

Culture in the Twenty-First Century Kindergarten

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Abstract – Culture is a topic that is rich in knowledge and materials to be included in the teaching and learning in kindergartens. However, teachers still find it difficult to use this topic in their teaching because culture is an abstract topic for kindergarten students. This article aims to describe Javanese cultural elements that can be taught in kindergarten classes. The sample of this survey research was selected using purposive sampling technique. There were 96 Yogyakarta kindergarten teachers participating as the respondents in this study. The data were collected using interview and FGD. These two instruments focused on investigating if teachers have ever included culture as the topic of their teaching, whether they can put culture as the theme and subtheme in their teaching, and which Javanese culture they can select to be the theme and subtheme. The findings show that 6 out of 96 (6.25%) teachers have ever included culture as the topic of their teaching while 90 teachers (93.75%) have never used this topic; as many as 30 teachers (31.25%) can identify culture as a big theme in their teaching while 66 teachers (68.75%) use this topic as a national subtheme; of all the topics, daily needs which include traditional food, traditional beverage, and traditional clothing become the most frequently chosen topic, selected by 24 teachers (25%). This finding can be used as a guide to using culture as a topic and theme of learning for kindergarten teachers.

Keywords – Culture, Javanese culture, teaching theme, kindergarten teaching, kindergarten students.

INTRODUCTION

This article explains that the use of culture in learning is still very minimal which indicates a lack of cultural preservation in schools. This has an impact on the extinction of culture, especially local Javanese culture, from its own country. The results of the study in this article provide an explanation that developing themes by utilizing cultural topics can be done by the teacher. Although early childhood education curriculum in Indonesia gives flexibility to kindergarten teachers to develop the learning theme in class. The current Indonesian curriculum requires teachers to be creative in planning and implementing learning. Culture as a topic which exists in around children, can be a topic in the learning theme that will affect children's cognitive development. Nevertheless, kindergarten teachers are not confident to developing the learning theme in their class using culture because the teacher's understanding is inadequate.

Indonesia is a country that is rich in culture [1] as it consists of various ethnic groups spread throughout its territory. The culture contains many elements related to people's lives. In regards to learning, cultural aspects existing around the school need to be taken into

consideration when designing the learning activities. Culture also needs to be considered when policy makers are about to develop a curriculum used as a reference in national scale. Culture needs to be included in the core elements of the curriculum in order to make learning becomes contextual and more importantly, to preserve culture through early childhood education. Bredekamp et al. [2] in Developmentally Appropriate Practices even includes culture as one of the contexts worth considering in curriculum development for early childhood education besides the child's background and age. Culture and curriculum of both formal and non-formal education are a unity connected through many things and keep changing as the time passes by. Culture is an interesting topic to learn [3]. Children learn about culture through culture and using culture [4].

However, it is undeniable that some topics related to culture is an abstract discussion and is difficult to understand and to be integrated in early childhood education [5]. This can be overcome by considering the stage of children development concerning the background, age, and experience before developing a certain cultural topic that will be used as a learning material or media [6]. The use of culture as a material or

medium for early childhood education should consider the individual characteristics of the child to make the cultural use meaningful. Children learn using concrete objects, so it would be better if the culture used for learning is also in the form of concrete cultural objects, such as artifacts. There are seven cultural elements that can be used in early childhood learning, i.e. religious systems and religious ceremonies, community and organizations systems, knowledge systems, languages, arts, living systems, and technology and equipment systems [7].

One of the cultures in Indonesia used as a learning material is Javanese culture. Javanese culture has a lot of influence for Indonesian as the Javanese is the largest ethnic group (about one third of the whole population) in Indonesia [1]. However, the preservation of this massive culture has not been optimized through the educational field [8]. Javanese culture has four pillars [9], namely mythos, logos, ethos, and pathos that can be used in education. Mythos itself is often used in early childhood education in the form of fairy tales or folklores [10] which contains various moral values, virtues, and other lives. The logos is contained in the rich diversity of food, clothing, and customs that can be developed as a topic for learning a material. Ethos can be embedded in various learning habits both inside and outside the classroom, and in family context. Finally, pathos that can be considered as a habituation in learning that follows the development of the era without leaving the richness of local cultures.

