

***Dakon* as a Local Traditional Game to Promote Protection, Provision, and Participation in Early-Childhood Learning Process**

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Abstract: This article is presenting *Dakon* as a child-friendly learning media to promote protection, provision, and participation (3Ps) of the child-hood learners. It was a part of an ongoing research and development of child-friendly game models for early-childhood education by using traditional games. The objectives of this study were to find out 1) whether *Dakon* as an alternative media enhance 3Ps for early-childhood learners; 2) how *Dakon* promote 3Ps in the learning process. The data was collected by observing traditional games at some early childhood education and by reviewing some documents. Narrative analysis and focus group discussion was used to formulate the results. The results show that *Dakon* had substantial advantages as an alternative media to promote 3Ps. To promote 3Ps, it was needed some modifications on the physical performances, the material of the board, the number and the shape of the holes and marbles, the players, the way to play the games, and the syntagmatic of the learning. Pedagogically, it had considerable benefits for enhancing the cognitive, psychomotor, mental, emotional, and social development of children in a learning process.

1 INTRODUCTION

Dakon can be considered as traditional learning media to realize children's right to play, as well as developing their mental capabilities, personal, social and academic competencies, and serving to introduce them much of the local wisdom of their heritage. *Dakon* with its characteristics possibly gives much chance for children to play. Playing is the world of children. Children use most of their time to play to express whatever they want. Playing has substantial benefits for mental, emotional, psychomotor, cognitive, social, and personal development. Lester and Russell (2010) argued that playing is fundamental to the health and well-being of children and the principal way in which children participate within their own communities.

It is in line with UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: 'play is essential to enhance the quality of childhood, to fulfill the children's privilege to optimum development, to promote the resilience and the realization of other rights'. Child-friendly approaches should extend to the preschool years as a way to enhance the opportunity, equity, and quality of early interventions. The approaches contribute to improving better learning outcomes and readiness

among children to involve in next higher school level. Child-friendly learning media can be considered as an approach to fulfill children's rights which are set up from the four general principles of the convention of child rights. Those principles convinced not to discriminate against the child or individual groups of children; to support the child's life and optimum development; to ensure for the best interests of the child; and to respect and enable the child's right to be heard and to participate. The articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) have often grouped into the '3Ps': protection, provision, and participation (Lester and Russell, 2010; Muhdi et al., 2010; Senowarsito, 2013, Senowarsito and Werdiningsih, 2017). The three categories accommodate the children rights having the privilege to create protection, contribute optimum development, and offer them having a chance to participate within their communities through child-friendly learning media.

Traditional games have many positive values and benefits that can be reconstructed as an alternative play introduced to children to develop their expected learning outcomes, and encounter the rapid wave of digital games as well. Indonesia has various traditional games under different cultures, which have existed from ancient generation to modern

generations. One of the traditional games in Indonesia is *Dakon* or *Congklak*. *Dakon* is played on a board with the number of house holes on each side. The boards have two 'storehouse' holes, one on each end, which is generally bigger than all the house holes. The game is played with a number of small markers such as shells or beads, which are divided evenly between all the house holes. It is possible to modify the game to reinforce the children learning to meet expected results. Kasim (2016) modified playing the game of *Congklak* with reinforcement learning. He recommended changing the rule to make the game fairer and more challenging to train artificial intelligent agents to play the game.

The 2013 National Curriculum of Indonesian Early Childhood Education (PAUD) affirmed that the main objective of the early childhood education is to develop moral, social-emotional, cognitive, language, psycho-motoric, arts, and creativity of the learners (Ananthia et al., 2016). It means that the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) as an institution which is responsible to form early-children's readiness for strong attitudes to attain all the competencies should facilitate children in learning process with appropriate approaches and treatments. The approaches and the treatments employed should meet the level of children developments and capacities, psychologically and physically. Teacher's awareness of psychological and physical developments of children will enhance the expected learning outcomes.

