



The Method of Holistic Education and Development of Early Childhood Potential in SPS Mekar

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to: 1) review the implementation of SPS Mekar Bantul, Yogyakarta, 2) Examine the process of inculcating character values of SPS Mekar Bantul, Yogyakarta. This study employed descriptive qualitative approach. The results of the study showed that: 1) Child Mentoring Program of SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul using Holistic Integralistic Approach which develop all child's potencies either physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual, 2) the implementation of character values was integrated in every mentoring activity by using habituation, exemplary, reward and punishment, and civilizing *Senyum, Sapa, Salam dan Terimakasih* (3S-T). The main character values that embedded upon SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul foster children were religious, honest, disciplined, independent, tolerant, hard working, caring, and respectful of others. 3) inhibiting factors that emerged according to this study were foster children's characters that have been formed before, time constraints, the attitude of foster children such as lazy, lack of fighting spirit, and inconsistencies, as well as mentor changes. Meanwhile, the support of foster children's parents, the commitment of the volunteers, and the spirit of mentoring children to be better were supporting factors in inculcation of the character values in foster children.

Keywords: Education, Holistic, Potency, Early Childhood

1. INTRODUCTION

The future of a nation lies on the shoulders of its younger generation. They are the ones who will later become leaders and play roles as agents of development. Instilling values of character from an early age through education is a necessity that cannot be ignored [1]. This is done to shape the younger generation into individuals with resilient personalities, noble character, and the ability to face any changes that occur in society [2]. Meanwhile, education, as we know, has two main goals: to educate people intellectually and to teach them to have good morals [3].

Various social problems related to moral deviations, ethics, and behavior often occur in daily life [4]. This raises the question, what is happening in our society and how has the education system functioned so far? Among these social problems, many involve the younger generation, both as perpetrators and victims. Several cases, such as student brawls, drug abuse, violence in schools (bullying), pornography, free sex, abortion, abuse, and even murder, are committed by teenagers who are still students. Data released by the National Commission for Child Protection on October 24, 2016,

shows an increase in the involvement of children in various deviations, such as children being users and dealers of drugs, children committing physical and psychological violence, brawls, and other cases [5]. These facts also show that our education system has not been able to perform its function well in achieving the full objectives of education. As stated in Article 3 of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, the function of education is "to develop the ability and shape the character as well as the civilization of a nation with dignity in order to educate the nation's life."

One way to shape character and personality is through character education. Agung (2017: 392) defines character as the way a person thinks and behaves to live and cooperate in the family, society, nation, and state [6]. Character is related to values that are manifested in daily actions that distinguish one person from another. Character education is intended to instill good habits so that a person understands, feels, and is willing to do what is good [7]. Character education becomes important because through it, individuals will be shaped to know what is good, want to do what is good, and actually do what is good [8].

The instillation of character values in a holistic manner from an early age as one approach to character education can be achieved through various educational pathways, including education within the family, school, and community. In Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 on Strengthening Character Education, Article 4a mentions that character education providers include formal, nonformal, and informal educational pathways. Parents bear full responsibility for shaping their children's character and behavior. Children will learn about what is good and bad, right and wrong, what can and cannot be done from the examples and habitual practices set by their parents. However, it cannot be denied that along with the times, there are many parents who neglect their primary responsibility to instill character values in their children [9].

The socio-economic condition of parents sometimes becomes a reason for them to neglect their primary responsibility. Parental work commitments, disharmony in the relationship between the father and mother, and divorce also serve as examples of why families fail to function as the first and foremost institution for shaping a child's personality and character. Many parents entrust their children's education to schools. Meanwhile, schools, as formal education institutions, have yet to optimally implement character education [10].

The inadequate function of education within families and schools has raised concerns in some segments of society. These concerns have been manifested in providing educational services to children who are less attended to. The emergence of community-based institutions that offer more attention to children, especially regarding their rights to education and welfare, is a testament to society's concern for the nation's younger generation [11].

One such institution providing educational services to children is SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul. This institution is a child development center located in the Kasihan region, Bantul. SPS Mekar Kasihan offers educational services for children aged 3-6 years so that they can grow and develop in their social environment according to their individual potential, interests, and talents. Some facts about the condition of children in the Kasihan, Bantul area show that there are still many children whose education has not been properly addressed, even though early childhood education is crucial for their future education and development [12].

With its vision, mission, and goals, SPS Mekar Kasihan Bantul offers a solution for the formation of children's character. This Child Development Center provides a program to accompany children in the area to develop their full potential, including through character education [13].

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The data in this study includes both primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through interviews and observations, while secondary data is collected through documentation and document studies. Secondary data is used to support the primary data [14]. Interviews are conducted with coordinators, mentors, tutors, and the children under care to thoroughly examine the implementation of the mentoring program and activities aimed at instilling character values. Observations are made through direct observation of the activities carried out in the field.

