

The Position of Teachers in the Development of Early Childhood Character Education

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Abstract

The teacher's position once looked down upon, is now considered a professional and even stipulated in Law no. 14 of 2005 Chapter II Article 2. Therefore, the position of the teacher now is no longer just teaching but also educating, fostering, motivating, and becoming a model for students. Efforts to instill commendable behavior in early childhood can be made through character education if a teacher understands his position. This study sought information about the teacher's position in instilling character education in early childhood at Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten. The method used in this research is qualitative with descriptive analysis. Data collection techniques using passive participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the teacher's position in the development of early childhood character education at Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten is not only as a learning resource, facilitator, manager, demonstrator, mentor, and evaluator but also has a position as a motivator. Teachers are also motivators because the teachers 1) explain or give direction and guidance on the objectives of each activity carried out, 2) arouse student interest will be encouraged them to learn and get used to it well, 3) use various learning models and strategies, 4) creating a pleasant atmosphere, and 5) giving awards or praise to students after doing commendable things.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of a nation's character determines the progress of a nation and is an important aspect of human resources (Alawiyah, 2012). One solution to overcome this is a national development policy through character education, especially in early childhood, which is a very strategic age to shape the character of the nation through education (Robingatin & Komariah, 2022). Human resources are developed through formal and informal education and training that occur simultaneously and continuously and are better known as non-physical investments (Atmanti, 2005). It is believed that education plays an important and strategic role in national development (Muhardi, 2004) and even becomes a controlling factor in increasing the nation's intelligence (Ningrum, 2016). The application of quality human resources is related to how to shape the character of every Indonesian child, which needs to be fostered and nurtured from an early age to improve the quality of Indonesian society. Early age is suitable for forming children's character (Chapnick, 2008). Because during this period, the development is perfect so that it cannot be repeated. This period is often called the (golden age) that is, the child will automatically be able to absorb what we apply, and the most important is the process of the formation of children's character from an early age (La Hadisi, 2015).

NAECY states (Monica & Mayar, 2019) early childhood is children from birth to the age of eight years, while in Indonesia, the category of early childhood is children from birth to the age of six and has unique characteristics, such as great curiosity about anything, and willingness to explore, imagine and fantasize about the outside world. The role of the teacher in the institution is necessary to build children's character so that they feel comfortable and safe in every learning process (Oktavianingsih & Fitroh, 2021). Educational institutions also have teachers/lecturers who can be used as intellectual figures and role models/examples for students. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System in Chapter 1, article 1 number 14 states that "Early Childhood Education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of 6 which is carried out through the provision of education, spiritual growth, and development so that children are ready to enter further education. Early childhood education is intended to provide a process for the growth and development of children and all aspects of their personalities (Westri & Pransiska, 2021). In addition, students can be noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and citizens who have a social spirit and are responsible, as stipulated in Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number: 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education, from now on abbreviated as PPK movement is under the responsibility of the education unit, which aims to strengthen the character of students through the harmonization of heart, exercise, thought, and exercise by involving collaboration between educational units, families, and communities.

The observations of a neurologist, Dr. Benyamin S. Bloom, an education expert at the University of Chicago, United States, said that the growth of brain tissue cells in children aged 0-4 reaches 50% (Purnomo, 2013). It means that if a child's brain cannot be stimulated thoroughly, then everything related to the growth and development of children physically and mentally will not develop optimally. Early childhood education is important to form the basis of the child's personality as a character builder, active, ethical, virtuous, wise, and devoted to God Almighty. The formation of children's character in an institution or education needs attention, especially where the teacher plays an active role in the coaching process. The main goal of education is to give birth to generations of people with a good personality, emotional and spiritual. In this case, schools or educational institutions are responsible for fostering and educating children to become the nation's successors, following the expectations of parents and society. The teacher has a position as an educator to help children acquire useful knowledge that can shape good morals and behavior, which is on par with the goals of education in developing the potential of students as children with intellectual personalities and noble character (Fauziah, 2014).

