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# Empowering Disadvantaged Kindergartens Through Guidance-Based Teaching

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## ABSTRAK

Gagasan di balik penelitian ini adalah bahwa pendidikan anak usia dini (PAUD) adalah dasar untuk menyiapkan generasi yang berkualitas, dan bahwa masih banyak masalah di seputar pendidikan anak usia dini, khususnya di tingkat Taman Kanak-Kanak (TK). Penelitian ini ditujukan untuk memberdayakan beberapa TK yang terbelakang melalui pembelajaran berbasis bimbingan dan melibatkan tiga TK yang ada di Bandung. Dengan menerapkan teknik penelitian tindakan kolaboratif dan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa pelaksanaan pembelajaran berbasis bimbingan melalui penelitian tindakan kolaboratif merupakan satu cara efektif dalam membedakan ketiga TK itu. Efektivitas pemberdayaan ini ditunjukkan dengan peningkatan kemampuan guru dalam merencanakan dan melaksanakan pembelajaran berbasis bimbingan; pemahaman guru, kepala sekolah dan orang tua yang lebih baik terhadap pendidikan TK; perubahan perilaku siswa ke arah yang lebih positif; prestasi siswa yang lebih komprehensif dan kaya; respon positif dari guru, kepala sekolah dan orang tua terhadap pemberdayaan ini. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga telah menghasilkan sebuah konsep dan model pembelajaran berbasis bimbingan di TK.

**Kata Kunci:** Guidance-Based Teaching (GBT), Collaborative Action Research (CAR), and Disadvantaged Kindergarten (DK)

Recently, we face a highly competitive life in various fields. This life condition requires us to prepare a quality generation with high capability and adaptability.

In the context of preparing quality generation, Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves a very important role in laying a strong foundation for further education and development. This point of view is based on a religious perspective (especially Islam), opinion of experts in ECE and child psychology, and relevant research findings.

However, ECE in Indonesia is still far from its desired level of development. Although there are many policies of the government of Indonesia (GOI) supporting early childhood services, these policies are still not coordinated yet in their implementation (Tim Peneliti Pendidikan Anak Dini Usia, 1998). Consequently, there are many early childhood services that do not maximally impact on improvement of children development. Reviewing various references, Solehuddin (1999) even identifies eight problems in ECE, especially

in kindergarten education, namely: (a) a limited number of available ECE institutions, (b) unqualified teachers in terms of their educational background, (c) a low appreciation on ECE teacher profession, (d) an inadequacy of education infrastructures, (e) inappropriate practices in ECE, (f) an ambiguity in differences and continuities among ECE program levels—day care, play group, and kindergarten, (g) an inadequacy of teacher education for young children in universities, and (h) an absence of professional organization specifically concerned with ECE profession.

The fact that the ECE problems are still many and complicated reflects an ironical condition. We need a quality generation and in the process of preparing the quality generation ECE serves very important; but on the other hand, the condition of ECE in Indonesia is still poor.

Furthermore, this issue indicates a complexity and dilemma in ECE problems in Indonesia. It is complex since the implementation of ECE still meets many problems; and its dilemma is between an expectation of improving quality and a need for

providing more ECE institutions. Unfortunately, the children not attending ECE in Indonesia are mostly from disadvantaged families.

To overcome the above problems, especially related to the access improvement of ECE for the poor children, Supriadi (1999) recommends two solutions for the GOI. First, the GOI should encourage community to build and deliver new kindergartens by providing a sum of grant. Secondly, the GOI applies a regulation on kindergarten model that wider and more flexible.

In line with its relevance and feasibility, this study is not directed to build new kindergartens as proposed by Supriadi above, but to empower several disadvantaged kindergartens. Thus, the main problem analyzed in this study is: "How is to empower disadvantaged kindergartens?"

When it is viewed from the children activity, the core of education is the occurrence of learning process. Whatever activities carried out in improving education finally directs to get a better quality of children learning. In line with this perspective, this study is focused on the quality improvement of children learning in several disadvantaged kindergartens.

Based on the assumption that guidance is a main and integrated part of teaching in kindergarten, the main problem addressed in this study is more specifically formulated in the following question: "How is to empower disadvantaged kindergartens through GBT?". The empowerment here is meant as an effort of improving kindergarten capacity, in this study it is limited to kindergarten teachers, in improving teaching quality through guidance approach; the disadvantaged kindergartens were kindergartens that are conditionally and contextually—in terms of human resources, infrastructures, and children family and community background—have limitations in creating conducive teaching environment and process for children; and guidance-based teaching (GBT) is considered as an effort of treating children and providing learning environment directed to stimulating and facilitating their learning comprehensively, optimally, and proportionally in line with guidance principles.