However, culture, especially Javanese, has been replaced by popular culture that is sometimes lacking in aesthetics and values although it is considered more progressive [11]. The shift from local cultures to foreign cultures needs to be minimized by encouraging children to love and appreciate local culture from an early age. The love for culture should not be just a slogan, but it should be realized in children's behaviour. Unless it is cultivated since an early age, local cultures will experience a shift towards foreign ones, primarily because the people's appreciation towards cultures is not strong enough and well rooted. This foreign culture will slowly replace the local culture and even make it disappear if not immediately addressed. Local cultures can flourish if science, thought, and appreciation for local culture are strongly embedded in our lives. Local cultural cultivation should be familiarized and developed in children from an early age to make their roots stronger [12].

Young children are the most appropriate agent for habituating the culture appreciation and characters

embedded within it. The cultivation of the culture appreciation in this country is absolutely necessary so that the culture can survive and even develop in the community. Culture is not only used as a learning material, but also more effectively used as a medium and means of learning a desired character. This means that culture should not be learned merely through memorization, but it would be better if culture is used as a learning tool and source for cultivating the national character. The use of cultural elements for learning, however, requires the presence of teachers with professional competence. Teachers need to have knowledge of cultural material that can be raised in learning and have the skills to develop learning based on local culture (Javanese).

In fact, there are only 6 out of 70 teachers (8.5%) who are brave and able to develop lessons in their classes a little more differently from developing the Indonesian national curriculum. Of 6 teachers, only one used culture as a learning topic [8], as presented in the following figure.

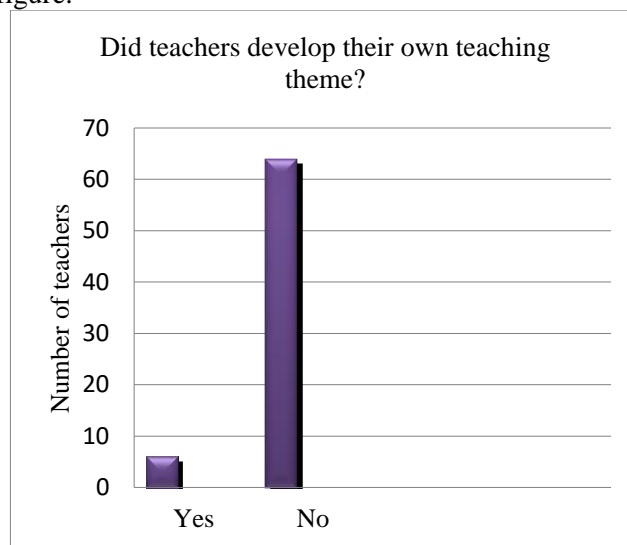


Figure 1. Teachers who develop their own themes (Source: Research report by Maryatun, et al., 2017)

There are several reasons why culture is very rarely included in kindergarten learning activities. The reasons expressed by the teacher are [7], 1) teachers lack knowledge in raising culture as a learning topic, 2) teachers have never received any training on theme-based learning, 3) they lack a good financial condition which hampers the selection of cultural theme-based learning, 4) the prevalence of an assumption that culture is an abstract material not suitable for children, 5) the spread of another assumption that children can learn

culture by themselves from the environment, 6) teachers have difficulty in integrating cultures into their daily lesson plans.

Culture

Culture (*buddayah*) which is the plural form of 'budi' that means 'mind' contains meaning as a way of life that develops and is shared by a group of people and passed down from generation to generation [12]. Culture, which comes from the word "colure" means "to manage" and "to do", which is all the efforts and actions of humans to process [13]. Therefore, it can be said that culture is a human action that manages and lives a life that is continuously developed, owned and bequeathed by particular groups from generation to generation.