Data analysis in this study uses the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2019: 33), which consists of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The validity of the data is checked through source triangulation, which involves comparing various data sources used in the research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul is one of the child development centers located in the Kasihan district of Bantul, Yogyakarta. This institution is situated in the midst of the Jomegatan village, Rt.03 Dk VII Ngetiharjo, Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta. Established in 2015, it is led by the school principal, Mrs. Sri Wardiani, SH, with the assistance of three teachers: 1) Pety Nurhayati, 2) Indah Suryani, S.Pd, and 3) Winarsih. The center uses the 2013 curriculum, and its educational model is centered on saving early childhood education as a foundation for future learning. The mission of the center is to develop children's growth and development through holistic services.

The main goal of SPS Mekar Kasihan is to support early childhood development so that children grow well and are prepared to continue their education in kindergarten. It also aims to help children discover their potential and develop good character. To realize its vision and mission, SPS Mekar Kasihan provides mentoring programs for early childhood, especially for children who are less attended to, with an integrated holistic education concept. This educational model is designed to develop all of the children's potential in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The programs and services provided include physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual potential development.

To support the physical potential of children, the center offers nutritious meals, health checks, and guidance on healthy living. Cognitive development is supported through mentoring and learning assistance.

Socio-emotional potential is developed through activities such as art tutorials, sports, and cooking skills. For spiritual development, services include character education, outbound activities, youth empowerment, and child protection training.

The mentoring program for early childhood is carried out using a mentoring method, with volunteers from the village actively participating in the local PKK (Family Welfare Movement). Each teacher or mentor is responsible for five children, monitoring their learning activities from Monday to Thursday, four days a week. The role of the teacher is to be a facilitator, parent, and friend, guiding and nurturing children to become better individuals.

The mentoring and learning process is grouped by age, with children aged 3-4 years and 5-6 years receiving group activities focused on cognitive and psychomotor development. Holistic character education is an essential part of the activities at SPS Mekar Kasihan. Character education is integrated into every program and activity to develop the spiritual potential of children.

The instillation of character values is approached through various methods such as habituation, role modeling, rewards, and punishments, as well as fostering a culture of smiles, greetings, and saying thank you (3S-T). Habituation involves teaching children to pray before and after activities, pray before and after meals, apologize when they make mistakes, tidy up their belongings, clean the activity spaces, wash used equipment, say thank you, and arrive on time for activities. Role modeling by the teachers includes leading prayers, arriving on time, greeting children before and after activities, and inquiring about the children's well-being and their activities. Children who consistently perform these tasks are rewarded with "star points," which are stamped on their hands. Meanwhile, gentle reprimands are given to children who violate the rules.

The character values developed and instilled in the children include religiosity, honesty, discipline, independence, tolerance, hard work, care, and respect for others.

The implementation of character education for early childhood is not an easy task, as it involves managing the behavior of young children. Several challenges arise, both from external factors and the children's own behavior. A significant barrier is the children's character formation from home, where they may be overly pampered by their parents and family members, making it difficult to instill character values holistically. Issues such as children not wanting to come, quitting halfway, or displaying fussy behavior are common. However, factors that support the successful implementation of character education include the commitment of

volunteers/teachers/mentors, the enthusiasm and motivation of the children, and support from parents.

3.2 Discussion

Education is one of the fundamental assets that an individual must possess in order to compete and survive in a society that is constantly changing. Education should fundamentally aim to develop the personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities of children so that they can reach their full potential. When a child is given the opportunity to develop all their potentials—whether physical, intellectual, or emotional—they will become a higher-quality human being. This is the goal that SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul strives for.

The early childhood education mentoring program implemented at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul is a form of educational service for children aged 3 to 6 years old, ensuring that their physical, psychological, and spiritual needs are met. This approach is meant to guarantee that children receive their rights as early childhood learners. One of the rights of children, as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28), is the right to education from early childhood to adulthood. Therefore, every child, regardless of their circumstances, is entitled to receive an appropriate education.

Education serves as a means to achieve happiness and well-being, from early childhood through adulthood. Early childhood is often referred to as the "golden age" for providing meaningful education that shapes a child's future life. The implementation of early childhood education at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul is a tangible example of the "Education for All" concept, which asserts that education is a right for every citizen, regardless of their age. However, some parents are unable to fully facilitate their children's development due to their own busy schedules.

The holistic-integrative education concept applied at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul has addressed and developed various potentials of children. Education's function is to develop abilities, shape character, and cultivate the nation's dignity in the context of advancing the nation's intellectual life. SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul has implemented this holistic educational approach to nurture children's potential through various programs, encompassing physical, intellectual, socio-emotional, and spiritual development.

One prominent program is the provision of nutritious food at the end of each month. Ensuring the fulfillment of physical needs is essential for human beings to develop their abilities and potentials. According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (2020), a person can actualize their full potential and become a well-rounded individual only if their basic needs are met. These basic needs, such as food, drink, and health, must

first be addressed, as fulfilling these needs will enable the fulfillment of higher-level needs, which in turn will foster the development of one's potential.