This study is intended to empower the disadvantaged kindergartens through GBT. A main result of this study is the improvement of teaching process and outcomes in the participating kindergartens. To achieve this target, there are some stages in this research and each stage has

a specific output, namely: (1) a picture of teaching process and its context in the participating kindergartens; (2) an identification of teaching problems in the participating kindergartens; (3) a formulation of empowerment strategy of the participating kindergartens (4) a description of the empowerment implementation in the participating kindergartens; and (5) a description of the empowerment benefits and outcomes. In addition, this study is expected to formulate a concept and a model of GBT in kindergarten.

#### *Theoretical Framework and Construct of Guidance-Based Teaching in Kindergarten*

Based on a thought that a change is a certainty and that all experiential changes form a pattern and structure of human development, the matter of human development is directed to the following question: "How is human development taken place toward an expected direction?" In this context, guidance is considered as an effort of facilitating human development in order to change in line with our expectation (Blocher, 1974).

In accordance with the perspective above, Kartadinata (2000) explains that guidance vision is educative, developing, and outreach. Furthermore, guidance missions are preventing a condition hindering development, developing all children potentials, and bridging the gap between actual and expected development. With these missions, guidance aims at facilitating children development rather than at solving children problems.

The guidance concept above directs guidance activities on creating development and learning environment intensely to stimulate children to learn and master new expected behaviors. In line with this guidance concept, kindergarten education is focused on building the basis for developing children's attitude, knowledge, skills, and creativity. The purpose of kindergarten is to support physical, emotional, and social development for the purpose of attending further education (Pusat Kurikulum Balitbang, 2002).

Based on the perspective that guidance concept and teaching process in kindergarten are congruent, the guidance here is considered as a main and integrated part of teaching process in kindergarten. The quality of teaching process in kindergarten, therefore, strongly depends on how far the guidance principles are implemented. In relation to this, there are a number of guidance principles

required to be implemented in teaching process (Kartadinata and Dantes, 1997; Natawidjaja, 1988), namely guidance: (1) is provided for all children, without any exception; (2) treats each child as a unique and developing individual—teaching process is adjusted with their characteristics and needs; (3) considers children as dignified and capable individuals (as individuals with dignity and capability), although in a certain condition they sometimes have difficulties to use their potentials and capabilities optimally so they need a special attention and treatment; (4) is directed to develop children's capabilities to be able to realize and actualize the development of all aspects of their personalities thoroughly and optimally, not only to master certain knowledge and skills; and (5) the teaching interaction is characterized with a positive attitude and naturality, warmth and openness, emphatic understanding and responsiveness to students' feeling and emotion, acceptance and respect, sincerity and genuineness, and permissiveness.

Since the GBT is intended to fulfill the need of children development and learning, the development of GBT concept in kindergarten is also based on the understanding more specifically on the characteristics of kindergarten children development and the ways of their learning. By carrying out a comprehensive review on variously relevant references (Bateman, 1990; Beatty, 1994; Bredekamp and Copple, 1997; Bredekamp and Rosergrant, 1991/92; Brenner, 1990; Cowles and Aldrige, 1992; Decker and Decker, 1992; Elicker and Fortner-Wood, 1995; Gestwicki, 1995; Greenberg, 1994; Kellough et al., 1996; Kontos and Wilcox-Herjog, 1997; Kostelnik et al., 1999; Peck et al., 1988; Leavitt and Eheart, 1991; Mac Naughton, 2003; Maxim, 1985; National Forum on Assessment, 1996; Newberger, 1997; Pica, 1997; Santrock and Yussen, 1992; Schickedanz et al., 1990; Taylor, 1993; and Vygotsky in Berk and Winsler, 1995), accompanied by a field study in the participant kindergartens, the researcher formulates the construct of GBT as follow.

*Teaching Purposes.* The purposes of teaching are to develop all aspects of children development and learning optimally and proportionally; to develop children's positive learning processes (attitudes, skills, and motivation) and achievements. In addition, it is also in line with the children's development and their individual characteristics and their values and norms.

*Teaching Curriculum.* Teaching curriculum is comprehensive and integrated; rich and various; and relevant with children's learning capacities, interests, and needs. Curriculum is emergent by accommodating children's experiences contextually.

*Teaching Method.* Teaching is prepared by considering children's background and entry behavior and implemented integratively and relatively flexible. Teacher and children are active in teaching process. The teacher actively facilitates children's learning activities, provides various learning activities that can be chosen by children, and provides children with opportunities and supports them to interact both with teacher and their friends, and implement play as important tool in teaching. On the other hand, the children actively carry out learning activities physically and mentally.

*Teacher-children Relationship and Interaction.* Teacher respects every child without any exception, communicates with children warmly and openly, and treats children genuinely and naturally. In teaching process the teacher provides children with wide opportunities to initiate, engage, and create. S/he also positively supports the children learning and is responsive with their emotional experiences. S/he responds children behaviors logically in line with their development as well as respects and takes efforts of understanding their ways of thinking and perspectives.