(Mulyasa, 2007) argues that early childhood character education has a very significant meaning compared to moral education, not just a matter of right or wrong but in a way how to get used to habitual behavior that is carried out continuously without coercion so that children have a commitment and awareness that in life needs good practice (Putri & Hudah, 2019). He needs to be accompanied and guided in character formation from an early age because then the child will get used to it over time (Monica & Mayar, 2019). For example (Pradana et al, 2014), when a child carries out searching and exploring activities, the child is involved in the world of mathematics, so without realizing it over time, the child continues to be involved in

the world of mathematics. From opening their eyes to closing their eyes again, children are always confronted with mathematical concepts, especially in education, where mathematics is studied (Nisa' et al., 2016).

Following Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning the enforcement of character education, it is explained that educational activities are the responsibility of elements of educational institutions that aim to fortify the character of each learner through thought, exercise, and sports. as well as instilling cooperation between educational institutions, parents, and the community (Hidaya & Aisna, 2020). The manifested character can be conquered by at least five factors, namely basic temperament (dominant, familiar, steady, and careful), belief (what is believed or paradigm), education (what is known or our insight), and life motivation (what it is known, feel, and the spirit of life), and the journey (what has been experienced, our past, parenting, and environment) (M. Saleh, 2016). the title of the research I took about, "Teacher's Position in Building Early Childhood Character," aims to find out how important the teacher's position is in shaping children's character, how to apply children's character from an early age, and all things that have an impact. Suppose the teacher's position is lacking in applying the child's character.

METHOD

The qualitative observation method was employed. There are many kinds of qualitative observation methods; however, the qualitative observation method applied in this observation was a type of descriptive analysis. This descriptive analysis method is powerful for describing and explaining the object under study through data or samples collected according to facts without conducting analysis and making general conclusions (Sholikhah, 2016). The descriptive analysis research method is a collection of problems in the field, which are then described according to the conditions in the field; then, the research results are analyzed so that conclusions can be drawn from the research results. It is called a descriptive method because it aims to obtain an objective explanation of the teacher's role in character-building in early childhood. The process of collecting data in this study used observation techniques by describing an object through observation, which produced accurate information and data, as well as interviewing teachers at Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten from November 7, 2022, to December 28, 2022. Respondents of this study consisted of two teachers: Mrs. NT and Mrs. IR. They served as resources to collect information about the position of teachers in the development of early childhood character education. In this study, the researchers only explored information about the teacher's role or position. Then, the observations and interviews were used to elaborate on the research results and discussion, not measuring the results of developing early childhood character education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

From the results of research conducted through observation and interviews, it was obtained data from students in the Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten group into three groups, namely play groups (KB), TK A, and TK B, according to Permendikbud

Number 44 of 2019 article 4 explaining that the requirements for prospective new students in Children's Parks, such as the age limit for entering Kindergarten, namely group A is five years old or at least four years old, while group B is six years old or at least five years old ([Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, 2019](#)). Each group consists of 15 students with two teachers. The data was obtained that the teacher's position in developing character education in Shafa Marwah Kindergarten used three techniques, namely 1) habituation, 2) imitating, and 3) doing. According to Leah Davies ([Yeni, 2018](#)), habituation of behavior that must be accustomed to early childhood includes being polite, helpful, punctual, humble, and independent. In learning activities, a teacher must instill positive and skilled behavior to be carried out continuously to form good habits, which are a plus for children in character building. In addition, parents at home also play an active role in supporting the process of forming children's character through stimulation that teachers at their schools have carried out. Because without the intervention of parents in supporting character building, the process will not run smoothly ([Diamond, Uchi, 2020](#)).

According to Rusmayanti & Cristiana ([Yeni, 2018](#)), the introduction of habituation methods at school can be done through daily routines in Kindergarten, spontaneous activities that are carried out spontaneously at the time and are carried out when the teacher knows the child's attitude or behavior is not good and through example. Students then imitated the example set by the Shafa Marwah Kindergarten teacher because the teacher has a position and influence as a role model (Example of Amanah), which is always used as an example or figure in behavior. These words affect the development of a student's character. Habits taught in Shafa Marwah Kindergarten include 1) dhuha prayer, 2) muroja'ah short surah, 3) getting used to smiling greetings to parents and friends, 4) putting or returning something in its place, 5) apologizing and thanking according to the context, 6) praying before and after making something, as well as many other habits.

