

PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS TOWARDS THE IMPORTANCE OF LANDSCAPE

Salina Mohamed Ali, Katiman Rostam, & Abd. Hair Awang

School of Social, Development &
Environment, FSSK,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43650
UKM Bangi

Faculty Of Architecture, Planning And
Survey,
University Of Teknologi MARA, Shah
Alam, Selangor

salina77775@yahoo.com

Abstract

There are differing perceptions towards landscape among school students, teachers and parents. Their perceptions are influenced by the types of landscapes, functions of the landscapes and schools' achievements among others. The purpose of this article is to examine the perception of the teachers, students and the parents on the importance of landscape in the development of learning process, character development and to nourish the realization to love the environment. For the said purpose, this study uses primary data compiled from research done on 502 people comprising students, teachers and parents in the Klang-Langat valley. Secondary data which includes records, documents and statistics compiled from various related departments and agencies. Generally, awareness among teachers on schools landscape is higher as compared to others. The AVOVA analysis approach indicates the existence of significant differences on the perception of the students, teachers and parents towards the importance of landscape in achieving 3K, learning assistance, character development, nourish the awareness towards environment and the total score. Importance have to be placed on awareness towards the environment. This should not only be done by way of syllabus and learning process but also by way of daily activities at schools

Keywords: *perception of students, teachers and parents; importance of landscape; assisting learning process; develop the character of students.*

INTRODUCTION

The adverse development in information technology has left the students and teachers exposed and influenced by social medias such as facebook, Twiter, You Tube, blog, whats app, We Chat, and others which provide various source of information and entertainment. Students, especially those from the urban areas are separated from the nature as compared to those from the rural areas. Most among them feel that the surrounding landscapes at schools are no longer relevant and that they do not have any influence in the learning process at schools. Perceptions of students, teachers and parents towards the school's surrounding could play a role in influencing the development as well as the characteristics of the school's landscape. Various perceptions of students, teachers and parents are discussed as follows.

Very often, children like parks or play grounds surrounded by greeneries, shaded trees and colourful plants. Hart (1979) dan Moore (1986) discusses on the inclination of children in choosing an environment which is not built with buildings. They also discuss on how children uses their space for playing games. Their opinion is supported by Titman (1994) who states that children like parks and play grounds surrounded by greeneries and this includes playing fields, trees to climb on, shaded trees to hide and to seek shelter. The same is shared by Hart (1982) and Heft (1988). Both agree that a choice of environment filled with greeneries as well as natural environment are important and plays important role towards childrens perception in choosing their play ground. Therefore landscape at schools should have natural as well as greeneries as important elements (Salina et al. 2014) to develop and enhance learning process as well as students' physical development. The design of landscape at schools often receives the students' attention when they are at the playing field. According to Nicholson (1971) and Moore (1986) the perception of children and students towards the schools' environment, is that they are influenced by factors involving variety of designs of the landscape. Children get bored easily with an environment or surroundings which are not properly planned and untidy. It is a known fact that children like to scatter their playing tools. According to Kasali and Dogan (2010) who had examined three private schools at Izmir, Turkey, primary school students usually group together at a particular spot during their break time. They would do various activities at the spot of their choice. The layout of the schools surrounding have an impact on students' priority. Students are also attracted to areas which are organized and least congested. They opine that overall, students are sensitive towards characteristics of their surrounding environment and that they choose where they would want to be accordingly. When students are given a choise of either choosing an area outdoor or indoor, they would choose an area suitable for their activity which is more condusive outdoor.

Parents on the other hand, are inclined to have different views on the schools' landscape. According to Gibbons and Silva (2011), parents are more concern on the schools' quality when it comes to their childrens education. The school's landscape is always an influential element of the school's quality. However, they are of the opinion that quality and the academic achievement of a school are closely related to the learning experience at the surroundings of the school.

The study of Jansson and Persson (2010) on the students perception towards schools' landscape at two cities in Sweden reveals that there exist different adverse views among consumers. For instance children are inclined to use landscape for various activities. Parents on the other hand, are with their perception that the school's landscape has social purpose. Parents are of the view that the school's surrounding is a place utilized by the children to play especially during their break time or during their co-curricular activities. The longer hours spent by their children at school as compared to at home makes the school landscape important in influencing their social behavior.

