

**LOCAL PLANTS AS ALTERNATIVE MEDIA  
TO PROMOTE CHILD FRIENDLY LEARNING:  
Best Practice in RA Al Hikmah and RA Al Muta'alimin, Semarang Municipality**

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**ABSTRACT**

A local milieu media has an important role in learning process to facilitate the child development on the cognitive, motoric, language, social, emotion, and kinaesthetic domains. It also promotes child friendly learning, accommodating provision, protection, and participation (3P:s) principles. This paper presents a best practice on the implementation of local plants as local environment media in RA Al Hikmah and RA Al Muta'alimin, Semarang Municipality, Central Java. Local plants, a non-classical realistic learning was implemented in 1<sup>st</sup> semester period in 2014. The field observation focused on teacher and children impacts. In teacher's perspective, this media was flexible, accessible, and available objects found in school surroundings and have possibility to manipulate the environment. In children's perspective, it gave joyful, recreational, experiencing, interesting, and realistic learning to enhance cognitive, motoric, language, social, emotion, and kinaesthetic domains. It is also safe for the children in doing their activities and activates children in learning process. It is highly recommended as an alternative media to be implemented for early child education in different local settings or in different manipulated-environments.

**Key words:** local milieu media, local plants, promote, child friendly learning

**INTRODUCTION**

Kindergarten is one of formal education which is categorized into early childhood education in line with Rules of National Education System Number 20, 2003 Article 28 stating, "*Pendidikan anak usia dini pada jalur formal berbentuk Taman Kanak-kanak (TK), Raudhatul Athfal, atau bentuk lain yang sederajat.*" Education on this stage aims at helping the students at the age of 4-6 years old to grow and develop both physically, emotionally, and spiritually before they go to the higher level of formal education, Elementary school (Depdikbud, Dirjen Dikdasmen, 1994). Suriansyah and Aslamiah (2013) state that all aspects of development including cognitive, language, social, emotion, physic, and motoric should be the main concern on this stage of education.

The education on early childhood education should facilitate the students to

develop all competence domains through leisure and safe game, and recreational activities. There are four articles known as general principles of UN Convention of Child Rights which should be emphasized in conducting early childhood education. They are 1) Survival rights including the child's right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence, such as nutrition, shelter, an adequate living standard, and access to medical services; 2) Development rights including the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion; 3) Protection rights which ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee children; safeguards for children in the criminal justice system; protection for children in employment; protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered exploitation or abuse of any

kind; and 4) Participation rights which encompass children's freedom to express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting their own lives, to join associations and to assemble peacefully. As their capacities develop, children should have increasing opportunity to participate in the activities of society, in preparation for adulthood. UNICEF recommends to accommodate the child's rights to rest, leisure, play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts (the Convention on the Rights of Child on Article 31).

In addition, the same article states that Kindergarten school learning should be appropriate with the characteristic of child who likes playing a lot. Therefore, it suggests that the activities of reading and counting should be integrated with the activities of playing. It means that while the students are playing, at the same time they are playing. In other words, the characteristic of learning in Kindergarten schools is facilitating the students to learn subconsciously. It is in line with Indonesian Curriculum 2013 which states that the principles of early child learning are 1) learning through playing, 2) orienting on child development; 3) orienting on child's need, 4) students' centered learning, 5) active learning, 6) orienting on character building, 7) supported with conducive environment, 8) orienting on democratic learning, and 9) utilising local media/sources.

The characteristic of learning in Kindergarten schools is facilitating the students to learn subconsciously. There are many strategies which can be applied by the teachers to create subconscious learning. For example, teachers can use media. Sadiman (in Zaman and Eliawati, 2010) defines media as all things which can be used to send messages from the sender to the receiver, and they can stimulate students' mind, feeling, attention, and interest, so learning process is occurred. Media have an important role in learning process at early child education. These are needed to make the students enjoy and interested in learning process. Moreover, Zaman and Eliyawati (2010) state that media

used in learning process can heighten students' learning process, and finally they can heighten their result of the study.