The position of the teacher as a model, where a teacher must be a role model for his students, exemplifies a good attitude, good language, and good appearance so that children will reflect and imitate what we do. The paradigm in the world of education, the teacher's personality includes (1) the ability to develop personality, (2) the ability to interact and communicate wisely, and (3) the ability to provide guidance and advice. ([Ratnawati, 2018](#)). Teacher personality competence is closely related to personal appearance, which must be owned by a person who is disciplined, attractive, responsible, committed, and exemplary. The thing that needs to be considered before we develop a character for early childhood is that we must create a sense of comfort and safety in every lesson so that children are able to apply what we teach according to their wishes. The technique of imitating and doing it in every activity at Shafa Marwah Kindergarten is carried out with students so that students see the teacher's figure, make good habits, and, as a student, imitate what the teacher is doing. Psychologists assume that children are good imitators. This imitation is a positive method in religious education ([Ramayulis, 2002](#)) or character education in early childhood.

The teacher's role is not only as a model for students but also has a role or position as a learning resource, facilitator, manager, demonstrator, mentor, motivator, and evaluator (Wina Sanjaya, 2006) (Wina Sanjaya, 2006) needs attention. Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten teachers position themselves as motivators for their students to develop early childhood character. This is documented from the results of observations made by researchers; the motivation given includes 1) the teacher explains or provides direction and guidance about the purpose of each activity carried out, for example, apologizing if you make a mistake so that children have good character; 2) Arousing student interest will be motivated to learn and do good habits; 3) using various learning models and strategies, for example, murojaah techniques with songs and repeating them; 4) creating a pleasant atmosphere; 5) giving awards or praise to students after doing something commendable, such as giving a high five or a star sticker on a shirt or class bulletin.

Yunita Rahmi, S.Pd. as the teacher and deputy head of student affairs at Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten, said the impact if the teacher does not play an active role in developing early childhood character, namely: the child will have a will that must be fulfilled as a result of excessive egocentric attitude, lack of empathy for others, lack of interaction making it difficult to explore the outside world, and others.

B. Discussion

Based on the results described above, early childhood is a child aged from birth to 6 years. In implementing teaching and learning at the Shafa Marwah Karawang institution, it is grouped according to age groups. Starting from the playgroup (KB) for children aged 3-4 years, Kindergarten A children aged 4-5 years, and Kindergarten B children aged 5-6 years. This is following the regulation of the minister of education and culture regarding the formation of early childhood education units, articles 1 number 4, and 6, where paragraph 4 reads Kindergarten, from now on abbreviated as TK, is a form of PAUD unit on a formal educational pathway that organizes educational programs for children aged 4 (four) years to 6 (six) years with a priority of ages 5 (five) and 6 (six) years.

Character education, based on Agus Wibowo in his book taken directly from T. Ramli (2003), that character education has the same basis and meaning as moral education and moral education, which aims to foster a positive personality and when in everyday life become citizens. In addition, character education is education that, in its application, fosters noble character in students, then becomes a young generation who has noble character and applies it in everyday life. Character comes from the Greek word *Charassein*, which means acquiring the proper and unforgettable level. Based on the opinion of the father of national education, Ki Hajar Dewantara, he stated that character is part of psychology. The basic character exists and is closely related to the lifeline of every human being, which is influenced by heredity. According to him, the good or bad of a person's behavior depends on the quality of his spiritual status. So it can be concluded that character is embedded in the human soul through habituation to the level of behavior that is carried out so that it becomes a character inherent in the human soul.