Culture is the sum of what a man has ever produced out of his/her thinking and work. J. J Honigmann [14] distinguishes three 'cultural symptoms', namely (1) ideas, (2) activities, and (3) artefacts. This is clarified further by Koenjtaraningrat who calls them three forms of culture, namely 1) form of culture as a complexity of ideas, values, norms, rules and so on; 2) form of culture as a complexity of activity and the patterned activities of humans in a society; and 3) form of culture as objects of human works.

Furthermore, regarding the form of culture, Setiadi, et al. [15] gives the following explanation.

Form of Idea

The form of idea shows the idea of culture as an abstract form which cannot be touched, held or photographed, and is placed in the mind of the community in which the culture is alive. An ideal culture has the function of regulating, controlling, and giving direction to human actions and behaviour in society in the form of courtesy. This ideal culture can also be called customs. This form of ideas, for example, is *unggah-ungguh* and *teposeliro*. *Unggah-ungguh* means a set of manners while *teposeliro* means being considerate.

Form of Behavior

The form of behaviour is named as a social system, because it is related to the patterned behaviour of the humans themselves. This form can be observed, photographed and documented because in this social system there are human activities that relate to and interact with one another in society. It has a concrete characteristic as reflected in the form of behaviour and language. The examples of culture as a form of behaviour are *kenduren* or *slametan*, and many others. *Kenduren*

and/or *slametan* are a kind of banquet commonly presented to commemorate events and ask for blessings.

Form of Artifacts

The form of artefact is also called physical culture, which is entirely a physical result. It is real, touchable, visible, and well documented in nature. For example: cowsheds, horses, chickens, goats, temples, mosques, *musholla* or *langar* (small mosques), *pendopo* (audience hall or ceremonial pavilion), *joglo* (mansion), *limasan* (hip roof house), *sentong* (rooms), *gapuro* (gates), *pager* (fences), *batik* (traditional clothes), *lurik* (stripped and checked textiles), *jumputan* (the dyed batik) and others.

Koenjtaraningrat extracts from various frameworks made by anthropology scholars, arguing that there are seven cultural elements that can be found in all nations called elements of universal culture:

1. Languages such as Javanese, which consists of four speech levels namely *ngoko*, *kromo andap*, *kromo madyo*, and *kromo inggil*.
2. Knowledge system, which consists of a) natural surroundings, b) plants that grow around the area where children live, c) animals that live in areas where children live, d) substances, raw materials, and objects in the children's environment, e) human body, f) human traits and behaviour, and g) time and space.
3. Social organization. Social organizations in Yogyakarta include: *RT* (neighbourhood groups), *RW* (community groups), *Pedukuhan* (hamlet), *Kelurahan* (villages), *Kecamatan* (sub-districts), *Kabupaten* (regencies), *Provinsi* (province/region), dan *Negara* (country). It could also be in the form of: *Paguyuban* (communities), *Karang Taruna* (youth organization), *Dasa Wisma* (a community welfare program comprising ten households), *PKK* (Family Welfare Movement), and *Asosiasi/Perhimpunan* (associations).
4. The daily living equipment and technological system consists of carpentry tools, agricultural equipment, traditional industrial equipment, marine and aquatic appliances, and traditional games.
5. Livelihood systems in Yogyakarta include hunting and gathering, breeding, farming in the fields, fishing, building settled farming with irrigation systems. Examples of the livelihoods are workers, sellers, employees, entrepreneurs, fishermen, farmers, and drivers.
6. Religious systems such as the belief systems of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Catholicism.

7. Arts include a) dance consisting of classical, new, modern and contemporary dance as well as traditional games; b) traditional plays such as *ketoprak*, *srandul*, *gejog lesung*, and *reog*; c) traditional music such as *gamelan*, *hadroh*, *cokekan*, and *campursari*; d) fine art of canvas, glass, and ceramic painting; e) sculpture of wood, stone, fiber; and f) craft from leather, leaves, and cloth.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten (TK) is a school that matches the characteristics and needs of children aged 4-6 years [4]. Kindergarten was initiated by Frobel in Germany in 1837. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, kindergarten was pioneered by the Indonesian education figure, Ki Hajar Dewantoro, known as *Taman Indria* (Indria Park). Kindergarten is an educational service for children aged 4-6 years [16]. Kindergarten classes are divided according to the age group of children and they are referred to as a *kelompok* (group). Age 4-5 years old is referred to as Kindergarten Group A and age 5-6 years old is called Kindergarten Group B [17]. Kindergarten is not an institution that prepares children to enter elementary schools. According to the results of the Dakar declaration, it has the purpose of helping children experience a lifelong learning. The main aim, therefore, is not to produce children who are skilled at *calistung* (reading, writing, and calculating), but rather to provide behavioural habituation. This can be seen in the Figure 2 below.

