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Instilling Character Education in Early Childhood by Using Illustrated Storybook

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Abstract: Early childhood is in its golden age and is very valuable compared to later ages. Early childhood experiences a very rapid process of growth and development. The intelligence of early childhood develops tremendously in absorbing everything in the surrounding environment. The golden age is a very decisive initial foundation in shaping the character and commendable personality and will adhere to adult children. Character education with an Islamic perspective will give birth to future generations who have quality personalities for the future of their lives in the future. Instilling character education in schools has an important role and spearheads the teacher. Character education is very appropriate to be implemented early. Early childhood does not know yet, has not been able to distinguish and does not yet know the effects of good deeds and bad deeds that they do. Educators should build the character of early childhood by introducing a variety of goodness, familiarizing and instilling pleasure to do good deeds. Learning method that can be applied to instill character from early childhood is through storytelling methods using illustrated storybook. Illustrated storybook is very interesting for early childhood because children can see various things and can develop imagination or fantasy, train emotions, attention and build the character of the child so that the Indonesian people have a future generation with good character.

Keywords: *character education, early childhood, illustrated storybook*

A. Introduction

The child is truly the mandate given from God. We are obliged to maintain, nurture and educate as well as possible. Early childhood is a very important and basic initial period. This period is called a sensitive period or golden age in a child's life. The golden age is very valuable because children experience tremendous intelligence development that is not experienced at the next age.

The golden age is very important to maximize all the potential that is owned. The spiritual, physical, intellect and skills that

exist in the child need to be stimulated so that they can grow and develop optimally. Every child is unique who is born with different potentials, has advantages, talents and interests that need to be developed through the educational process. Education for early childhood is directed at facilitating the growth and development of children from the age of 0 to 6 years by providing optimal stimulation and stimulation.

Institutionally, early childhood education is education which focuses on laying the foundation for growth and development with the stages of development

that are passed according to their age. The development is directed at intellectual, spiritual, emotional and social intelligence. The four intelligences will guide children to become insan kamil. Aisyah (2018) children will be able to understand their rights and obligations in a balanced and appropriate manner in their daily lives through character education. Character education needs to be given and provided early because children are the next generation of the nation. Children must be able to be the next generation of quality and better than their predecessors.

Character education given to children from an early age will have a positive impact. This is because early childhood cannot yet know, has not been able to differentiate and does not yet know the effects of good deeds and bad deeds that they do. So that it is necessary to instill character values in children. Good character values are the right behavior when dealing with others by doing good. Character values that need to be instilled from an early age are empathy. Empathy is a moral emotion so that children can understand and be sensitive to the feelings of others around them. Children will be encouraged to help others who are experiencing distress and feel pain. Empathy in character values needs to be instilled by educators in schools for children through various learning activities. One of them is the method of telling stories using story books.

Story books that are read by educators to early childhood have a huge influence on children's mental growth. Instilling character with early childhood through storybooks is very effective and will bring children to another world that is very pleasant. In the story read by educators there is a message of morality, advice, exemplary, and wisdom through the figure of the story. Children will be trained to be sensitive and sharpen their memory.

B. Discussion

1. Early Childhood

He Stated, "Early childhood in the Law on National Education System Number 20 of 2003 Article 28 paragraph 1 states that those who include early childhood are children in the age range of 0 to 6 years". (Muhammad, 2014, p.18). This age is the most important initial and fundamental period in the human life span. This period is called the golden or golden age period.

Ahmad (2017) early childhood according to the National Association for Education Young Children (NAEYC) are children aged zero to eight years. At the age of zero to eight years (Ahmad, 2017), children experience a process of growth and development that skyrocketed in various aspects. Educators need to pay attention to the characteristics of early childhood in the learning process by paying attention to the stages of development according to their age. Characteristics of early childhood are:

a. Curiosity.

Early childhood is very interested and wants to know everything that happens around. Children often unpack an object, ask questions with the words "what" or "why". Adults need to facilitate children's curiosity by providing various objects to be assembled and serving questions with wise and comprehensive answers by asking questions back to the child so that there is a pleasant dialogue but still scientific.

b. Unique Personal.

Every child has their own uniqueness. For example, how to learn, interests and family background. The uniqueness of children comes from genetic factors (physical characteristics) and the environment (in terms of interest). Educators need to take a personal approach so that they can be accommodated well.

c. Like to fantasize and imagine.