The school's surrounding also influences the childrens perception towards the environment physically. The study by Ozdemir and Yilmaz (2008) towards school students in Turkey proves that the outdoor environment could influence the perception and the students' understanding of the environment. This is based on the existence of relationship between the characteristics and designs of the landscape with the students' behavior in the context of environment. The environment, besides influencing the childrens behavior, could also influence their understanding

towards the environment. Therefore, awareness towards the environment has to be given priority not only in syllabus and learning process but in the daily activities at schools. Providing and making available a conducive environment and landscape is important for students.

National Education Philosophy stresses upon the importance of the role of schools in the development of the character and personality of the students. Therefore, the schools' landscape which has an identity and concept could play a role in the development of learning process and it could also appreciate the environment. Students could benefit by way of mental stability, composed feeling, avoiding stress, improved behavior and develop a better mental health through interaction and direct contact with the environment. In the context of the attention restoration theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan, 1995; Berman et al. 2008) based on the analogy that the environment is closely connected with the mental stability of an individual; that being the close proximity between the inclination of an individual who is to be recovered with the help of the environment. Relationship with the environment means when a student is within the natural element such as plants, water source or an outdoor environment, the mind of the student would experience peace, feel fresh and relaxed. Relationship with the outdoor environment is not determined within a given period. It could happen within a short period but on a frequent basis. The psychological effect of this relationship is reduced mental pressure in the daily life of the students (Matsuoka, 2008). In the context of theory, the theory of evolutionary-psycho is about the emotional reaction which plays an important role in determining an individual's reaction towards the environment (Ulrich, 1983; Ulrich et al. 1991; Matsuoka, 2010).

The focus of discussion of this Article is about the perception of the teachers, students and parents on the importance of landscape in the development of the learning process, development of the students' character and personality and to develop the love towards natural environment. This is important in determining whether students, teachers and parents are aware of the importance of landscape in the learning process, whether in the aspect of cognitive, character development and awareness of the natural environment. For that purpose, the 3K programme which is being organized by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia shall be used as the basic assessment for the functions of landscape in the learning process. Information on the level of awareness could be used as a guide towards increasing and developing the management of landscapes at schools.

RESEARCH AREA AND METHODOLOGY

This research is conducted at schools located in the urban as well as rural areas within the Klang-Langat Valley, especially those located within the state of Selangor. Schools located at Shah Alam and Subang Jaya in the Petaling district were chosen to represent the schools within the urban area. On the other hand, schools at the district of Hulu Langat, Selayang, Klang and Sepang were chosen to represent the schools within the out skirts and rural area. The classification of schools within the urban area and rural area were done based on the criterion set by the Education Department of Selangor and the Education Department of Federal Territory (2011). Klang-Langat valley were chosen as the research area because of the following factors: firstly, it is situated at the main area within the Peninsular where growth and development is at the fast pace; secondly, schools at this area are those which experience modernization due to its location which is close to the country's innovation centre especially Kuala Lumpur; thirdly, the

size of the landscape area at the schools within the Klang-Langat valley which is reducing due to the scarcity of land and price of the land which is booming high which impacts its development; and lastly, the existence of schools at out skirts and rural areas which are experiencing adverse changes especially areas within the district of Hulu Langat and Sepang (Katiman Rostam, 2006; Katiman et al 2010).

This research uses both primary as well as secondary data. Secondary data are such as records, documents, statistics compiled by the various departments or agencies such as the Education Department of Selangor and Federal Territory as well as the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. Basic data derived from the Department of Statistics, Malaysia are also used. The same applies to particulars of students and teachers obtained from schools chosen for this research. Information on National Landscape Policy and National Education Philosophy which consists the schools development and planning, population density, social economy, local planning and structure are also collected for the purpose of this research.

This Article discusses on the perception of students, teachers and parents towards the importance of schools' landscapes. Those directly involved in the schools are students consisting of head prefect and assistant head prefect, teachers' representatives consisting of 3K teachers, student counselors and parents' representative consisting of the head of the Teachers and Parents Association. The number of respondents who attended to the research form was about 502. The data for the research form were processed by with the use of SPSS and the result was as what will be discussed later in this Article. The basis assessment is the importance of Landscape measured by using Likert scale, i.e. completely against, against, not so against, agreed and very much agreed.