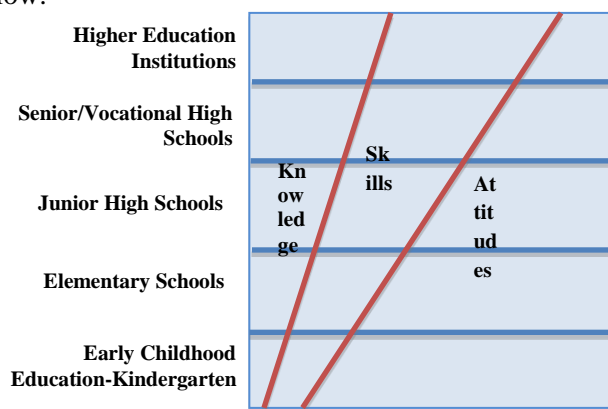


Figure 2. Learning Objectives of Each Level of Education

Source: Mirzano (1985), Bruner (1960) in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) K. 13 Socialization

Figure 2 explains that the focus of PAUD development, including TK, is to develop children's attitudes and behaviours. Attitudes are developed in

kindergarten through various habituations integrated in various children's activities. Attitudes are formed through various activities carried out gradually and repeatedly according to the characteristics of kindergarten children.

Learning Topics in Kindergarten

Topics of learning in kindergarten that have been developed so far include 11 themes: myself; my surroundings; my needs; animals; plants; recreation; work; water, air, and fire; communication tools; my homeland; and the universe [18] [19] [20]. Those 11 themes are distributed into two semesters: 5 themes in semester 1 and 6 themes in semester 2. These themes are then broken down into sub-themes, which are used as topics in daily learning. An academic year of kindergarten refers to those 11 themes and subthemes. Schools and all elements within them should have the ability to develop existing themes into subthemes relevant to their cultural characteristics.

The choice of learning topics should refer to the characteristics of the existing themes, and they have to [21]: 1) be built based on the child's real knowledge and experience in their environment; 2) be adapted to the child's age and culture; 3) be presented through concepts for children to explore; 4) be supported by factual knowledge of research results and teacher experience during teaching; 5) be included with first-hand experiences for children; 6) be included with 6 aspects of development that describe the curriculum (linguistic, cognitive, psychomotor, NAM, socio-emotional, and art) and supporting its integration; 7) be included with thematic material conducted more than once and in various activities (playing exploration, guided discovery, problem solving activities, discussions, demonstrations, direct instruction in small and classical groups); 8) be included with integrating content and learning processes; 9) provide opportunities for children to practice and apply basic skills according to their age; 10) extend topics derived from children's ideas and directly for children; 11) encourage children to document and reflect on what they learn; and 12) involve children's families in various ways.

METHODS

This research was qualitative in nature using narrative survey. The sample in this study was 96 kindergarten teachers in Yogyakarta. Random sampling is used to determine the sample with the criteria the respondent is a kindergarten teacher with an academic qualification graduate of early childhood education

program. This study used interviews and documentation to collect the data. The initial data collection used unstructured interview techniques. Documentation was used to collect the data in the form of lesson plans that the teacher had made in their respective schools. The participants were interviewed about whether or not they developed their own theme for their class outside of the predefined themes set by the government in the previous curriculum. For those who did develop their own theme, in-depth interviews were conducted by asking what were the themes or subthemes of culture outside the themes of the government that they developed. The next question was about what cultural elements that can be used as a learning theme in kindergarten. Lesson plan documents designed by teachers in the form of Semester Program or Theme Webbing were used to support the results of interviews related to the development of lesson plans for children in kindergarten. The data analysis technique was done qualitatively. This article is the result of research with mere academic objectives without any political interests and no party will be harmed. As for the names involved in the sample, the identity of the identity will be maintained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Use of Culture in Developing Learning Themes

The results show that first, there are 6 out of 96 (6.25%) teachers who have used cultural topics as the theme for classroom learning, while 90 teachers (93.75%) have never developed any theme related to culture. The results of the study are shown in Figure 3.

