments during implementation furnished the teachers with a wealth of information with reference to the students' strengths, weaknesses, abilities and disabilities together with their actual performance in the LO. In addition they also got to know the students' behaviour problems, the sources of the problem, as well as ways to handle these problems. This information about the students was used by the teachers during implementation to provide instruction that catered to their individual ability.

As stated earlier, the assessment results were also documented in the checklist against each LO, albeit merely by awarding ‘stars’ with no details and does not reflect the students’ actual status. This information was used to write progress reports for administrative purposes as well as for parents.

The assessment information was also used to provide instruction that catered to the student’s abilities. The teachers tended to use the information gained through assessment, to cater to the individual student’s abilities when performing an activity, even though they did not use it to plan individualised instruction

Table 4.6 summarises the assessment methods, the documents used during assessment and the uses of the assessment.

Table 4.6

Focus for Assessment and the Strategies

Focus	Strategies/Purpose		
	Kayla	Marla	Sheila
Obtaining Information	Interview with parents	Interview with parents	Interview with parents
	Observation	Observation	Observation
	Completed Worksheets	Completed Worksheets	Completed Worksheets
Documenting the Information	Remarks on worksheets	Remarks on worksheets	Remarks on worksheets
	Mental notes	Mental notes	Mental notes
	Checklist	Checklist	Checklist
Using the Information	Writing annual reports for stakeholders	Writing annual reports for stakeholders	Writing annual reports for stakeholders
	Preparing worksheets according to ability and sometimes needs		Preparing worksheets according to ability and sometimes needs
	Implementing instruction according to ability and sometimes needs	Implementing instruction according to ability and sometimes needs	Implementing instruction according to ability and sometimes needs

Summary

How the three stages of instruction were carried out in each of the preschools for CSN was described in detail. The themes that emerged from the data were used as sub topics to explain how each stage in classroom instruction was carried out in the individual preschools. The descriptions began with the planning stage and then the implementation and finally the assessment stage according to the findings of the study following the sequence of the stages as practiced in the preschools. The chapter concludes with a cross case analysis of the findings obtained from the three preschools. This cross case is also presented according to the same sequence of the stages in the classroom instruction, emphasising the similarities and differences according to the factors that became the focus of each classroom instruction stage. The focus and the criteria/strategies emphasised in each case is compared in detail and the gist is also presented in tables. This comparison helped to derive at the findings which will be discussed in the next chapter.