



## THE UTILIZATION OF OUTING CLASS ACTIVITIES AS A CONTEXTUAL LEARNING MEDIUM FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN STRAWBERRY FIELDS

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### Author Information

Dewanty Sukma Dewi  
[dewantysukma20@gmail.com](mailto:dewantysukma20@gmail.com)  
Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an

Ahmad Khoiri  
[akhori@unsiq.ac.id](mailto:akhori@unsiq.ac.id)  
Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an

Nugroho Prasetya Adi  
[nugroho@unsiq.ac.id](mailto:nugroho@unsiq.ac.id)  
Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an

### Abstract

*This study aims to describe the optimization of outing class activities as a contextual learning medium for early childhood education conducted at a strawberry field in Binangun Village, Kertek District. This research highlights a contextual learning model based on local agricultural potential as a novel approach in early childhood education. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, students, and strawberry field managers as research informants. The data were analyzed using the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that outing class activities were implemented through three stages: opening activities, core activities, and closing activities. Children actively participated in observing, planting, caring for, and harvesting strawberry plants. These activities provided direct and meaningful learning experiences that contributed to the development of children's cognitive, motor, language, social-emotional, and creativity skills. The results indicate that integrating contextual learning with real-life agricultural environments significantly enhances children's active engagement and learning experiences. Supporting factors included an adequate agricultural environment, teachers' support, and students' enthusiasm. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors consisted of weather conditions, limited time allocation, and the need for more intensive supervision during outdoor activities. Therefore, outing class activities proved to be an effective contextual learning medium for early childhood education by connecting learning materials with real-life experiences. This study contributes to the development of contextual, environment-based learning strategies by optimizing local potential as an innovative learning resource in early childhood education.*

**Keywords:** *Outing Class, Contextual Learning, Early Childhood Education, Strawberry Field.*

## INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a level of education that plays a strategic role in supporting children's overall growth and development. Early childhood is often referred to as the golden age because physical, cognitive, language, social-emotional, and moral development occurs rapidly during this period. Various forms of stimulation provided at this stage significantly influence children's development in subsequent phases of life. Therefore, the learning process must be carefully

designed in accordance with children's developmental characteristics. High-quality early childhood education serves as a crucial foundation for children's future success (Nurhayati, 2022).

Young children possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from learners at other educational levels. They tend to learn through direct experiences, play, exploration, and interaction with their surrounding environment. Consequently, teacher-centered learning approaches are often less effective in helping children understand learning concepts. Children are more likely to comprehend information when they can see, touch, and directly experience the objects being studied. This condition highlights the importance of providing meaningful and authentic learning experiences for young children.

Meaningful learning can be achieved through the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach. This approach emphasizes the connection between learning materials and learners' real-life experiences. Through contextual learning, children do not merely receive information from teachers; rather, they construct knowledge based on their direct experiences. Learning becomes easier to understand because it is closely related to children's everyday lives. Furthermore, the CTL approach helps enhance children's motivation and engagement in learning activities (Nurhadi, 2020).

The concept of contextual learning is highly relevant to early childhood education. At this age, children are still in the concrete operational stage of thinking and therefore require tangible objects and real-life experiences to understand concepts effectively. Piaget's cognitive development theory explains that children learn optimally through direct interaction with their environment. Through these concrete experiences, children can construct new understanding based on their observations and explorations. Therefore, utilizing the environment as a learning resource is essential in early childhood education (Piaget, 1951).

One form of contextual learning implementation is the outing class activity. This learning process takes place outside the classroom and utilizes the surrounding environment as a learning resource. Through outing class activities, children have opportunities to observe, explore, and directly practice what they are learning. Learning occurs not only through teacher explanations but also through authentic experiences gained during the activity. As a result, learning becomes more engaging, enjoyable, and meaningful for children (Erva, Yulia, & Nisa, 2023).

Outing class activities also provide numerous benefits for early childhood development. Outdoor learning can enhance cognitive abilities through observation and simple problem-solving activities. In addition, these activities help develop social skills through interactions with peers and the surrounding environment. Physical activities conducted during outing classes also contribute to children's motor development by involving various forms of movement. Therefore, outing class is considered an effective learning strategy for supporting children's holistic development (Maryanti, Kurniah, & Yulidesni, 2019).