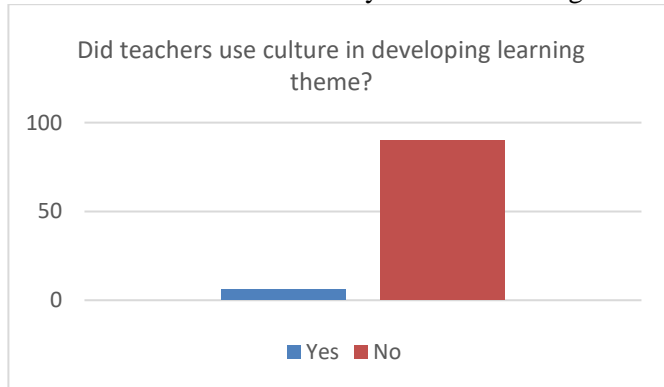


Figure 3. The Use of Culture in Learning Theme (Source: Research Report of Maryatun, et al [22])

The second result is that 30 teachers (31.25%) are able to identify culture as a major theme in learning while 66 teachers (68.75%) use cultural topics as national subthemes. Cultural topics used as major themes of learning include clothes, culture, Indonesia, and tourism.

Meanwhile, the national themes that can be developed by the subthemes using the topic of culture are hobby, need, environment, occupation, transportation, recreation, homeland, and myself. The data is presented in the following figure.

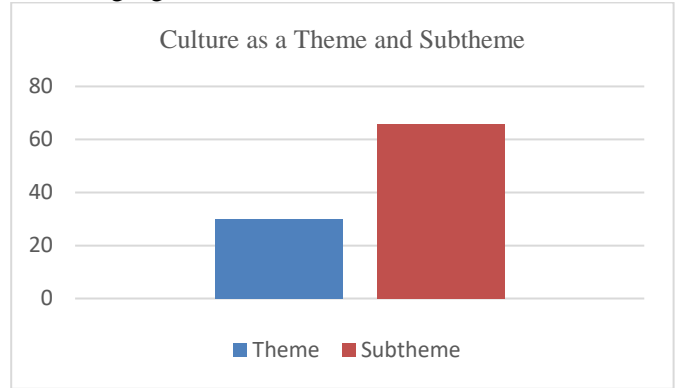


Figure 4. The use of cultural topics as themes and subthemes [22]

Table 1. Development of Javanese Culture-Based Themes

The Development of Culture in Learning	The Development of Cultural Themes and Subthemes	Teachers Developing the Cultural Themes/Subthemes	Number of Teachers	
Cultural Themes	Clothes	2	30	
	Culture	16		
	Indonesia	8		
	Tourism	4		
National Themes				
Self	My traditional games	8	66	
	Need	Traditional food		24
		Traditional beverages		
Environment	Traditional clothes		6	
	<i>Keraton</i>			
	<i>Taman Sari</i>			
	<i>Alun-Alun Merapi</i>			
Transportation	<i>Andong</i>	16		
	<i>Becak</i> (pedicab)			
	<i>Gerobak Sapi</i> (cow chart)			
Occupation	Farmers	2		
	Fishermen			
	Sand miners			
Recreation	Beaches	4		
	Mountains			
	Gardens			
	Forests			
Homeland	My culture	6		
	My language			
	My custom			
Total of Respondent			96	

The third result is that from all the cultural topics developed, 'need' becomes the most widely used topic (used by 24 teachers (25%)). The cultural subthemes of that topic include traditional food, beverages, and clothes. The details of the data are presented in Table 1.