RESEARCH OUTCOME AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the least difference among the students, teachers and parents in assessing the importance of landscape towards the learning process at schools, developing the academic performance, development of students character and personality and enhancing awareness of the natural environment.

Table 1

Minimum Differences in the assessment of landscape among school students, teachers and parents

Landscape Score	School Members	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Develop 3K	Teachers	218	22.77	2.330
	Students	179	21.74	2.553
	Parents	105	22.13	2.329
Assist in the Learning Process	Teachers	218	21.57	2.643
	Students	179	20.85	3.011
	Parents	105	21.24	3.018

Develop Character of Student	Teachers	218	21.40	2.688
	Students	179	20.50	3.034
	Parents	105	21.30	3.314
Nourishing Awareness of the Natural Environment	Teachers	218	22.19	2.404
	Students	179	21.34	2.909
	Parents	105	22.10	3.115
Total Score	Teachers	218	87.94	8.745
	Students	179	84.43	9.533
	Parents	105	86.77	10.329

Source: Research 2013

The over all mean view of the students, teachers and students is in the range between 20.50 to 22.77 (the ideal score is 0.0 for the lowest and 88.0 for the highest). Among the teachers the minimal highest obtained for views on the importance of landscape towards achieving the 3K programme (Mean = 22.77, SD = 2.330), followed by assisting the learning process (Mean = 21.57, SD = 2.643), develop student's character (Mean = 21.40, SD = 2.688), nourishing awareness of the natural environment (Mean = 22.19, SD = 2.404) and the total score (Mean = 87.94, SD = 8.745).

Table 2 shows the mean differences towards the landscape assessment for schools in the urban and rural areas. Schools located at the rural areas have the highest min as compared to the schools located at the urban areas. This is based on the assessment made by the students, teachers and parents. For schools located at the rural areas, assessment towards developing 3K obtained the highest mean (22.33) followed by nourishing awareness of natural environment (21.95), development of student's character (21.35) and assist in learning (21.30). On scattered data, it is noticed that the datas are scattered evenly between one another. All datas are within 2.400 to 9.700 only.

Table 2

Differences in mean score on the importance of landscape for urban and rural schools

Landscape Assessment	Urban			Rural		
	N	Mean	Difference	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Development of 3K	343	22.24	2.416	159	22.33	2.530
Assist in Learning	343	21.22	3.009	159	21.30	2.553
Develop Students' Character	343	20.92	2.983	159	21.35	2.949
Nourish awareness of natural environment	343	21.83	2.786	159	21.95	2.746
Total Score	343	86.21	9.676	159	86.94	9.077

Further analysis (Table 3) uses the ANOVA approach, indicates the existence of significant differences in the assessment of the students, teachers and parents towards the importance of landscape in achieving 3K ($d = 2$, $f = 9.137$, $p < 0.01$), assist in learning ($d = 2$, $f = 3.108$, $p < 0.05$), develop student's character ($d = 2$, $f = 5.051$, $p < 0.01$), nourishing awareness of the natural environment ($d = 2$, $f = 5.244$, $p < 0.01$), total score ($d = 2$, $f = 6.951$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3

ANOVA students, teachers and parents towards assessment on landscape

Landscape Score	Total ²	Degrees of Freedom	Mean ²	F	Significant Level
Develop 3K	106.311	2	53.156	9.137	0.000
Assist in Learning	50.774	2	25.387	3.108	0.046
Develop Student's Character	88.049	2	44.024	5.051	0.007
Nourish Awareness of Natural Environment	79.214	2	39.607	5.244	0.006
Total Score	1222.332	2	611.166	6.952	0.001

Source: Research 2013

Develop Landscape 3K

Table 4 exhibits mean and the standard deviation for the segment of landscape for 3K schools. There are five segments which can be classified in landscape developing 3K. Mean for improving the surroundings of the schools (4.61) has the highest mean followed by improving the image of the schools (4.52); to be the "lungs" for the schools by releasing oxygen and inhale carbon dioxide (4.46); provide shelter and reduce the temperature level at schools (4.43) and to provide security and increase the level of protection (4.24). The standard deviation value reflects data which are even between one another. All the data are within the standard deviation value of between 0.500 to 2.500. This indicates that students, teachers and parents are aware of the importance of landscape which could help beautify the schools surround and at the same time enhance the schools image. Teachers are given the responsibility to ensure schools comply with 3K requirements by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