There are many researchers applying the media in teaching learning process, especially in Kindergarten school. The first previous research which had successfully applied the media in learning entitled "Penerapan Media Pembelajaran Berbentuk Sock Puppet Untuk Anak-Anak TK Kemala Bhayangkari 97 Porong" done by Rosalina, Murwandani, and Tjintariani (2014). Here the writers applied Sock Puppet media to teach Kindergarten students. The result shows that Sock Puppet can make the teacher easily deliver the materials, and it can also be an inspiration and an alternative media which is easily made by the teacher. Moreover, the students' score raised 86, or it was categorized excellent. The students also give positive response by showing the attitude of taking care of the environment. For example, they throw the rubbish in the trash and water the plants. Astuti (2008) as the second previous research had also successfully applied the media in learning. In her final project entitled "Peran Media Gambar Dalam Pembelajaran PAI Pada Anak Usia Dini di TK Islamic Centre Semarang", she applied pictures to teach Islamic Kindergarten students. The result shows that by using pictures, they can improve the quality of teaching learning process; learning activity is more effective; and pictures also resolve the limitation of space, time, and sensory perception. From these results, it comes to the conclusion that the use of media can improve the process and result of students' learning.

However, teachers sometimes are not aware with the safeness of the media use. The safeness of the media use is sometimes forgotten. The safeness, in this case, is not dangerous for students' physics or physicist. If the safeness of the media is not kept, this causes some negative effects for students. Therefore, teachers should be able to manage the media used starting from planning, using, saving, and maintenance, so they are kept well. Finally, they can raise the goals of learning. Dewi A. (2015) suggests that

teachers should compose some plans before they choose and organize the media in order that the use of the teaching media is appropriate with the characteristic of child. She adds that in planning, teachers should consider 1) the goals of learning, 2) developing child development aspects: cognitive, language, social emotional, and physic motoric, 3) sufficient quantity, 4) save, 5) based on students' interest, 6) various kinds, 7) appropriate with the child's developmental level, 8) durable, 9) interesting, and 10) cheap.

In addition, the availability and accessibility of the media sometimes become the problems that the teachers face. Thus, teachers should find out the media that are suitable and protect them from physical injured, etc. One of the alternative media that the teacher can use is the local plants media. Local plants media are learning sources which utilize plants originating from the learners' environment. They are for example medicinal plants (ginger, turmeric, greater galangale, etc., garlic, onion, chilli, etc. This kind of media is not only accessible but also available everywhere. The writers assume that by using the media, learners, in this case early child, can have real and direct experience because in applying the local plants media they themselves can plant and observe what they plant, so they can easily understand the material given by the teacher. It is in line with Piaget (1972: 7) stating, "Children should be able to experiment and research themselves. Teachers, of course, can lead children by providing materials which are accurate, but the most important thing for them is to understand something, they have to build their own sense, they must find their own. Moreover, learning methods, such as lecture, reading a book, listening, or teacher demonstration will not give whole understanding for students. Therefore, these need to be changed into learning based discussion, experiment, and communicating it to the others.

Based on the background above, the problems of the study can be stated as follows:

1. How does the teachers apply the local plants as media to promote child friendly teaching?
2. What are the impacts of the local plants media on the developments of child (in children and teacher perspectives)?

The aims of the study are 1) to describe the application of local plants as media to promote child friendly teaching and 2) to find out the impacts of the local plants media on the developments of child (in children and teacher perspectives).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The type of the study is qualitative descriptive, that is to describe the application of local plants as media to teach early child. The approach used in the study is qualitative. Kothari (2004: 5) states that qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behavior. Research in such a situation is a function of researcher's insights and impressions.

The subject of the study was teachers and students of RA Al Hikmah and RA Al Muta'alimin, Semarang Municipality, Central Java. The technique used to get the sample is purposive sampling which belongs to Non-probability sampling. Kothary (2004: 59) states, "Non-probability sampling is that sampling procedure which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has of being included in the sample."

The instrument used was observation sheet and interview guideline. The techniques used to collect the data were observation and interview. The data of the study is then analyzed following Miles and Huberman's way (1994) including data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The application of local plants as media to promote child friendly learning