Teachers who choose the theme of culture for children's learning are already aware of the principle of the theme development; that is, the theme is to be taken from the closest environment to the children. In addition, marking important days to be used in the theme is one of the techniques that can be developed for learning. The theme 'my need' is the teachers' favourite when developing a culture with traditional food, beverages, and clothing subthemes. Those three subthemes are very culturally related to children because they often consume those traditional food and beverages. The traditional food, often referred to as *jajan pasar* (market munchies), is familiar for children because *jajan pasar* has been created and adapted to the children interests. The examples of *Jajan pasar* include various processed cassava such as *gethuk*, *lepet*, and so on. Similarly, children enjoy traditional beverages, often referred to as *wedhang* or herbal drink, such as *wedhang ronde* (drink made from ginger, peanuts, *kolang kaling* (sugar palm fruit), sticky rice, and slices of bread), or *es dawet* (drink made of coconut milk, brown sugar, and droplets of long rice flour jelly), as well as herbs such as *beras kencur* (made of aromatic ginger, cinnamon, and rice), *kunyit asam* (made of turmeric and tamarind), and so forth. The traditional clothes are also the subtheme that children could learn to understand culture. Children in Yogyakarta are required to wear traditional clothes every Thursday to preserve the culture. In addition, children also often watch soldier parade and traditional ceremonies whose performers wear certain traditional clothing. The opportunity to acquire this knowledge then becomes one of the strategies that teachers can use to introduce traditional clothing to children. The theme 'my need' then becomes the most common cultural theme that could be developed in learning.

The second theme is types of transportation such as *becak* (pedicabs), *andong* (horse carriage), and *gerobak sapi* (cattle carriage). These traditional vehicles are still used in Yogyakarta as a means of public transportation. Children can still see pedicabs and horse carriage in traditional market and are still a family favourite vehicle when traveling while shopping. Cattle carriage is also used in rural areas in Yogyakarta. Every few year a cattle carriage festival is held to preserve the culture. Children have the opportunity to learn through culture and learn with culture through their life experiences in society.

The development of other national themes associated with culture includes 'my traditional games' in the themes of 'self'; 'tourism' in the theme of 'my environment'; 'culture, language and customs' in the theme 'my homeland'; 'recreational places' in the theme of 'recreation'; and 'farmers, fishermen, and sand miners' in the theme of 'work'. These subthemes subsequently follow the theme of 'need' and 'types of transportation'. Even so, the teachers still need to realize that these themes, which are not very desirable, are actually simple themes and very close to children. The obstacles faced by teachers are the lack of skills to develop learning by referring to a culture that enriches the children knowledge through a real life.

The results of this study also show that only 32 percent of teachers dare to develop a cultural theme based without following the national theme. The rest of the teachers are still developing cultural themes following the form of the national subtheme. Some of the reasons that they conveyed regarding the decision not to choose to develop their own cultural themes are 1) the lack of teacher's knowledge to develop cultural themes, 2) the lack of specific training to develop cultural themes for children, 3) difficulties in developing cultural themes for children with limited costs and supportive learning sources, 4) the notion that children do not need in-depth material discussion about culture because it is often found around children, and 5) difficulties in developing cultural learning plans for children in the form of daily lesson plan. These reasons indicate that research and development related to local culture-based learning planning is necessary. The results of interviews and teacher documentation analyses related to the ways teachers develop the learning themes they have done are 1) using a theme developed by the education office based on the previous curriculum, and 2) circling important dates in the calendar that may be used as themes. As these methods have become annual activities, it is difficult for teachers to develop new themes. This difficulty is also seen from the inability of teachers to develop new cultural themes as material for training in the 2013 curriculum socialization.

Culture in learning in kindergarten

The data triangulation identified seven cultural elements that could be used as learning material and media in kindergarten, as shown in Table 2.

Cultural themes that can be used in kindergarten learning are physical or concrete objects.