*Special Attention and Treatment to Requiring Certain Children.* Teacher is concerned with uniqueness of children personalities and behaviors and tries to understand the determinants of children problems and inadequate behaviors. S/he adjusts his/her teaching activities to speed learners and slow ones and provide special and supportive concern with and treatment to some certain requiring children.

*Assessment.* Teaching assessment is comprehensive and aims at evaluating both the progress and achievement of children learning and development. It uses various techniques, especially observation. It could represents children behavior objectively and involving the children as "evaluators" and parents as information sources in its process.

*Teaching Media and Equipment.* In GBT, the teacher provides and uses teaching media and equipment in accordance with children development,

learning capacity, and sociocultural context. It implies that teaching media and equipment should be various, attractive, and physically safe. The teacher needs also to introduce new items of the equipment and regulate ways of using the teaching media and equipment by considering the children's opinion.

*Classroom and Outdoor Arrangement and Management.* Classroom arrangement should allow children to learn individually, in a small group, and classically. In addition, outdoor space arrangement allows them to do various activities safely and comfortably. To make the children behave effectively in terms of teaching purposes, teacher needs to arrange a schedule of the children's activities logically and proportionally and minimizes a waiting time for them. By involving the children, the teacher can simply define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors which can be implemented consistently.

Relationship and collaboration with parents. Considering their expectations and preferences, teacher treats parents as collegial partners in educating children. The teacher

shares with them on the ways of facilitating the children's learning and support them to participate and contribute in teaching activities in kindergarten. Besides reporting the progress of children learning and development periodically and incidentally as required, the teacher tries as well to find and accept inputs from the parents on the progress of their children learning and development.

## Method

This study was carried out through a collaborative action research (CAR) between teachers (practitioners) and a researcher (academic) using a qualitative approach. In this collaboration, the teachers served in implementing efforts of improving teaching by applying GBT. On the other hand, the researcher served in arranging the study design and facilitating strategy for improving teaching practice carried out by the teachers. The researcher also observes and notes the process and the results of teaching. The teachers and the researcher analyze and formulate teaching problems in kindergarten, formulate the strategy to overcome them, and implement this strategy.

Research data were collected and analyzed qualitatively. Data collection was mainly carried out through observation supplemented by interview

and questionnaire. To clarify the research findings, three independent observers were asked to observe directly to the study sites in the early and at the end of the research period by using a rating scale.

In general, this study was carried out through following steps: (1) preparation, including determining the research sites, (2) identification of current condition and problems in the participant kindergartens, (3) strategy formulation of solving the problems, (4) strategy implementation and reflection of solving the problems by planning and practicing GBT through several cycles, (5) data analysis, and (6) report writing.

## Findings

### 1. General Picture of The Participant Kindergartens

Three participant kindergartens were private kindergartens with the mission of empowering young generation with religious basis. Two of them were relatively new, while the other one was relatively old. One kindergarten (TK Nurul Mu'min/TK NM) is located in village, one kindergarten (TK Arrosyidu/TK AR) is located in suburbs, and the other one (TK Al-Ikhlas/TK AI) is in downtown area. All these kindergartens were in need of repair in terms of building and other physical facilities.

In general, the teachers and the principals of these kindergartens had unqualified educational background, were relatively young in their ages (about 20-30 years), and were relatively new in their experiences—less than 5 years. The principals occupied their positions in these kindergartens not because of professional reasons; but the teachers still had relevant reasons to be teachers there. They were different in marital status, generally stayed in around kindergarten areas, and got low incentive. However, the ratio teacher-children in these kindergartens was good enough.

The principals and teachers perceived kindergarten as important education for children with major reasons as preparation for entering primary school. Their perspectives on kindergarten goal and curriculum content were still limited to academic things (reading, writing, and arithmetic/3Rs), memorization and basic knowledge on religion, and building good behaviors in terms of religious and local community values. In general, they also stated that the teaching in kindergarten should be attractive and carried out through guidance, modeling, and classically.

Except one teacher in NM kindergarten and the principal of AI kindergarten, the teachers and the principals agreed with play as a mean of teaching in kindergarten with usual reasons like to make children interested and in line with the principle of "learning while playing". The other reasons they proposed were because play develops the children thinking and creativity and makes the children interact among them. According to them, learning was an activity to learn something, involving the use of subject matter, making children stressful, listening to teacher, and using teaching media; while play was just an activity to do something, enjoyable, involving games, and using play tools.