In pedagogical perspectives, one of the characteristics of children in learning is playing-based learning. Playing is valued pedagogically in early age settings. The playing functions to mobilize children's participation in learning and to generate learning activities for reaching academic and attitude outcomes. So early childhood educators should place playing as potential opportunities to enhance children's participation in everyday activities as supporting initial academic activities (Breathnach et al., 2017). In line with article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts (Rachel, 2007; Sulisty, 2011). Children should have opportunities to develop themselves in the process of their growth. The nature of playing among children can be used as a vehicle to develop their expected competencies.

On the other hand, the digital era increasingly stimulates every part of children's lives with multifunctional and interactive features of digital

devices (Siu and Lam, 2005). Many children of preschool age are encircled by digital technologies and they are aware to use them. In fact, the real play in children's world is constantly replaced by virtual games available and children rarely play traditional games in digital device era (Ananthia et al., 2016). Children are sometimes considered as digital natives. In such conditions, children have exposed excessively games in digital devices and they gradually fail to recall traditional games as an alternative game they can play. Some researchers (Wright, 2001 and Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 1994) as cited by Vittrup et al. (2016) have shown several benefits from the use of digital devices. They found that digital programming designed for children not only increased their academic skills, but also improved spatial skills, visual attention, problem-solving skills, fine motor coordination, and computer literacy.

In contrast, negative effects of excessive using digital games will be encountered by the children physically, emotionally, socially, and culturally as well. A report from the Children's Commissioner for England was calling on parents and teachers to do more to prepare children for the emotional impact of social media before they start secondary school (Voce, 2018). The Children's Commissioner highlighted the risks involved in the digital devices and the social media pressures. It was found that many 7 year children felt under pressure to be constantly connected online and that this constituted a risk to their mental and emotional wellbeing. Anne Longfield (A Children's Commissioner for England) asserted while social media clearly provided some great benefits to children, but it was also exposing them to significant risks emotionally.

Those are the reasons why it was needed to find out 1) whether *Dakon* as an alternative media enhance 3Ps for early-childhood learners; 2) how *Dakon* promote 3Ps in the learning process.

2 METHODS

This research was preliminary research and development (R&D) mainly focused on identifying: 1) *Dakon* as an alternative media to enhance 3Ps for early-child learners; 2) how *Dakon* promote 3Ps in the learning process. The data was collected by observing traditional games at some PAUDs (early childhood education) in Semarang Municipality, which was selected with purposive random sampling, and by reviewing some documents of traditional games in Indonesia and some related literature. Narrative analysis was used to analyze field notes,

surveys, documents, and related literature, and to reformulate the results of focus group discussion among the early childhood experts, involving early childhood teachers, and education lecturers.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are many traditional games of different Indonesian cultures, passed down through generations to today's children. Based on research conducted in Semarang municipality, it was found that there were some traditional game tools used in learning activities at PAUD. The traditional games used were *Mini-gamelan* (Javanese musical orchestra), Hula-hoop, Puppets, Marbles games, *Angklung*, *Kuda Lumping*, and *Dakon*. As part of the social and cultural products of a certain group of people, the traditional game tools are believed containing benefit values for the community (Senowarsito and Werdiningsih, 2017). Philosophically, in Javanese context, a traditional game should be considered as guiding principles of life, what one believes to be correct and appropriate in life. For example, the circle shape of the hoop can be interpreted as a circle of life that started at a point and end at the same point. This concept is not easily conveyed to early childhood, but these values can be introduced early to them by considering the level of children capacity to understand. In education perspectives, using the hula-hoop games for early childhood can enhance the personal competence, such as a jovial person, willing to work hard, tranquillity, and discipline. The cheerful character is derived from the entire game, starting from how to turn the hoop and hold back the spin. The ability to work hard for a child can be sharpened from the child's effort to be able to play the hoop which is not an easy to do. Every game has their own values relating to the characteristics of the game itself (Senowarsito and Werdiningsih, 2017).