Table 4

Mean and standard deviation for landscape 3K

Landscape 3K	Mean	Standard Deviation
Provide shelter and reduce temperature	4.43	0.765
Develop schools image	4.52	0.618
Release oxygen	4.46	0.682
Beautifies the schools	4.61	0.598

Security and facilities	4.24	0.734
Total	22.27	2.451

Source: Research 2013

Landscape Assist Learning Process

Beautiful landscape at the school surround could enhance the learning process to a certain extent. Some of the importance of landscape which relates to enhancing the learning process could be listed into five segments. Table 5 shows segments which obtained the highest mean would be schools which have shades to rest, memorize and discuss with friends or classmates (4.40), followed by students, teachers and parents develops their general knowledge by way of reading the informative sign boards, the scientific names of the plants, sculptures and other elements found in gardens (4.35); assist in the learning process especially the science subject, biology and geography (4.28); provides inspirational source and interest for the students to be present at school 4.16) and lastly, provides motivation for students to study hard (4.05). In the context of scattered data, they are scattered evenly. All data are in the standard deviation between 0.600 to 2.900. From the compiled mean, it explains that students, teachers and parents realize the importance of landscape as comforting for students to rest, memorize and as a place for discussion. Nevertheless this realization stays put as it could not be pictured in the present schools' landscape.

Table 5

Mean and standard deviation for the landscape to assist learning process

Landscape Assists Learning Process	Mean	Standard Deviation
Provides Inspiration	4.16	0.725
Motivational Source	4.05	0.779
Assist in the learning process of science, biology and geography	4.28	0.756
General Information	4.35	0.683
Place of shelter to rest, memorize and discuss	4.40	0.696
Total	21.25	2.870

Source: Research 2013

Landscape Develops Students' Character

The importance of having schools with a conducive environment besides developing the learning process, it provides a significant relationship and role in the development of students' character. As provided in Table 6, there are five segments which have been categorized in the importance of landscape in the development of the students character. Mean for the importance of landscape segment could increase students' psychomotor skill and the segment learning from the sign boards which could increase awareness of the natural environment (4.27) obtained the highest mean value. This is followed by mural art which helps to develop the spirit of patriotic (4.24); activities related to associations, marching, uniform (4.15) and encourages the creativities of the student. Standard deviation value indicates data are scattered evenly. All data are at a standard deviation between 0.600 to 3.00 unit. This indicates that the students, teachers and parents agree that with the existence of landscape, it could increase the level of psychomotor skills of the students such as develop their physical activities, social activities, recreation, gatherings, resting and association with friends. Besides that, students, teachers and parents has the awareness when they attend to the research form but however, the awareness of landscape which helps to develop students' character is still at a very minimal level.

Table 6

Mean and standard deviation of landscape assisting the develop the character of the students

Landscape Develops Students' Character	Mean	Standard Deviation
Increases psychomotor skill	4.27	0.686
Association, marching and uniform	4.15	0.743
Increases the awareness of the environment	4.27	0.745
Mural art encourages patriotism	4.24	0.756
Creativity of the student	4.12	0.898
Total	21.05	2.976

Source: Research 2013

Landscape Nourishes Awareness of Environment

In the presence of shaded trees, plants and greeneries, the school's landscape could be liven up and it could change the static nature of the landscape. Apart from that it could also nourishes the awareness of the students, teachers and parents on the importance of safe guarding or protecting the importance of the environment. Refer to Table 7, mean for beautiful landscape which brings about the feeling of affection and sense of belonging towards the environment (4.41) obtains the highest mean followed by the segment where it encourages cleanliness and a conducive surrounding (4.39) which obtains the same mean. Mean for the function of plants in safeguarding fauna and flora is 4.36 and the presence of re-cycle containers or bins encourages students to re-cycle the waste (4.31). In the context of scattered data, they are scattered evenly. All data are placed at the standard deviation between 0.600 to 2.800. This indicates that the surround of the school which is covered with plants and trees could to a certain extent nourish the awareness of the importance of protecting the environment beginning right from the school. Thus, this shall inculcate the need to love the environment.