Early childhood really likes to tell stories, imagine and develop things convincingly as if they saw or experienced it themselves. Even though it's the result of a child's fantasy or imagination. Children cannot separate reality and fantasy. Fantasy and imagination are very important for the development of creativity and language. Adults around children need to direct slowly so that children know the difference between imagination and reality. Fantasy and imagination need to be developed through storytelling activity.

d. Potential time for learning.

Early childhood in golden age experiences rapid growth and development in various aspects. Adults need to provide the right stimulation in order to optimize children's development.

e. Egocentric attitude.

Early childhood only understands things from their own point of view, not the point of view of others, more thinking and talking about themselves, not others, and their actions aimed at benefiting themselves. For example, the children consider their mother and father absolutely their parent but not their brother/sister's parent. When children start school, their self-centeredness starts to decrease. Adults help reduce egocentrism by getting children to listen to stories, train social care and empathy by giving help to orphans.

f. Has short attention span.

Early childhood has a very short attention span. The attention quickly shifted from an activity to another activity. If the previous activity was less attractive. Adults try to create a pleasant atmosphere in educating.

g. Part of social beings.

Early childhood begins to learn to socialize and learn to be accepted in the environment, socializing and playing with peers, learning to share, succumbing and patiently waiting their turn when playing with friends. Adults guide, direct and provide explanations if there is a child's behavior that is not in accordance with the norm.

Age 0 to 6 years is referred to as early childhood. A personality development process occurs and is an age that is difficult for adults to understand children. Children behave that are less attractive and unpleasant for adults. For example, children feel fear that is irrational, angry without reason, opposed to the willingness of adults, often feeling jealous and so forth.

Early childhood is at the stage of wanting to know the state of the surrounding environment. This period is called the age of exploring. Children ask a lot about the surrounding environment. Questions that arise because of the child's curiosity. Adults around children must answer children's questions. This will increase stimulation in the child's brain. Brain development is influenced by stimuli received by children from the womb. Stimulation affects the intelligence and ability of children to learn.

She stated, "According to the results of neurological studies, brain size has reached 75% when a child is two years old and 90% of the size of the adult's brain when a child is five years old". (Novi, 2016, p.7). Ruben, Daufur and Hayness said, "That in the human brain there are 100 billion nerve cells called neurons. Each neuron can develop thousands or even hundreds of thousands of tissues called synapse". Erny and Suharso suggested, "The number of synaptic connections in the brain would reach 1,000 trillion when the child was three years old. The number of synapses is many and the

complexity of the network to determine the intelligence of children". (Novi, 2016, p.80). The number of synapses is increasing, and the network is complicated by always providing stimulation to children. The experience gained and the right stimulation in early childhood is very influential on intelligence, spiritual, emotional and social development. Experience gained by children through education.

Education is very important in its childhood role and has a huge influence in shaping the basic personality of each child. The child would form the basic personality at the age of the first five years in childhood. Educators should understand and know the phases of development to make it easier to understand and learn the personality of their students.

2. Preparing Children's Future In Golden Age

Awareness of the importance of early childhood education, has not been fully realized by some people. A very valuable golden age is often ignored by parents. This is due to limited information received. There are still parents who argue that sending their children to Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is just playing and singing. Parents have not fully realized the importance of education from an early age.

Novan and Barnawi (2016) early Childhood Education (PAUD) is education for children aged 0 to 6 years before children sit at the level of primary education. Children are in the golden age and very vulnerable so that in stimulating must be in accordance with the stages of child development. The goal is to hold early childhood education to facilitate the growth and development of all aspects of the personality and potential possessed by children. The potential of children developed is religious and moral, cognitive, physical, gross and fine motor skills, language, social and emotional. If in stimulating improperly

and inappropriately it can harm the child. (QS. Ta Ha: 114).

فَتَعَلَىٰ اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ
أَنْ يُفْضَلَ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ۝١١٤

114. So high [above all] is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, [O Muhammad], do not hasten with [recitation of] the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."

Children can grow and develop in a healthy and optimal manner if educators can provide maximum stimulation and rich experiences. Early childhood education can make children grow and develop in accordance with the values, norms, expectations of society and children to be able to adapt to their environment. A conducive environment helps the process of nurturing the soul and instill character values so that children are in the benefit of living well in the world and in the hereafter.