The local plants media was implemented in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester period in 2014. In applying the local plants media, the

teachers used Child Friendly Teaching Model (CFTM) based on 3Ps (Provision, Protection, and Participation) proposed by Sumardiyani & at all. Therefore, all activities in learning process were done based on the model. The activities consisted of some stages, namely Preparation, Implementation, Observation, Evaluation. The steps were done as follows:

a. Preparation

On this stage, first the teachers directed the students to divide themselves into groups. After all students had groups, then each group decided the leader. Then the teachers and students made an agreement. The agreement included the kinds of the plants they wanted to use and all materials needed in the implementation. Teachers noted all things which they had decided on the board, so the students understood the decision they made and the consequence if they broke the rules. The teachers offered two kinds of plants as the media; they are medicinal plants, such as ginger, turmeric, galangal, etc.; and olericulture plants, such as tomato, onion, garlic, etc. In this stage, the students of RA Al Muta'alimi decided to plant medicinal plants because they are easy to find around them, while the students of RA Al Hikmah decided to plant olericulture. Besides the other materials which they should bring were such as vase, water dipper, soil, small towel, etc. Each group shared the duties of preparing the materials to the members of the group.

b. Implementation

On the day of the implementation, the teachers made sure that all students had brought the materials needed. The teachers gave space for each group to plant their plants. The students planted their plants

together. In planting stage, the teachers accompanied the students; when they faced difficulties the teachers helped them. The teachers directed the students to remember the steps in planting the plants. After the activity of planting finished, the teachers reminded the students to wash their hands. Then each group communicated the steps in planting the plants to the whole groups. The teachers helped and motivated the students when they got difficulty in communicating the steps.

c. Observation

Observation was done on the day after they planted their plants. The students observed all changes of the plants including the growth of the plants, counting the number of the leaves, the colors of the leaves and the stems, etc.

d. Evaluation

On this stage, the students communicated the results of the observation to the other groups. The teachers and the students evaluated the results together.

**2. The Impacts of the Local Plants Media in Teachers' and students' perspective**

a. Teachers' Perception of the Local Plants Media

Field observation was used to get the data of the teachers' and the students' perspective. It was as the main technique in collecting the data. However, the writers also used as an additional data. Interview was done after the implementation of the media. The writers interviewed two teachers from two schools who implemented the media. There were three questions given to the teachers. The questions were as follows.

1) What do you think of the local plants media which you implemented?

- 2) Do you think that the media have good impacts to the development of the child?
- 3) Can the media be easy to get?

The results of field observation and the interview can be summarized below.

Both of the teachers agree that local plants are good media to promote child friendly teaching because in implementing the media there were various activities done by the students. All activities done involved the students to participate together with the teachers. For example, in preparation stage, the students learned to decide something themselves. It means that they were given right of participation. The students also got the right of giving an opinion freely in this stage.

In addition, the students got the right of protection as well because during the application of the media, the teachers always accompanied and kept their eyes on what students did, so the activities done by the students were safe. After the activity of planting, the students were reminded by the teachers to wash their hand with soap; it means that they were protected from impurity and germ.

In teachers' perspective, this media was also flexible because it can be used in the classroom and/or outside the classroom. Moreover, this media was accessible and available because the objects can be found in school or students' surroundings, and the media have possibility to manipulate the environment. All activities done in the implementation can also develop child development aspects, such as cognitive, language, social emotional, and physic motoric.

Interview was also done to the students, and there were three students in each school interviewed by the writers. Two questions were

given to the students; they were as follows:

- 1) Do you like the activities done with your friends when you planted the plant?
- 2) What did you get from the activities?

The result of the observation and the interview done by the writers of the impacts of the application of the local plants media in children's perspective indicates that it gave joyful, recreational, experiencing, interesting, and realistic learning to enhance cognitive, motoric, language, social, emotion, and kinaesthetic domains. It is also safe for the children in doing their activities and activates children in learning process. They really liked the activities of planting because they can cooperate with their teammate.

#### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the findings above, the study can be concluded as follows:

1. Local plants media is one of good alternative media to promote child friendly teaching because in using the media the teachers had applied 3Ps (Provision, Protection, and Participation).
2. In teacher's perspective, this media was flexible, accessible, and available objects found in school surroundings and have possibility to manipulate the environment.
3. In children' perspective, it gave joyful, recreational, experiencing, interesting, and realistic learning to enhance cognitive, motoric, language, social, emotion, and kinaesthetic domains. It is also safe for the children in doing their activities and activates children in learning process.

There are some suggestions and/or recommendation given based on the results of the study. They are as follows:

1. It is highly recommended as an alternative media to be implemented for early child education in different local

- settings or in different manipulated-environments.
2. The teachers who applied local plants media should motivate the other teachers to implement the media because of their good impacts on child development.
  3. The researchers should conduct the further research to know the problems faced by the teachers and the students when local plants are implemented as media in teaching learning process.

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