The children of the participating kindergartens were about 4-5 year old. They generally stayed no far from the kindergarten. Most of their father were traders (in NM and AR kindergartens) and private employees (in AI kindergarten), while most of their mothers were housewives. The parents were generally graduated from junior and senior secondary schools. However, there were some from higher and primary education. They generally expected kindergarten to provide teaching in 3Rs, reading the Quran, memorize doa-doa pendek (short prayers ) and surah of the Qur'an, and shalat and wudhu (simple prayers). They also expected children to be diligent in learning and wished teachers to be powerful and attractive, serve as a model, and apply games.

## *2. The Picture of Teaching Process in The Participant Kindergartens*

Although they were different in their referent formal curriculums, the participating kindergartens used relatively homogeneous books. The coverage of actual curriculum in these kindergartens was also almost similar—about 3Rs, memorization, basic knowledge in religion, good behavior, and gross and fine motoric skills. Singing was frequently used as a mean to control children behavior. Subjects stressed in these kindergartens were memorization, reading the Qur'an, and writing Arabic in NM and AR kindergartens and 3Rs in AI kindergarten.

The teaching measures in the participating kindergartens were basically relative similar, namely preparation, introductory, core, free time, enrichment, and closing activities. In the teaching method, they also generally follow directions in the books used as well as are progressive (from simple to complex), gradual (step by step), and using explanation and examples (frequently through association) supplemented with tasks and

repetition. Play was frequently used as a reward for the children that had learned and games tended to be applied limitedly in sport activities; while prayer practice was carried out through simulation. The children with misbehavior were overcome by teachers similarly like through admonishment, advice, and providing certain signs.

The participating kindergartens were different in the way their group children. NM kindergarten organized children into a classroom and divided the teachers' tasks based on their education background; AR kindergarten grouped children based on their ages and learning experiences and divided the teachers' tasks according to the group of children; and AI kindergarten grouped children into two big classes and assigned a senior teacher as a main teacher and the others as co-teachers.

In teaching evaluation, AR and AI kindergartens determined clear targets, but NM kindergartens did not have any explicit target. In addition, NM and AI kindergartens used observation and daily assessment, but AR kindergarten used test and followed a examination carried out by BKPRMI (An Islamic community organization concerned with the Qur'an-based education for young generation)

In NM kindergarten, the parents unusually accompanied their children to school, except when their children in trouble; but in AR and AI kindergartens the parents usually did it. When the parents are in kindergartens, in the last two kindergartens, their behaviors were relatively similar like observing their children, accompanying their children, and helping their children in accomplishing their works.

## *3. Teaching Problems in The Participant Kindergartens*

This study found that there were problems in all teaching components. In the matter of teaching purpose and content in the participant kindergartens, for example, they tended to focus on academic achievement and directly tangible behaviors resulting in less accommodate the development of children's thinking, creativity, and learning attitude and motivation (especially in AR and AI kindergartens).

Teaching in the participant kindergartens tended to be structured and monotonous; lack of variety, playfulness, integration, hands-on, and lack of group learning activities; and very directed by the book used. Teachers tended to frequently give advice or prohibition without enough explanation;

helping children directly; and "taking over" children's problems. The teachers also tended to control the children's behaviors monotonously by giving certain signs, commands, and prohibitions. Assessment focused on academic contents using numeral grading; the results of assessment was just reported in writing at the end of the four-month and yearly period; and parents and children were not involved yet as active subjects in the assessment.

The common problems in arranging and managing classroom were that teaching schedule was still not proportional (tended to academic activities), the limitations of children's behaviors were still not formulated, the children were still not engaged in discussing and formulating the classroom rules; while in relation to providing and using teaching media and equipment, besides they were still poor and less various, the available ones were still not used maximally.

The teachers in the participant kindergartens still did not involve parents intensively in developing kindergartens, except in relation to finance, and did not share with them on the way of facilitating children learning. The presence of parents in the kindergarten (in AR and AI kindergartens) limited to perform as companions that sometimes behaved contra-productively.

#### 4. *Design of Empowerment Strategy*

Accommodating the teachers' and the researcher's interests, this empowerment aims at developing the teachers' capabilities in planning and implementing GBT. The empowerment strategy is designed as follow: (a) it is conducted through practice and field guidance with a training before; (b) it is accomplished through three main phases—preparing and planning the empowerment program, implementing the program (the teachers implement GBT facilitated directly by the researcher), and implementing GBT by the teachers more autonomously; and (c) the teachers served as implementers and the researchers served as a designer and facilitator. Program evaluation is arranged through observation supplemented by a series of spontaneous interviews and the involvement of independent evaluators.