Character values instilled since early childhood as a contribution to the success of children in the future. Early childhood education not only increases knowledge and skills related to science. Early childhood education has an important role in building the character of children from an early age. Children are prepared to have a moral character so that children can behave well and morally.

Bisri (2015) instilling character values with children is not as easy as what is said. Sharp and thorough knowledge is needed. Incorrectly instilling character values can have fatal consequences for a child's future. Educators must have the knowledge of education, psychology, and religious sciences. The science of educating will provide discourse to educators, how to educate right. Psychology to find out the mental condition of a child. Educators know how to behave towards active children and less active children. Religion is related to

character and is the foundation of all aspects of a child's future life. To prepare for the future of children in the golden age, adults must be able to build character education in the womb and instill character from an early age. Being an educator must know and understand character education especially for early childhood.

3. Character Education In Early Childhood

Whether we realize it or not, the character formation process is reflected in the daily behavior of children. The development of technology in this era affects the occurrence of behavioral deviations and shifts in character values. Adults around children (parents, educators, communities) must take this issue seriously. Adults need to build and instill character through character education from an early age.

Thomas Lickona argued that, "Character is a person's nature in responding to moral conditions. The character is manifested in good actions, including honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. The success of character education when it starts from the understanding of good characters, love and exemplary". (Thomas Lickona, 1992, p.22).

Samani and Hariyanto stated that character is a basic value that builds a person because of environmental influences. Basic values are the values of human behavior that relate to Allah, oneself, fellow human beings and the surrounding environment. Basic values are carried out in thoughts, feelings, words, attitudes, actions based on religious norms, manners, culture, and law. (Novi, 2016, p.139).

Character is a mimic process of what is seen, heard and followed. Children will have good or bad characters depending on the imitation process. In accordance with the characteristics of children, one of them is imitating. Children only imitate without considering whether the deeds are good or

bad. This is due to the urge of the child to want to know and want to try which appears spontaneously. In building the character of children, educators must be provided with knowledge and understanding of children's development.

4. Importance Of Character In Early Childhood

Character education is the same as moral education or moral education. The goal is to form a good personality in children so that children when they become adults, can apply as members of the community and citizens who are religious, nationalist, productive and creative. Character education as a foundation or character base should be built since early childhood. He stated, "For the foundation to be strong, educators cultivate and enrich children's character development by instilling in children (1) a sense of empathy (loving others); (2) be steadfast and can always be thankful under any circumstances; (3) believe in Allah. (Agus, 2013, p. 66-67).

Novi (2016) instilling character education with children is not easy. Educators must know and understand the instilling of character building in children from an early age, among others:

a. Instilling adab (good manners).

Adab means good manners. A person can be seen by the behavior from the way speaks, interacts, behaves and socializes. The purposes of instilling adab for children from an early age are to instill honesty, faith (tawheed), can respect parents and older people and peers.

b. Instilling responsibility

Responsibility is the desire to carry out the tasks assigned. Children need to be instilled early on so that children can do the tasks that are their responsibility.

c. Instilling concern.

Concern means empathy, which is the desire to help others according to their abilities. Instilling empathy from an early age is the foundation for building social piety. Empathy that has been embedded in children from an early age will foster a sense of brotherhood and keep children from being arrogant, selfish and individual.

d. Instilling self-reliance.

Self-reliance is the basis of one's success and is very important to be instilled from an early age. The purpose of instilling self-reliance in children early is so that children do not depend on others, belief in their own abilities and not bother others. A self-reliance attitude instilled in children early will make children become unyielding, persistent, have high enthusiasm, be optimistic and feel able to solve the problems they face.

e. Instilling the importance of community.

The goal is to be implanted from an early age so that children can socialize with others. Children are expected to implement mutual cooperation in the community and learn to get along with people in the surrounding environment.

Aisyah (2018) instilling character building early will motivate children to make it happen. Children will grow up to be self-confident and able to empathize with others. The formation of children's character from an early age through several stages, including:

a. Know The Virtue.

Educators first tell the child about good deeds and bad deeds. Children will know and understand good and bad deeds, and why we must and need to perform good deeds.

b. Feel The Virtue.

Educators need to grow and arouse the feeling of love to do good to children by the way children feel the benefits of the good deeds they have done. The child will arise a desire not to do bad deeds.

c. Perform The Virtue.