The use of the environment as a learning resource has been widely recommended in early childhood education. The environment offers various real objects that children can observe and learn from directly. Environment-based learning enables children to gain more concrete experiences compared to learning that takes place solely inside the classroom. Moreover, it helps foster curiosity, creativity, and environmental awareness. Therefore, the environment should be optimally integrated into the learning process (Ali, Fauziah, & Latif, 2023).

Binangun Village, Kertek District, is an area with considerable agricultural potential. One of its notable resources is the existence of strawberry fields that serve both as cultivation sites and educational tourism destinations. These strawberry fields offer valuable opportunities to be utilized as contextual learning media for young children. Children can directly learn about plant growth processes, cultivation methods, maintenance, and harvesting techniques. Such experiences allow them to understand various learning concepts through real-life situations they encounter firsthand.

Strawberry fields possess significant educational value because they support the development of multiple aspects of children's abilities. Through activities such as observing, planting, watering, and harvesting strawberries, children can simultaneously develop cognitive, motor, language, social-emotional, and creative skills. These activities also help children understand the importance of environmental stewardship and appreciate the growth process of living things. Therefore, strawberry fields can serve as effective learning media to support children's comprehensive development (Subair, 2024).

However, preliminary observations indicate that learning activities in Group B of SPS Bahrul Ulum are still predominantly conducted inside the classroom. The utilization of the surrounding environment as a learning medium has not yet been implemented optimally or systematically. As a result, children's opportunities to gain direct learning experiences remain limited. This condition suggests that contextual learning has not been fully integrated into daily learning activities, despite the significant potential of the surrounding environment as a learning resource.

The limited use of environmental resources in learning also affects children's involvement in exploratory activities. Children are rarely engaged in activities that allow them to interact directly with the natural environment. In fact, direct learning experiences can enhance curiosity, creativity, and thinking skills. Learning activities that focus exclusively on classroom-based instruction may reduce children's opportunities to gain meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, innovative learning strategies are needed to increase children's active participation in the learning process.

Based on the foregoing discussion, a research gap exists in the limited number of studies specifically exploring the optimization of outing class activities based on the local potential of strawberry fields as a contextual learning medium for early childhood education, particularly within rural ECE institutions. Furthermore, the novelty of this study lies in the integration of the CTL

approach, outing class activities, and the utilization of strawberry fields as environment-based contextual learning media rooted in local potential.

Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute an applicable model of environment-based contextual learning implementation for early childhood educators while enriching learning strategies that utilize local resources. Therefore, this research aims to examine the optimization of outing class activities as a contextual learning medium for young children in the strawberry fields of Binangun Village, Kertek District.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of outing class activities as a contextual learning medium for early childhood education in the strawberry fields of Binangun Village, Kertek District. This approach was considered appropriate because the learning phenomenon under investigation was naturalistic, complex, and occurred directly within an educational social setting, requiring deep understanding rather than numerical measurement. Through this approach, the researcher was able to obtain a comprehensive description of the learning process, children's participation, and the factors influencing the success of the activities. The study was conducted through direct observation of phenomena occurring in the field, ensuring that the data reflected actual conditions. Therefore, the qualitative approach was deemed suitable for addressing the objectives of the study.

The research was conducted at SPS Bahrul Ulum in Binangun Village, Kertek District, Wonosobo Regency, Indonesia. The research site was selected because the institution utilizes strawberry fields as a learning medium for outing class activities involving young children. The selection of this site was based on the existence of contextual learning practices that integrate local environmental potential, a topic that has received limited attention in previous studies and therefore offers contextual novelty. The research participants consisted of the school principal, Group B teachers, students, and strawberry field managers who were directly involved in the learning activities. In addition, several supporting informants who possessed relevant knowledge regarding the implementation of the program were included in the study. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that involves deliberately choosing participants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. The selection criteria included direct involvement in outing class activities, experience in implementing learning programs, and substantial knowledge regarding the use of strawberry fields as learning media. Through this technique, the researcher obtained data that were relevant to the focus of the study.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to directly examine the implementation of outing class activities in the strawberry fields, while interviews were carried out with the school principal, teachers, and field managers to obtain