#### 5. *The Implementation of Empowerment Strategy*

The empowerment was implemented through a training, practice and field guidance, a comparative

study to another kindergarten, and teaching simulation by teacher models. The comparative study and simulation are two activities not planned before, but they are as responses to the teachers' suggestion. Training was carried out through lecture, discussion, modeling, and simulation. Guidance-based teaching was practiced by the teachers and field guidance was conducted by the researcher. These practice and field guidance were implemented in developing a series of teaching plans, teaching implementation, meeting with parents, and treating certain cases. The comparative study was conducted in Kids Garden Al-Mabrur in Bojong Soang since this kindergarten was considered much more implemented guidance principles in teaching. Based on the teachers' request, teaching simulation was conducted only in NM and AR kindergartens.

Some problems were faced in every step of activities. For example, in the training some teachers were not able to attend it, the limitation of training media and equipment, and the too far distance of some teachers' home stay. The problems in practice and field guidance are, for example, the teachers' expectation not to add their work burden, maintain the teachers-researcher relationship proportionally, and the usage of books making the teachers uncreative since they just follow the directions printed in the books. In the comparative study, some teachers felt pessimistic to adopt what they observed. And in the simulation experience occurred a kind of "competitive situation" on some teachers so they limited the performance of simulators (in AR kindergarten), inharmoniousness in treating children (in AR and NM kindergartens), and a little rigidity in communicating with children since the children spoke with Sudanese (NM kindergarten).

Through a series of discussions and reflections conducted persuasively, accommodatively, rationally, and gradually; the problems above could be resolved. Even the teachers, principals, and parents judged this empowerment positively and more fruitful than just through a training.

#### 6. *Outcomes of The Empowerment*

##### a. Positive Changes in The Participant Kindergartens

Three positive changes identified as effects from the empowerment are improvement of

teachers', principals', and parents' understanding on early education; improvement of teaching practice, and enrichment of students' achievement.

The principals, the parents, and especially the teachers showed better understanding on kindergarten education. Their understanding was richer, more appropriate, and more consistent.

In teaching practice, the participant kindergartens demonstrated improvement in all teaching aspects. When compared among the teaching aspects, the changes in arranging and managing classrooms and outdoor spaces seems to be the lowest; while when the comparison made among kindergartens, NM and AR kindergartens showed better improvement than AI did.

Specific changes in each kindergarten occurred as well. For example, AR kindergarten did not only stress on subjects examined by BKPRMI; AI kindergarten still kept on mastering 3Rs but not neglecting other subjects; and NM kindergarten engaged children in maintaining and keeping the cleanliness of their classroom.

The children's achievement was also richer. Although showing similar achievements in terms of accomplishing targets of curriculum and the books used and in terms of academic achievement to that of before, GBT seems to be more effective in developing non academic achievements.

#### b. The Teachers', Principals', and Parents' Opinions on The Benefits of The Empowerment

The teachers, principals, and parents generally viewed this empowerment as a positive effort. According to the teachers, this empowerment through GBT improves their understanding on children development and education in kindergarten, their self confidence and teaching capability, capability in treating the children's behavior in kindergarten, and helping them in building better relationship with parents. The principals considered this empowerment useful for improving teachers' capability in teaching (all kindergartens) and in solving teaching problems (AR and AI kindergartens), motivating teachers (all kindergartens), and improving image of kindergarten (NM kindergarten). Finally, the parents also stated that this empowerment had made classroom condition are more attractive and cleaner; children are more diligent, active and creative, autonomous, and no tearful anymore;

children brave to go to school (NM kindergarten); teacher-parent communication is better; and the teachers are more eager in teaching (NM and AR kindergartens).

#### c. Evaluation of The Independent Observers

Evaluation of the independent observers showed a significant improvement in teaching process in the participant kindergartens. In the early past of the study period, the teaching process in the participant kindergartens was considered as lack of representing GBT; but at the end of the study period it was deemed as enough representing GBT. When compared among kindergartens, the improvement of teaching process in NM kindergarten and in AR one was regarded relative similar and the both were judged higher than the improvement in AI kindergarten.

### 7. *Guidance Based Teaching Model*

Although it is not yet validated widely, the empowerment through CAR has resulted in a model of GBT that can be adopted in other kindergartens. This teaching model stresses on appropriate treatment on children and consists of nine teaching components, namely purpose, content/curriculum, method, relation and way of interaction between teacher and children, specific concern with and treatment to certain requiring children, evaluation, providing and using teaching media and equipment, arranging and managing classroom and outdoor space, and relation with parents (A more description is listed on the part of Theoretical Framework and Construct of Guidance-Based Teaching in Kindergarten).

#### 1. Discussion on General Picture of The Participant Kindergartens

The discussion here is limited to essential things related to the empowerment, that are the teachers' and the principals' educational background and their perspectives on early education.

The teachers' and the principals' educational backgrounds not fulfilling the professional requirement may indicate at least two things, namely they represent nepotism and/or the perspective that kindergarten is "low" educational institution that can be handled by anybody. In other words, appreciation on professionalism is not built up yet in the participant kindergartens.