Educators train children to do good. Children who are accustomed to doing good will be accustomed to doing good and get a feeling from their actions.

5. Character Education Strategy In Early Childhood.

Ratna Megawangi (2010) stated that character education requires a strategy by adjusting its age phase, namely: (Agus, 2013, p.88 – 90).

a. 0 to 3 years old phase.

The moral foundation of new children is formed in this phase. Children really need love from parents and educators.

b. 2 to 3 years old phase.

Educators must be more patient with children in this phase. Children begin to be unruly and have started trying to break the rules made by adults. Children in this phase have begun to learn about manners and good and bad deeds.

c. Phase 0 (4 years old).

In this phase, educators avoid giving punishment to children. In this phase, the child likes to break the rules, egocentric and happy to impose the wishes. Children can do good and want to get praise from educators and can empathize. Educators give praise by giving direction to children. For example, "A pious child will not pinch a friend". In this phase, educators provide clear rules so that children understand it. For example, "Children who speak out loud in class, don't get a chance to play blocks today".

d. Phase 1 (4.5 to 6 years old).

In this phase, children begin to be invited to collaborate, willing to accept the opinions of others, be more obedient, be able to respect adults and surround them and understand that adults know everything. Educators in Phase 1 emphasized the importance of good and polite behavior and provided opportunities for children to understand the reasons for speaking to children. This situation is due to children still trusting adults (parents and educators). For example, educators are not enough just to say, "If you eat, sit". Educators should give their views to children, "What happens when you eat while walking or running around?".

e. Phase 2 (6.5 to 8 years old).

In this phase, educators behave more wisely to children. Children already feel they have the same rights as adults (parents and educators), begin to think that adults can no longer govern children, begin to understand doing good to be liked by others, asking for fair treatment and starting to like comparing with others.

6. Character Building Method In Early Childhood.

The duty of adults around children to build the character of the child to be good. Islam is very concerned about the problem of character or morals. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam was sent to improve human morals. The Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam said:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ صَالِحًا لِأَخْلَاقِي

"Indeed, I was only sent to perfect moral character."

Novi (2016) educators in building children's character must be with examples. Not only using words or commands. Educators in building the character of children from an early age need to use

several appropriate methods so that their goals can be achieved. Methods in building the character of children from an early age namely:

a. Habitual method.

An activity to train children who are carried out regularly, continuously and repeatedly. Habits carried out are good habits for developing a child's personality. Childhood personality developed by educators by making good habits, including honest, independent, clean life, discipline, help others and live in harmony with friends.

b. Exemplary method.

Exemplary method is teaching method by giving good examples to children so that children can imitate the example of the educator and implement it in daily life. The exemplary method is very effective applied for early childhood. This situation is caused by one of the characteristics of children is imitation. Children will imitate the behavior of educators in words, actions and mental attitudes such as emotions and sensitivity. The exemplary method applied by educators for early childhood by:

- 1) Providing direct examples of what children can see in school. For example, educators get used to greeting before entering and leaving the class, praying before and after learning, praying before and finishing eating, praying when they want to ride the vehicle, showing patience, gentle, not loud when together with students.
- 2) Educators provide examples in the learning process by using storytelling methods. Children are very fond and very enthusiastic about the method of telling stories.

- c. **Playing method.**
It is an activity carried out for fun and will make children happy, comfortable and excited. This situation is due to the world of children that is the world of play and play is a necessity for children. By playing, children are adding experience, doing exploration and building new knowledge. Children use objects around them. Through playing activities, children are stimulated to develop thoughts, emotions and social.
- d. **Conversation method.**
It is an activity carried out by educators with students by means of conversation or question and answer. Using conversational methods can arouse feelings, give an impression and can foster an idea for listeners. Conversation methods carried out for early childhood are usually combined with the method of telling stories.
- e. **Storytelling method.**
The storytelling method is an activity carried out by using props or not using props to convey the message of the story. The storytelling method is very effective for early childhood in instilling a variety of values and ethics.

7. Instilling Character With Storybook In Early Childhood

"Educating children is not easy". In educating children, they need to understand and know the methods, strategies, and methods of educating them to become insan kamil. Educators need to understand that early childhood does not yet know and has not been able to distinguish between good deeds and bad deeds and does not yet know the effects and effects of good deeds and bad deeds that they do. Educators in instilling character with early childhood, introducing

various kinds of goodness with appropriate and effective methods. The right and effective method to apply and suit early childhood using the illustrated storybook method.