After analyzing the overall potentials of traditional games tools, one of the traditional game tools that have philosophical and educative value is relatively complete and can be developed for early childhood is *Dakon*. *Dakon* as one part of the traditional game tool can be assumed to also contain values of personality development, has positive functions that can be taken, non-violence, and friendly to young children. *Dakon* can be modified as early childhood media to promote 3 Ps in enhancing child-friendly learning. Philosophically, it contains guiding and teachings people to save for their life in the future. *Dakon* board represents houses and

storehouse which give a description of the stereotype of parts of traditional Javanese houses, as they were mostly traditional rice farmers. Storehouse or barn which is used to put the seeds in the game reflects the rice barn (where the rice is stored). The winner in this game is the one who keeps the most seeds in the barn. To fill the barns to the edge, then the *Dakon* players should have some strategies and anticipation. It teaches Javanese people the principles of anticipating and thinking of strategies in gaining their life prosperous (Senowarsito and Werdiningsih, 2017).

In education perspectives, *Dakon* as a learning game tool contributed to enhancing: 1) academic competence, especially in mathematics, natural science, natural environment, and natural resources. In playing *Dakon*, the players should distribute a number of seeds in a number of holes, in which it introduces them to calculus. *Dakon* is made from natural materials such as plants, soil, tiles, or stones in different shape and weight. It means that children are often closer to nature which enable them to become more integrated with nature, to acknowledge with natural resources surrounding them, and naturally introduced to a science or knowledge of objects in nature, as biology or physics; 2) intelligence and logic competence. This game trains children to count and determine the steps that must be passed. It gives a space for children to enhance their strategic thinking skills; mathematical thinking skills; cognitive skills; analytical skills; planning and developing strategies; and creative skills. Carefulness or accuracy can be obtained when determining the steps and seeds in which holes will be used to distribute. The mistake, inaccuracy, or blunder in determining the hole and the number of the seeds chosen will inhibit the turn of the game itself. Therefore, players must be attentive and conscientious; 3) kinaesthetic intelligence. In general, this game enhances motoric skills. It encourages players to move and to sit steadily. For early childhood, it encourages them to use their hand and fingers to put and to place the seeds in proper holes; 4) emotional and interpersonal competence. This game is played in pairs or modified in groups. In a pair or in a group, a child will learn to practice his/her emotions that give rise to tolerance and empathy for others, as well as comfort and familiarity with social interaction, or face-to-face social interaction and cooperation. In groups, all players have to work together to make the game run smoothly. Substitution of players is also governed by the principle of cooperation. Such game directs children in a communal perspective and avoiding the development of individualistic personalities; 5)

personal competences. This game builds some personal characters, such as discipline, fairness, sensitivity, mutual respects, and others. To play the game needs discipline in following the rules of the game and should not violate it. Violations will make players lose in the game. Sensitivity and mutual respect can also be embedded through this traditional game tool; 6) psychological rehearsal. While playing, children experience and release their emotions. They shout, laugh and move. This kind of activity can be used as therapy for children experiencing distress. Moreover, this game functions to foster attractive and joyful learning.

To reconstruct of those competencies as fostering their capacities to actualize child-friendly learning process, a framework that was initiated on four principles of the Child Rights Convention (non-discrimination, survival and development, the best interests of the child, and participation) in three Ps (3Ps) can be described as follows:

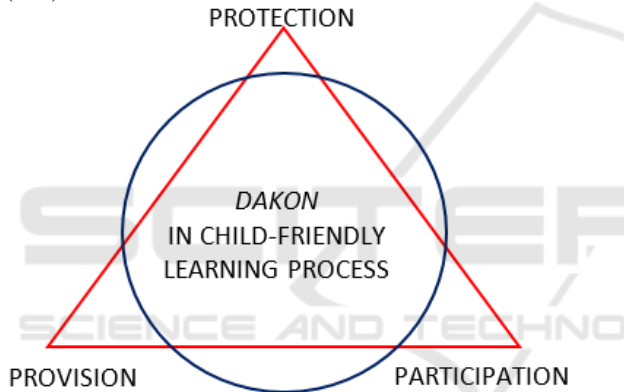


Figure 1: Framework of *Dakon* in Child-Friendly Learning Process.