Next, although the teachers, principals, and even the parents perceived kindergarten education as an important thing; their reasons are still limited to academic reasons—preparation of entering primary school, providing children with basic knowledge of religion, and forming good behaviors. They also agreed with the idea of using play as teaching method in kindergarten, but their reasons are still not appropriate—play is considered as a mean of making children enjoy, not as a main vehicle for children’s learning.

Relevant with this finding, a number of studies (Dunn & Kontos, 1997) indicated that parents tended to stress on academic skills, especially the poor parents and minorities. And in relation to the dominance of structured and academic kindergarten, it is explained by Maxim (1985) that the direct benefits from structured learning are very easy and clear to be observed, whereas something learned through play is not clear, especially in the short term period.

## 2. Discussion on Teaching Process in The Participant Kindergartens

The weaknesses of improvement efforts by the institutions that are responsible in developing kindergartens, the strength of parents and community insistences, and the strong influence of the books used by teachers could bring about incongruence between referred formal curriculum and actual curriculum in field. In addition, the similarity in teaching procedures and methods in the participant kindergartens indicates that the teachers of these kindergartens followed what are usually going on in the most kindergartens, besides reflecting the lack of their creativity in modifying teaching. Whereas GBT requires flexibility and contextuality to allow for a meaningful learning for children.

Furthermore, the participant kindergartens grouped children differently. For the researcher, NM kindergarten grouping children in a class is reasonable since the number of children is small. The way of grouping children in AR kindergarten based on their ages and learning experiences is also usual and can facilitate teachers in managing and delivering teaching. But, the way of grouping children in AI kindergarten into two big classes seems not to be ineffective for teaching purpose. According to NAEYC (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997), the number of children in a class in kindergarten is about 15-18 children for 1 teacher or up to 25 children for 2 teachers. The class with

large number of children could raise problems, namely more difficult in providing attention to children individually, a range of teaching strategies that could be used by teachers will be more limited, more difficult in accommodating individual differences of children adequately, and children adapt to group setting just in early teaching activity (Decker and Decker, 1992).

In the matter of teaching assessment, interesting things to be discussed here are about the teaching target, assessment techniques, and the involvement of parents and children in assessment. While two of the participant kindergartens determined clear targets, the other one did not determined a clear one. In GBTP perspective, the target of children behavior changes is required as a direction and general objectives to be achieved. But, the realization of determining this target should be adjusted with the children’s learning capacity and progress.

In teaching assessment technique, NM and AI kindergartens used mainly observation, while AR kindergarten used mainly test. Observation is a strongly recommended technique in assessment in kindergarten. Seefeldt (Beaty, 1994) explains that observing children in a natural setting is an effective way in assessing children in kindergarten. The use of test in assessment in kindergarten is not recommended, although it is not forbidden either. But when test is used in kindergarten, it is required to be used in informal setting in order to make children free of stressful atmosphere that can make the children perform not maximally.

Although the engagement of children and parents as “subjects” is required in assessment process, all the participant kindergartens did not do it yet. The children engagement in assessment process is a part of learning process, while the engagement of parents in assessment could invite them to involve in teaching process and enrich the assessment results.

The teachers in the participant kindergartens had taken efforts in overcoming children’s unexpected behaviors in relatively similar ways, like by admonishment, giving advice, and certain gestures. These ways seem to be effective for a moment, but not for long term. Therefore, Gatrell (2001) recommends teachers to overcome these unexpected behaviors through guidance rather than through punishment, namely teachers try to better understand children and their behaviors and then help them in developing and using the ways



that allow children to see and understand their behaviors.

### 3. Discussion on Teaching Problems in The Participating Kindergartens

This study found that teaching problems occur in all aspects of teaching. Related to this phenomenon, there are four factors identified as contributors to these problems, that are teachers' education qualification, the books used in kindergartens, parents and community demands, and the developing system conducted by the institutions that are responsible to do it.

The low educational qualification of teachers seems to be a main contributor to raise teaching problems in the participant kindergartens. A study to more than 1300 early childhood education teachers in five metropolitan areas in the USA concludes that formal education is a better predictor than trainings; and the formal education supplemented by the trainings are stronger predictors of the effectiveness of teacher performance in classroom (Howes et al., 1992). In addition, a review conducted by Dorsey (1992) concludes that the practitioners of early childhood education need education, especially on children development and education. When teachers are prepared appropriately, the quality of early childhood program becomes better.

The books used in kindergartens are also a factor contributing to the teachers' way of teaching. There are some reasons why the books used in kindergartens strongly contribute to the teachers' way of teaching. Firstly, the books are too "promising" by claiming them as easy, practical, or speed way of learning. Secondly, not only in their titles or prefaces, but also in reality the books are very easy to use and very "straight". Thirdly, the learning targets stated in the books are very relevant with the teachers', the parents', and the community's expectations, namely the children can read, write, and/or memorize surah of the Qur'an speedily.