more in-depth information. Documentation was used to complement the research data, including activity photographs, field notes, and other supporting documents. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of implementation, the level of children's participation, and forms of optimization of outing class activities in supporting contextual learning. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed by comparing data obtained from different informants and data collection methods. This triangulation process was conducted to verify the consistency of information across sources and to enhance the credibility of the findings through cross-validation of field data. Consequently, the data generated in this study demonstrated a high level of validity and credibility.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Learning activities in early childhood education require approaches that effectively connect instructional content with real-life experiences that are familiar to children. One form of learning that provides direct experiences for young learners is the implementation of outing class activities. Through these activities, children acquire knowledge not only from teachers' explanations but also through observation, exploration, and direct interaction with their surrounding environment. The utilization of the environment as a learning resource is essential because it enables children to understand learning concepts in a more concrete and meaningful manner. Therefore, outing class activities conducted in the strawberry fields of Binangun Village serve as an alternative form of contextual learning that supports the development of young children.

The findings revealed that the implementation of outing class activities involved several stages that actively engaged children throughout the learning process. Children were given opportunities to observe, identify, and interact directly with strawberry plants and the surrounding environment. These activities not only provided enjoyable learning experiences but also contributed to children's cognitive, motor, language, and socio-emotional development. Furthermore, several supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation of outing class activities were identified. These findings are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

### **3.1 Implementation of Outing Class Activities as a Contextual Learning Medium for Early Childhood Education in the Strawberry Fields of Binangun Village, Kertek District**

Learning activities in early childhood education require approaches that effectively connect instructional content with real-life experiences that are familiar to children. One form of learning that provides direct experiences for young learners is the implementation of outing class activities. Through these activities, children acquire knowledge not only from teachers' explanations but also through observation, exploration, and direct interaction with their surrounding environment. The utilization of the environment as a learning resource is essential because it enables children to

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The findings revealed that the implementation of outing class activities involved several stages that actively engaged children throughout the learning process. Children were given opportunities to observe, identify, and interact directly with strawberry plants and the surrounding environment. These activities not only provided enjoyable learning experiences but also contributed to children's cognitive, motor, language, and socio-emotional development. Furthermore, the findings indicate that contextual learning based on local environmental resources enhances children's active participation, addressing the limited engagement previously observed in classroom-based learning. Several supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation of outing class activities were also identified and are discussed in the following sections.



**Figure 1.** Outing Class Activities in the Strawberry Fields

The implementation of outing class activities began with a planning stage conducted by the teacher. During this phase, learning objectives were established, activity plans were developed, and the necessary materials and equipment were prepared. Teachers also provided children with guidance regarding the rules and procedures that needed to be followed during outdoor learning activities. This planning stage served as a crucial indicator of the successful implementation of environment-based contextual learning. Effective planning has been widely recognized as one of the key determinants of successful learning processes in early childhood education (Mulyasa, 2017).

The implementation phase involved taking children to the strawberry fields, where various learning activities were conducted. Upon arrival, children were introduced to the surrounding environment and the different parts of the strawberry plant, including the roots, stems, leaves, flowers, and fruits. Teachers provided simple explanations regarding the plant growth process, enabling children to understand the concepts concretely. Throughout the activity, children actively observed, asked questions, and participated in discussions. These findings suggest that direct experience-based learning is more effective in developing conceptual understanding among young children than traditional classroom-based verbal instruction, which is consistent with experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014).

In addition to observation activities, children participated in practical tasks such as planting seedlings, watering plants, and harvesting strawberries. These activities provided authentic learning experiences that could not be obtained within the classroom environment. The children demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm and engagement throughout the activities. This finding reinforces the view that outing class activities not only increase learning participation but also strengthen experiential learning, which represents a core principle of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) (Erva, Yulia, & Nisa, 2023).

At the conclusion of the activity, teachers conducted evaluation and reflection sessions with the children. Participants were encouraged to share and describe their experiences, while teachers reinforced the concepts learned during the outing. Reflection represents an essential component of contextual learning because it connects concrete experiences with children's cognitive understanding and supports meaningful knowledge construction. Through reflection, children are able to organize and internalize the knowledge gained from their direct experiences, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the learning process (Johnson, 2022).

### **3.2 The Role of Outing Class as a Contextual Learning Medium in Early Childhood Education**

Outing class activities play a significant role in supporting the implementation of contextual learning in early childhood education. Through these activities, children are provided with opportunities to learn directly from authentic experiences in their surrounding environment. Direct learning experiences help children understand concepts more effectively than learning through verbal explanations alone. Learning becomes more meaningful because children can connect instructional content with their everyday experiences. This finding is consistent with the principles of contextual learning, which emphasize the relationship between knowledge and real-life experiences (Sanjaya, 2016).