Table 7

Mean and standard deviation of landscape nourishing the awareness towards the environment

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Develops sense of belonging and affection towards the environment	4.41	0.700
Re-cycle bins encourages students to re-cycle wastes	4.31	0.681
Beautiful landscape encourages maintaining cleanliness	4.39	0.650
Plants could protect fauna and flora	4.36	0.698
Conducive surrounding provides for awareness activities of the environment	4.39	0.667
Total	21.87	2.771

Source: Research 2013

SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

In general, they are in agreement for teachers and parents contribute towards beautifying the school surround. This assessment is important in determining if students, teachers and parents are aware of the importance of landscape towards the learning process either in the aspect of cognitive, development of character and awareness of the environment.

There should be high level of awareness among the teachers on the importance of landscape because teachers play the role of educator who would influence the students in caring for the environment at schools. Teachers would provide exposures in subjects which are thought such as science, geography, civik, extra curricular activities, Islamic studies, morale and other environment related subjects. In the event the awareness level of teachers are not encouraging, there will be a possibility that the students awareness level will also be the same. There are various methodologies used by the teachers in their effort to provide awareness to students in the up keep of school surrounds. Among them, the use of gardens in the school as a place to enhance their knowledge, conduct outdoor experiments, teaching and relate the teaching with the school surround.

To conclude, this article is about the perception of students, teachers and parents towards awareness of importance of landscape at schools. There exist differences among the students, teachers and parents in assessing the importance of landscape in the learning process at schools, that being, in the context of 3K programme, develop the learning process at schools, develop the academic standard, character of students and nourish the awareness of environment.

REFERENCES

- Berman, M.G., Jonides, J. & Kaplan, S. 2008. The Cognitive Benefits of Interacting With Nature. *Psychological Science* 19: 1207

- Gibbons, S. & Silva, O. 2011. School quality, child wellbeing and parents' satisfaction. *Economics of Education Review* 30: 312-331
- Hart, R. 1979. *Children's Experience of Place*. New York: Irvington Publishers.
- Hart, R. 1982. *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*. London: Earthscan.
- Heft, H. 1988. Affordances of children's environments: A functional approach to environmental description. *Children's Environment. Quarterly* 5(3).
- Jansson, M. & Persson, B. 2010. Playground planning and management: An evaluation of standard-influenced provision through user needs. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 9: 33-42
- Kasali, A. & Dogan, F. 2010. Fifth-, sixth-, and seventh grade students' use of non-classroom spaces during recess: The case of three private schools in Izmir, Turkey. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30: 518 – 532.
- Kaplan, R. & Kaplan, S. 1989. *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, S. 1995. The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 15: 169-182.
- Katiman Rostam. 2006. Migration to the suburbs of the Klang Valley Metropolitan Region. *Akademika*, 68: 3-27.
- Katiman Rostam, Mochamad Rosul, Er Ah Choy, Abdul Rahim Mohd Nor, Zaini Sakawi, Norazuan Md Hashim & Aishah@Esah Hj Muhammad. 2010. Urbanization and the spread of the city on the edge of the Klang-Langat Metropolitan Region *GEOGRAFIA Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 6 (2): 37 – 50.
- Matsuoka, R.H. 2010. Student performance and high school landscapes. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 97 : 273–282
- Matsuoka, R.H. 2008. High school landscapes and student performance. Ph.D. dissertation: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Moore, R.C. 1986. *Childhood's Domain: Play and Space in Child Development*. London: Croom Helm.
- Nicholson, S. 1971. How NOT to cheat children. The theory of loose parts. *Landscape Architecture*. 62: 30-34.
- Ozdemir, A. & Yilmaz, O. 2008. Assessment of outdoor school environments and physical activity in Ankara's primary schools. *Environmental Psychology* 28(3): 287-300.
- Salina Mohamed Ali, Katiman Rostam & Abd. Hair Awang. 2014. Characteristics of landscape architecture schools in the Klang Valley-Langat. *GEOGRAFIA OnlineTM Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 10(1): 118-129.
- Titman, W. 1994. *Special Places, Special People. The Hidden Curriculum of School Grounds*. WWF UK (World Wide Fund For Nature) / Learning Through Landscapes.
- Ulrich, R.S. 1983. Aesthetic and affective response to natural environment. In I. Altman & J. F. Wohlwill (Eds.). *Behavior and natural environments*, hlm. 85-125. New York: Plenum.
- Ulrich, R.S., Simons, R.F., Losito, B.D., Fiorito, E., Miles, M.A. & Zelson, M. 1991. Stress recovery during exposure to natural and urban environments. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 11: 201-230.