The holistic-integrative mentoring system used at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul is a strength of this educational institution. The mentoring approach to early childhood education is part of a humanistic educational framework, which focuses on humanizing individuals. Aloni (2020) describes humanistic education as one that helps individuals actualize their humanity and achieve their best potential. The primary focus in this system is on the relationships between people, creating emotional and personal bonds between mentors and children, similar to those between parents and their children.

The role of the mentor in the mentoring program is not just to teach, but also to educate, care for, and guide the children to help them grow into well-rounded individuals. Mentors serve as teachers, trainers, caregivers, educators, and facilitators, as demonstrated by the staff at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul in their daily activities.

Age-based grouping in the mentoring process is one way to ensure that the children's potential can develop optimally according to their psychological development stage. Grouping children by age makes it easier for educators to choose appropriate methods, materials, and activities that cater to the children's developmental needs.

Character education is an integral part of the activities at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul. It is a form of value-based education. Zakiyah & Rusdiana (2019) state that value education involves teaching individuals to recognize values of truth, goodness, and beauty through proper value judgment and consistent actions. Gulati and Pant (2020) outline two perspectives of value education: from an individual perspective, its goal is to enable individuals to achieve success in life and work; from a societal perspective, the goal is to prepare young people to contribute to society, the nation, and the world.

At SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul, character education involves methods such as role modeling, habituation, and the use of rewards and punishments (reward and punishment). Based on interviews and observations, it is evident that these methods, along with fostering a culture of respect and care (the "smile, greet, say hello, and thank you" culture or 3S-T), are central to instilling character values.

Among these, role modeling and habituation are the most effective approaches for instilling character values, compared to methods like lectures and advice. Values cannot merely be taught as abstract concepts; they must be demonstrated through actions and behaviors. A value will not take root in an individual if they have never seen it embodied in the actions of others. Thus, role

models—adults who set a good example—play a crucial role in children's education. Children will grow to be good people when they observe positive behaviors.

Similarly, habituation is an effective method. A value will truly be instilled when a person is accustomed to performing it repeatedly. When children repeatedly perform positive behaviors, it becomes ingrained in their daily lives. Through this repetition, children will internalize good habits and feel guilty if they fail to do what they are accustomed to.

In addition to role modeling and habituation, SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul also applies the reward and punishment method. This approach is particularly important for instilling discipline in children, ensuring that they participate in activities and understand that every action has consequences—whether benefits or risks. The use of rewards in this context has a positive impact on the children's development.

Research by Ilviaun Nasivah on Character Education in Families reveals that methods such as habituation, role modeling, and punishment are effective in instilling character values. Similarly, Muflikh Najib's research on the instillation of religious values in character formation highlights methods such as advice, habituation, role modeling, and punishment, which aligns with what the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) advocates.

The development of the 3S-T culture (smile, greet, say hello, and thank you) at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul is a form of strengthening and supporting character value education. The creation of a cultural environment that supports positive values requires the involvement of all parties, ensuring that the values being instilled can successfully take root. This is reflected in the behavior of all stakeholders, including coordinators, mentors, tutors, staff, and the children themselves, who consistently practice and exhibit these values.

The holistic education model developed at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul is in line with the 18 character values outlined by the Ministry of National Education in 2010. Based on the Character Education Strengthening Program of 2017, the character values fostered at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul include religiosity, independence, and mutual cooperation. These values are developed to ensure that children grow into well-rounded individuals capable of competing and surviving in a rapidly evolving world.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of interviews, observations, documentation studies, and records, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. The mentoring program for children is implemented with a holistic-integrative education concept that develops all aspects of the child's potential, including physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual development. The mentoring program is carried out by mentors and tutors who are responsible for the children's development and are involved in nurturing the children's potential according to their talents and interests. In practice, the children are divided into two age groups: children aged 2-3 years and children aged 4-5 years.
2. The integration of holistic education and character values is embedded in all the programs and activities carried out at SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul. Character education is instilled using methods such as habituation, role modeling, rewards and punishments, and the development of a culture of smiling, greeting, saying hello, and thanking others (3S-T). The values that are promoted include religiosity, honesty, discipline, independence, hard work, care, and respect for others.
3. The factors that hinder and support the instillation of character values come both from within the children themselves and from external sources. The main barrier to the instillation of character values is the pre-existing character traits already formed within the children. Meanwhile, the critical supporting factor for instilling character values is the commitment and consistency of the children in striving to be better.

4.2 Suggestion

1. SPS Mekar Kasihan, Bantul should emphasize and clearly define the holistic values to be instilled in the children, so that the children in the mentoring program demonstrate these values and behaviors, distinguishing them from children who are not part of the program.
2. Teachers should be more proactive in guiding and supervising the children, especially during class sessions, to ensure that the children receive optimal support in their educational journey.
3. Children should be encouraged to be more consistent and serious in following the educational program, so that they can fully benefit from the values and skills being nurtured within the program.

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