Storytelling is one of the fun activities for early childhood. The story uses pictorial story books indirectly giving moral messages contained in the story to students. The story will make students understand and can distinguish good deeds and bad deeds. Through stories, educators train children the basics of good deeds. Through stories, children's imagination and fantasy are developed. Stories that children hear will always be remembered.

In the Qur'an, it is explained that the story is a warning to humans. QS. Thaha:99

كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ
لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا

Kažālika naquṣṣu 'alaika min ambā'ī
mā qad sabaq, wa qad ātaināka mil
ladunnā žikrā

Thus, [O Muhammad], We relate to you from the news of what has preceded. And We have certainly given you from Us the Qur'an.

The verse explains that humans can learn from the story and know good deeds and bad deeds. Instilling the knowledge of good and bad deeds to early childhood by using stories. Children will be more interested in listening to the moral messages contained in the book than children listening to advice. The learning process carried out by educators in instilling character education with children is more appropriate and effective by using illustrated storybook.

Illustrated storybook is very interesting for children because children can directly see the pictures in the story book. Children will be more focused on listening to stories. Children will quickly and easily understand the contents and moral messages in the

story because they do not imagine the storyline. Early childhood has not been able to think abstractly. There must be objects or images that can be seen directly by the child.

Illustrated storybook for early childhood is made as attractive as possible with various colors and images. The writing in the story is not too long. Using easy-to-understand language so that children are easier to understand the content and moral message of the story. The story is in the Qur'an QS. Yusuf: 111. As the word of Allah.

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصصِهِمْ عِبْرَةً لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ
مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً
لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Qur'an a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe.

The verse above explains that in the story there is a message that will be conveyed to the listener and is a lesson for humans. He and she stated, "Stories have an attraction that can touch human feelings and will affect their lives". (Ihsan and Uswatun, 2018, p. 54). Not different from early childhood when educators readout illustrated storybook. Moral values such as honesty, mutual help, friendship and courage contained in the contents of the story play a big role for children. Children begin to be trained to regulate their feelings, instill a sense of empathy, instill self-confidence in children. The story conveyed by educators will bring children into adventure dreams, stored in the subconscious and will affect real life later.

Bisri (2015) the story of using illustrated storybook has many benefits for early childhood, among others:

- a. Through stories, educators introduce the environment around children, introduce and instill good character, children know and understand good deeds and bad deeds.
- b. The story will stimulate and develop thinking, imagination, and children's fantasies.
- c. Stories add to the child's inner experience, develop reasoning power so that children can be more critical.
- d. Children begin to be able to distinguish which actions can be an example and imitated as well as actions that should not be exemplified and imitated and actions that must be abandoned.
- e. Listening to stories will foster confidence and a commendable attitude.
- f. Foster empathy. Children will foster their personalities when children feel the stories that are heard from their feelings and points of view.
- g. Obtain new knowledge and experience.

C. Conclusion

The golden age is very important to maximize all the potential that is owned. The spiritual, physical, intellect and skills that exist in the child need to be stimulated so that they can grow and develop optimally through the educational process. Education for early childhood is directed at facilitating the growth and development of children from the age of 0 to 6 years by providing optimal stimulation and stimulation. The development is directed at intellectual, spiritual, emotional and social intelligence. The four intelligences will guide children to become *insan kamil* (perfect human).

Children will be able to understand their rights and obligations in a balanced and appropriate manner in their daily lives through character education. Character education needs to be given and provided early because children are the next generation of the nation. Children must be able to be the next generation of quality and better than their predecessors.

So that it is necessary to instill character values in children. Good character values are the right behavior when dealing with others by doing good deeds. Character values that need to be instilled from an early age are empathy. Empathy is a moral emotion so that children can understand and be sensitive to the feelings of others around them. Children will be encouraged to help others who are experiencing distress and feel pain. Empathy in character values needs to be instilled by educators in schools for children through various learning activities. One of them is the method of telling stories using story books.

Many benefits obtained by children from reading illustrated storybook. Educators should first read a lot of story books. So that when reading storybooks to children, educators have confidence. As an educator, it must begin to improve the way to educate students to be better. Using the right and effective method will be able to instill character education early on to students. Students will change negative characters into positive characters. Children will become insan kamil according to the expectations of educators and parents.

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