Table 2. Identification of Javanese Culture as Learning Materials in Kindergarten

Cultural Elements	Javanese Culture In Learning		
Religious systems and ceremonies	<i>Sekaten</i> <i>Nydran</i>		
Social systems and organization	<i>Siskamling</i> <i>GotongRoyong</i>	<i>Pedukuhan</i> <i>Kasultanan</i>	
Knowledge System	Self	My traditional games My traditional food My traditional beverages My traditional clothes	
	Environment	<i>Gembira Loka Zoo</i> <i>Malioboro Street</i> <i>Keraton (Palace)</i> Pasty Mount Merapi Beaches Post Office Vredenberg Castle	
	Plants	Teak Dragon Fruit Thorny Palm Cassava	
	Animals	Cows Goats (mendo)	
	Occupations	Agricultural tools (<i>bajak, garu, luku, ani-ani, etc.</i>) Fishing equipment (canoe, rowing, fishing nets, fishing rods, traps, etc.)	
	Transportation	Horse Carts Pedicabs Cattle Carts	
	Communication tool	<i>Kenthongan</i> <i>Lesung</i> PigeonPost	
	My traditional craft	Pottery Batik Weaving	
	Language	Javanese Language	
	Arts	Dance <i>Ketoprak</i> (Plays) <i>Srundul</i> <i>Gejog lesung</i> <i>Reog</i>	Puppet Gamelan Statue Craft
Livelihood Systems	Farmers Fishermen Pedicab driver Coachman		
Equipment and Technology Systems	Agricultural equipment (plow, rakes, <i>luku, ani-ani, etc.</i>) Fishing equipment (canoe, rowing, nets, fishing rods, traps, etc.) Cooking utensils (stoves, cauldrons, spatula, etc.)		

The reason is that kindergarten children (ages 4 - 5) are in a preoperational cognitive development, and they still need to use concrete objects to learn. Of the three forms of culture (ideas, behaviours, and artefacts), kindergarten teachers can only use artefacts. Kindergarten teachers use the form of cultural ideas and behaviours as a planting habituation of Javanese cultural character in learning.

The research data shows the description of the teachers who need a separate book containing various cultural materials. This book is needed so that when teaching, teachers can directly use the material from the book as a reference and do not make mistakes in understanding the cultural concepts that will be used. Teachers' limited knowledge and skills in using culture as a learning topic can be overcome by referring to this book.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Culture-based learning can be potentially developed since kindergarten through experiences children get through their environment. Some cultural topics that can be used in kindergarten include traditional clothing, traditional custom, Indonesia, and tourism while the national topics that can be developed comprise myself, hobby, need, environment, occupation, transportation, recreation, and homeland which are elaborated in the culture subtheme. These themes are found in learning topics that have been developed in the national curriculum in the previous curriculum [23]. Cultural themes can be used in preschool learning according to the characteristics and principles of theme development that are built from the child's factual knowledge and experience in their environment and appropriate to the age and culture of children [24], [25], [26], [27].

The culture subtheme the teachers can develop include my traditional games, my traditional food, my traditional beverages, my traditional clothes, the *keraton* palace, *taman sari*, *alun-alun*, mount Merapi, *becak* (pedicabs), *andong* (horse carriage), *gerobak sapi* (cattle carriage), farmers, fishermen, sand miners, beaches, mountains, gardens, forests, my culture, my language, and custom. All the topics raised by the subject are included in the seven cultural elements that were echoed by Koentjaraningrat, namely the religious system, social organization, knowledge, language, arts, livelihood, and technology [13].

The culture introduction through these themes are expected to help maintain the noble values and attract children to appreciate their own culture. Teachers are also expected to be able to learn how to integrate culture

into their learning materials because children learn culture through their environment. Teacher training which aims at increasing their ability to develop culture-based topics in their classroom which are both simple and practical is, therefore, needed.

The limitations of the study are in cultural material which some parts are abstract for early childhood, so the teacher needs a pocket book about concrete cultural material that can be used as a learning topic in kindergarten. The second limitation, this culture-based development guide focuses on Javanese culture, while Indonesia still has more than 37 cultures outside of Javanese culture. This needs to be studied more deeply in each area so that the guide can be used in areas other than Java.

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