Figure 1 shows that *Dakon* as child-friendly game should deliberate 3Ps: Protection, Provision, and Participation, which accommodate five principles of child rights: 1) non-violence; 2) respect for children’s evolving capacities; 3) respect for children’s individuality; 4) engagement of children’s participation; and 5) respect for children’s dignity (Rachel, 2007 and Sulistiyo, et. al., 2011).

3.1 Protection

Protection should be considered as children’s rights to encounter any kinds of violence, child abuses, bullying, excessive academic pressures, loss of security and adult’s supports, distresses, discrimination, and unsafe environments and communities. Moreover Lester and Russell (2010) assert that protection rights relates to children's rights

to protect themselves that can be seen as a self-protecting process offering the possibility to enhance adaptive capabilities and flexibilities. The adaptive capabilities and flexibilities elevate children’s physical, social, and cognitive competence which is possibility to reduce severe stress and to build resilience to cope with stress. According to them, the experiences of playing effect changes to the brain construction, relating to emotional and motivation systems. The acts of playing acts contribute to health, including pleasure and enjoyment; emotion regulation; stress response systems; and creativity. *Dakon* as a learning game tool secures children to play. It is a self-protecting process that offers the possibility to enhance adaptive capabilities and resilience (Lester and Russell, 2010). The game enables children to practice their emotions that give rise to tolerance and empathy for others, as well as comfort and familiarity with social interaction, or face-to-face social interaction and cooperation.

3.2 Provision

Provision should be deliberated as serving the children’s needs to survive and develop as well-being. It requires wider consideration of social and physical environment which guarantees to support children's rights behind the four principles of the CRC (non-discrimination, survival and development, the best interests of the child, and participation). It gives a space for the children to fulfill their needs as the whole including their secure, equality, welfare, health, knowledge, and skills. *Dakon* can be considered as a useful child-friendly game tool to enhance children’s academic, social, emotional, and personal competencies. It offers and provides space and opportunities to develop children capacity as an individual or social well-being to survive for their future; to fulfill the best interests of the child, to develop children’s dignity, and non-discrimination. Provision implies much more than providing children facility in learning and playing.

3.3 Participation

Participation denotes to the children’s capabilities and flexibilities involving in their learning and development process. Children’s involvement in learning and development in their everyday life represents a primary form of participation. The quality of children’s participation is usually influenced by some factors such as a range of social and cultural conduct, gender, disability, and socio-economic status. The role of the adults is essential to

support and create conditions addressing to the children's rights for participation. Children usually find ways to participate in any activities that come apart of the adult orders. Children's independent is valued for their roles in learning and development but in children's settings, it is necessary under the direction, guidance, and supervision of adults. *Dakon* can be played in pairs or modified in groups. It directs children to learn in a communal life, which facilitates and provide a space for children's engagement in participation.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In 3Ps perspectives, it places *Dakon* as an alternative game tool to enhance the expected capacities of the children in learning and to establish learner-centered approach. The game tool provides places and opportunities for the children to develop academic, social, emotional, and personal competencies without avoiding their rights to play. In child-friendly education, learners are placed either as objects or subjects of learning. So the roles of the teacher are to facilitate children to have space to play. The creativity of the teachers is needed to support the implementation of the principle of child-friendly education conquering the whole objectives of learning. As a local wisdom, *Dakon* is also offering some values found in traditional games that may benefit for future generation. The widespread popularity of *Dakon* around the world can undoubtedly be attributed in part to the simplicity of the local materials within its variations used to play the game to be more attractive, valuable, and advantageous child-friendly game.

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