The character has several elements, namely: attitude (a person's behavior that is carried out in every activity, good or bad), emotion (something that humans can feel, which is based on awareness, behavior, and physiological processes), belief (thinking that this is right or wrong based on evidence and experience), habit (human behavior that lasts a long time without planning) or will (related to one's actions so that a feeling of willingness to do something arises), and self-concept (how to build a good and positive self). The character of early childhood built-in Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten through habituation, imitation, and practice includes having a religious character that contains religious teachings, prioritizing living in harmony, being tolerant, honest, respectful, disciplined, caring for the environment, and independent. Early childhood has several characteristics, namely: egocentric, unique, expresses a definite and reflexive attitude, active and enthusiastic, have a strong curiosity and passionate about many things, have an explorative and wandering spirit, is rich in imagination, has relatively high imagination power (Tatminingsih, 2016).

According to Megawangi, an effort to form the next generation of the nation is something that every individual must do. In its implementation, there needs to be support and encouragement to raise awareness that character education needs to be implemented early. If you look at the current apprehensive conditions, humans are not easy to build character naturally. According to Aristotle, this results from human effort throughout his life (Suarmini, 2014). In building a child's character, of course, it can be done throughout life. Children grow and develop into human beings with character when they grow and develop in areas with character; that is where a child's nature develops optimally. Thus, three important roles are in developing children's character: parents, schools or educators, and the community (Khaironi, 2017).

According to Wiyani (Israwati, 2017), character education needs to be implemented early; this proves that early childhood can develop its potential to the fullest. Character education must be implemented early because it is tested early so children can fully develop their abilities (Ratih, 2019). The learning method is an overall planning design following the steps of this learning activity considered as a process that has been prepared in a planned manner (La Hadisi, 2015). The habituation, imitating, and acting activities carried out in Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten are arranged in a planned manner in the syllabus, process, and weekly and daily lesson plans as the implementation of teacher pedagogic competence.

Then the position of the teacher in developing early childhood character education at Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten through habituation techniques, imitating, and doing includes a) the teacher as a role model, the teacher as a role model who is always used as a good role model for students, the teacher as a model enters into individual abilities. This individual ability is an important competency that must exist at the level of early childhood education. Sometimes it's hard to realize that in early childhood is very easy to imitate what we do and what they see; b) The teacher as a guide, the teacher acts as a guide to help, direct and guide children in carrying out the teaching and learning process through the habits that are carried out. Early childhood certainly needs to be

guided because, from a physical point of view, they are still very small, and from a psychological point of view, they do not yet feel and do not understand the meaning of life. Early childhood is in the process of scaffolding, namely the condition of children who still need adult guidance in their life activities. c) The teacher is a motivator in the learning process or the teaching and learning process; early childhood experiences certainly feel tired of learning, bored, or all the complaints they complain about learning. In this case, the teacher must be at the forefront to provide encouragement or motivation to rebuild children's enthusiasm for learning, especially in carrying out various positive activities. d) The teacher as a trainer in early childhood needs the implementation of exercises, repetition, and improvement of various kinds of learning or stimulation that has been learned. e) The teacher, as an assessor, in the process of child development, requires an assessment or evaluation related to the stimulation that has been carried out, which functions to determine the level of achievement of children through programs carried out in education units.

CONCLUSION

The position of the teacher has been explained in Law Number 14 of 2005 Chapter II Article 2 as a professional educator. Teacher positions in Shafa Marwah Kindergarten include Teacher as a model, Teacher as a guide, Teacher as a motivator, Teacher as a trainer, and Teacher as an assessor. The position of the teacher in efforts to develop character education in Shafa Marwah Kindergarten uses three techniques: habituation, imitation, and doing. At the same time, the habits taught in Shafa Marwah Kindergarten include dhuha prayer, muroja'ah short letters, getting used to smiling to greet elders and friends, putting things in their place or returning them, apologizing and thanking according to the context, praying before and after doing something, as well as more habits. The teacher's position in developing early childhood character education at Shafa Marwah Karawang Kindergarten is not only as a learning resource, facilitator, manager, demonstrator, mentor, and evaluator but also a position as a motivator, including a teacher. They are clarifying or providing direction and guidance about the purpose of each activity carried out, arousing students' interest will be encouraged to learn and get used to it well, using various learning models and strategies, creating a pleasant atmosphere, giving awards or praise to students after doing something commendable.

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