The parents' and community's demands are other significant factors raising teaching problems in the participant kindergartens. What was observed in the teaching processes in the classrooms reflected the parents' and the community's expectations.

Finally, the weaknesses and the inappropriateness of guiding and developing system by the institutions in charge—MORA and BKPRMI. In NM and AI kindergartens, no any guidance and developing efforts from MORA both

in the form of direct developing efforts like training and supervision and written guidance in the form of providing guideline. In AR kindergarten was found the developing efforts conducted by BKPRMI both in the form of providing curriculum/standard and book publication, delivering trainings, and carrying out examination through several levels. Unfortunately, the stronger influence on the participant kindergarten is its pressure to prepare children to attend examination rather than facilitating teachers in developing appropriate teaching practice in line with the children learning needs.

### 4. Discussion on the Design of Empowerment

The empowerment here is designed based on and aimed at solving practical problems in kindergartens. This way is relevant with action research method that some based on real problems in field. In the context of action research like this, practitioners will perform best when they start from the real problems (Ferrance, 2000).

The design of this empowerment was implemented by maximally engaging teachers. According to Minnis et al. (Barnett and Frede, 2001), in a collaboration the participants represent mutual complementary expertise. As collaborators, they are committed to share resources, strengths, and talents; no participant dominating so their works reflect an integration of all participants' contributions.

In various references, next, it is stated that the goal of action research is a common goal so it provides mutual benefits for the two participants. For example, Barnett and Frede (2001: 6) stated, "Their goal is a negotiated partnership where knowledge is jointly produced to serve mutually agreed upon goals". In line with this opinion, this empowerment is designed by considering both the teachers' and the researchers' interests; and these are negotiated.

The empowerment arranged in three phases—preparation and planning program, empowerment program implementation with intensive field guidance by the researcher and GBT implementation by teacher with more independently—reflects expected progress in this CAR. But, it does not mean leaving out the cycles of the core activities in CAR—planning, action, observation and reflection, and planning refinement—since this implementation phase consists of a series of cycles of the CAR.

A little difference in this design is the implementation of trainings as a precondition effort

in the early past of program implementation. This training is inserted into the design of empowerment as a response to the teachers' suggestions since they think that they are not familiar with GBT.

##### 5. Discussion on The Empowerment Implementation

Something which needs to be discussed here related to the implementation of empowerment is the training activity as a precondition effort. There are several broader positive benefits from this training rather than just facilitating the teachers to better understand GBT and to be more prepared for practicing it. This training is a response to the teachers' requests since they want to acquire input on GBT first and to be more familiar with UPI. Thus, this training can be one of the researcher's efforts to treat "the human being" of teachers thoroughly. Stated by Stinger (1996) that one main feature CAR is not only the accomplishment of it, but also ensure the well-being of every participant.

Other interesting things to be discussed are the additional activities inserted to the design of empowerment, namely the comparative study and the teaching simulation. The addition of these activities could be accepted since the design of CAR is dynamic. Explained by Stinger (1996) that the practice of action research could be a complex thing. The action research is not a structured activity making the participants follow every steps of it definitely until the end of its process. They will work back and forth, repeat the process, revise the procedure, rethink the interpretation, and sometimes make radical changes.

Maintaining the relationship and roles proportionally between the researcher and the teachers, including the teachers' early discomfort of the presence of the researcher will substitute what they have been doing, is also an important thing to be discussed. The emergence of this problem can reflect an interactional experience between teachers and academicians that usually occur. Academics usually perform as "experts" who are skillful in criticizing educational practice in fields, and teachers are commonly placed as subjects to be criticized. Considering this issue, the researcher was careful in providing feedbacks for improvement, in addition to formulating the feedbacks based on the real problems faced in field. The teachers' understanding and awareness on the teaching problems were also continually developed before giving them ideas for improvement. Other than, periodic reflections on the researcher's and

the teachers' roles were continually conducted to remind both the researcher and the teachers to keep the equality of their roles. In relation to this issue, Barnett and Frede (2001: 4) remind that "Equality or balance between the partners is a major issue that emerges from our exploration of the literature and from the other articles in this issue".

The engagement in action research will be effective when it allows the participants to involve actively. There is an interesting phenomenon in relation to this issue. Firstly, the teachers with too low education level tend to withdraw in CAR. On the contrary, the teachers with higher level of education but having opposite opinion with the researcher tend to be more resistant. The condition that more facilitate the teachers' engagement in this empowerment is the adequate level of the teachers' education level matching with the planned changes.