The utilization of strawberry fields as a learning medium enables children to become more familiar with the natural environment. Children can observe the growth process of plants from the planting stage to harvesting. In addition, they are exposed to various natural elements found within the agricultural setting. These experiences help children understand that learning can occur beyond the classroom and can be derived directly from the surrounding environment. Therefore, the strawberry field functions as a contextual learning resource that strengthens experience-based learning among young children (Ali, Fauziah, & Latif, 2023).



**Figure 2.** Children Participating in Strawberry Planting Activities

Outing class activities also contribute significantly to enhancing children's learning motivation. The learning atmosphere, which differs from routine classroom instruction, encourages greater enthusiasm and participation among learners. Children were observed actively asking questions, making observations, and engaging in various activities throughout the program. These findings indicate that outdoor learning increases children's interest and curiosity regarding the learning materials. The higher the level of learning motivation, the greater the likelihood of achieving the intended learning objectives.

Furthermore, outing class activities assist teachers in delivering instructional content more effectively. Teachers are able to provide authentic examples that are directly related to the concepts being taught. Rather than merely imagining a concept, children can observe and experience it firsthand. This finding suggests that contextual learning through outing class activities enhances the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in early childhood education. By connecting academic content with real-world experiences, outing class activities create meaningful learning opportunities that support children's understanding, engagement, and overall development.

### **3.3 The Impact of Outing Class Activities on Early Childhood Development**

The findings of this study indicate that outing class activities have a positive impact on the cognitive development of young children. Through direct observation activities, children gained new knowledge about strawberry plants, including their parts and growth processes. Authentic learning experiences enabled children to understand learning concepts more easily and meaningfully. In addition, these activities encouraged children to develop critical thinking skills through questioning and information-seeking behaviors related to the objects they observed. These findings suggest that experience-based learning can effectively enhance children's cognitive development (Ali, Fauziah, & Latif, 2023).

Outing class activities also contributed to children's motor development. Activities such as walking through the plantation area, planting seedlings, watering plants, and harvesting strawberries required coordinated body movements and physical engagement. These activities simultaneously supported the development of both gross and fine motor skills. As a result, children became more

physically active and participated in a variety of movement-based tasks throughout the learning process. Learning experiences that involve direct interaction with natural environments have been shown to support physical and motor development in early childhood (Fitriani & Wulandari, 2024).



**Figure 3.** Classroom Learning Activities

In addition to cognitive and motor development, outing class activities positively influenced children's language development. During the activities, children were encouraged to ask questions, answer teachers' inquiries, and engage in discussions with their peers regarding their observations in the field. These interactions helped improve children's communication skills and expand their vocabulary. Children learned to express their ideas, share opinions, and describe the experiences they gained during the activities. Consequently, outing class activities contributed significantly to the development of language skills among young learners.

Another positive impact was observed in children's socio-emotional development. Through participation in outing class activities, children learned to cooperate with their peers, follow established rules, and take responsibility for assigned tasks. Social interactions occurring throughout the activities helped children develop discipline, tolerance, and adaptability to their surrounding environment. Furthermore, children learned to appreciate the results of their efforts and to care for the environment in which they learned. These experiences contributed positively to character formation and socio-emotional growth during early childhood, which are essential components of holistic development (Maryanti, Kurniah, & Yulidesni, 2019).

### **3.4 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Outing Class Activities**

The primary supporting factor in the implementation of outing class activities was the availability of strawberry fields located near the school environment. The accessibility of the location enabled teachers to organize and conduct outdoor learning activities efficiently. In addition, the natural environment provided a variety of learning resources that could be utilized to support the educational process. The strawberry fields served as an authentic learning environment that strengthened the implementation of contextual learning for young children. A learning environment rich in real-life experiences enhances the effectiveness of contextual learning and promotes

meaningful educational experiences (Purnama, 2023). Therefore, the availability of a supportive environment was one of the key factors contributing to the success of outing class activities.