Another thing that sufficiently contribute to the teachers' engagement in this empowerment program is the work atmosphere and leadership in the schools. The differences of these two factors are followed by the differences as well in the teachers' engagement in the research activity.

Finally, in the matter of the length of this research time period the researcher can explain as follow. It is not too difficult to improve teachers' capacities, if the target is just to make them capable of doing teaching in terms of the technical-methodological. The more difficult here is how to make the capability of these teaching skills be a part of the teachers' daily activities. To develop this capability requires enough time and many times reflection. In relation to this matter, Da Ros and Kovach (Gartrell, 2001: 10) explains, "It takes commitment, time, and effort to learn guidance alternatives and, until a teacher masters them, they may seem less effective." Even in a case, Gartrell (2001: 1) provides an example that for developing a pattern of guidance behaviors like this, a teacher needs five years. He states, "A model teacher, in her late forties, once told me it took five years before she felt her guidance responses had become automatic".

##### 6. Discussion on The Outcomes of The empowerment

This study concludes that the implementation of GBT through CAR is effective in empowering the participating kindergartens. This conclusion is not only based on the improvement of teaching practices in the participant kindergartens, but also

on the broader positive effects on the teachers' self confidence and motivation, better relationship with parents, and even on the better image of kindergarten. In the matter of these effects, Kelly and Gluck (1979) state that evaluative criteria of the activity like this are not limited to their technical and functional values, but includes as well its effects on broader things like self esteem, dignity, identity, and responsibility. Thus, these broader effects reflect that this research to some extent had accommodated what was stated by Kelly and Gluck.

Next, what are factors contributing to the successfulness of this empowerment? To this question, at least there are two reasons, that are because GBT implemented through a CAR is a workable teaching model in the participant kindergartens and because it is implemented by considering collaboration principles and through guidance approach—starting from actual problems in field, directly in kindergartens in which the teachers work, accommodating the participants' interests and expectations, in a partnership collaboration, and applying guidance approach in communication and interaction. Stated by Johnston (1999: 2),

Collaboration arises from a recognition of mutual interests between school and college.... Within a partnership of institutions there should be a coequal relationships of colleagues, a volunteer association of individuals who choose to work together of allies in leagues to improve our schools. An equal importance must be attached to what each partner brings to the relationship.

In the matter of teaching improvement in NM and AR kindergartens that are more apparent than in AI kindergarten, there are at least two factors influencing this. Firstly, it is because of the different level of teachers engagement in this empowerment, especially the engagement of the key persons. Secondly, the work challenges in AI kindergarten seems to be heavier than in NM and AR kindergartens.

#### 8. Discussion the Produced Model of Guidance-Based Teaching (BGT)

Although this research aimed at improving the quality of teaching in field, it produces as well a concept and model of GBT in kindergarten. However, since its orientation to problem solving in field and applying guidance perspective, the teaching model produced has several unique nesses, that are comprehensive, flexible, and (in

light with the guidance perspective) its emphasis on providing treatments and creating learning environment appropriately instead of rigidly technical and procedural teaching process.

#### Conclusion

Based on the research findings discussed above, finally the researcher comes to the following conclusions.

- a. Through CAR, GBT is an effective teaching model in empowering the participating disadvantaged kindergartens—empowering teachers in improving teaching process and outcomes. However, it does not mean that the implementation of this teaching model overcomes all any problems in these kindergartens. To empower these kindergartens thoroughly requires the use of a comprehensive approach as well, including improving management, leadership, and personnel's' welfare.
- b. The effectiveness of GBT in empowering the disadvantaged kindergartens indicated with the improvement of teachers' capability in planning and implementing GBT; better understanding of teachers, principals, and parents on kindergarten education; positive changes in children's learning behavior—richer and more comprehensive; and the teachers', the principals', and the parents' comments stating that many benefits from this empowerment.
- c. Both the teachers and the researcher get mutual benefits from this CAR experience. Through this collaboration, the teachers improve their understanding on and their capability to implement GBT; and on the other hand, the researcher becomes more familiar with and more skillful in responding the problems in field, besides getting research findings that are eligible to be a scientific work.
- d. At least there are two reasons supporting the effectiveness of the empowerment of these disadvantaged kindergartens, that are because: (1) GBT is a workable teaching model in the participant kindergartens; and (2) it is implemented by considering collaboration principles and guidance approach.

- e. In spite of the reasons supporting the successfulness above, there are also some things making this empowerment more challenge, that are: (1) the weaknesses and inappropriateness of developing system of kindergartens conducted by the institutions in charge—MORA and BKPRMI; (2) parents and community demands on kindergarten that are too academic; (3) the books used promising much but sometimes can mislead; and (4) the low level of teachers' education or enough level but they have an opposite opinion.
- f. The difference of teachers' involvement, especially the key persons, and the difference of difficulty level in field results in the variation of this empowerment.

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