Another important supporting factor was the active role of teachers in planning, facilitating, and guiding students throughout the activities. Teachers functioned not only as providers of information but also as facilitators who helped children gain direct learning experiences. Their ability to organize activities, manage learning interactions, and provide appropriate guidance significantly influenced the success of the program. Consequently, teacher competence emerged as a crucial element in the effective implementation of outing class activities (Mulyasa, 2017).

Students' enthusiasm also played a significant role in supporting the success of the activities. Children demonstrated excitement and eagerness to participate in every task provided during the outing class. Their high level of curiosity encouraged them to ask questions, explore their surroundings, and engage actively in learning activities. This condition created a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. Such enthusiasm served as an important foundation for achieving the intended learning objectives and maximizing the benefits of contextual learning experiences.

On the other hand, several inhibiting factors were identified during the implementation of outing class activities. One of the most common challenges was unpredictable weather conditions, as the activities were conducted outdoors. Adverse weather occasionally disrupted planned activities and affected the learning schedule. In addition, limited time allocation reduced opportunities for children to participate in all planned activities to their fullest extent. Safety concerns and the need for intensive supervision also became important considerations because outdoor learning environments require continuous monitoring to ensure children's well-being and security.

Despite these challenges, the findings indicate that the obstacles encountered were primarily technical in nature and did not substantially reduce the effectiveness of the learning activities. Through careful planning, effective organization, strong coordination among stakeholders, and adequate supervision, these challenges could be minimized. Therefore, the supporting factors were found to outweigh the inhibiting factors, allowing outing class activities to remain an effective strategy for implementing contextual learning and promoting holistic development in early childhood education.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of outing class activities in the strawberry fields of Binangun Village, Kertek District, represents a form of contextual learning that provides direct learning experiences for young children. The activities were conducted through systematic stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation that were adapted to the developmental characteristics of early childhood learners. Learning that utilizes the environment as a learning resource enables children to gain more concrete experiences than classroom-based instruction alone. Through these activities, children were able to observe, explore, and interact directly with learning objects. Therefore, the findings of this study

confirm that environment-based learning through outing class activities enhances meaningful learning experiences for young children while addressing the limitations of conventional classroom instruction.

Outing class activities play a significant role as a contextual learning medium because they effectively connect instructional content with children's real-life experiences. The utilization of strawberry fields as a learning resource provides opportunities for children to understand various concepts through firsthand experiences. Children acquire knowledge not only through teachers' explanations but also through observation and practical activities conducted during the learning process. As a result, learning becomes more active, interactive, and easier for children to understand. These findings indicate that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach based on local environmental resources makes a substantial contribution to improving the quality of learning processes in early childhood education.

The findings further reveal that outing class activities positively influence multiple dimensions of child development. From a cognitive perspective, children gained new knowledge about strawberry plants and their surrounding environment. In terms of motor development, children enhanced their skills through activities such as planting, watering, and harvesting. Language development was fostered through questioning, discussion, and the retelling of experiences gained during the activities. Furthermore, the activities contributed to children's socio-emotional development by promoting cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and environmental awareness. Consequently, outing class activities were found to support holistic child development in accordance with the fundamental principles of early childhood education.

The successful implementation of outing class activities was supported by several factors, including the accessibility of the strawberry fields, strong teacher involvement, and high levels of student enthusiasm. The surrounding environment, rich in learning resources, provided valuable opportunities for experience-based learning. Teachers played a crucial role as facilitators by guiding and supporting children throughout the activities. In addition, support from the strawberry field managers contributed to the smooth implementation of the program. These findings suggest that collaboration among schools, teachers, and local community resources is a key factor in optimizing contextual learning through outing class activities.

Despite the numerous benefits identified, several challenges were encountered during implementation, including unpredictable weather conditions, limited time allocation, and the need for intensive supervision of children during outdoor activities. However, these challenges can be minimized through careful planning, effective coordination, and efficient activity management. Therefore, the obstacles identified in this study were primarily technical in nature and did not significantly reduce the effectiveness of outing class activities in supporting the learning process.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that outing class activities conducted in the strawberry fields of Binangun Village make a positive contribution to both the learning process and the overall development of young children. This study highlights the novelty of integrating contextual learning, outing class activities, and local environmental resources in the form of strawberry fields as an innovative and effective strategy for early childhood education. Accordingly, such activities should continue to be developed as a learning innovation that optimally utilizes local environmental potential, particularly in strengthening experience-based learning practices in early childhood education settings.

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