



## Character-Based Teaching Methods for Early Childhood: An Examination of Ratna Megawangi Thoughts

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**Abstract.** Character-based teaching methods have become the focus of early childhood education, where early childhood is a very vulnerable level of Education and a unique special approach to the learning process. This study aims to describe and analyze Character-Based Teaching Methods for Early Childhood: An Examination of Ratna Megawangi Thoughts. This study used a qualitative approach by conducting a literature review. This approach shapes children's character through direct learning and practical experience. Meanwhile, the application of character-based teaching methods requires teachers who have a deep understanding of character values to be developed skills in integrating character learning into the curriculum and daily activities, on the other hand also involving parents and the child's social environment in the educational process; to create an environment that supports the development of children's character. The results of this study indicate that there are several teaching methods in kindergarten that can be a concern for educators in developing children's character, including reading, writing and arithmetic schemes, linked to giving grades and report cards, criticism and information on learning outcomes that tend to be negative, class quiet and one-way learning process, as well as intense in the classroom without ice-breaking for a long time.

**Keywords:** teaching method, character, early childhood, Ratna Megawangi.

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### Introduction

In the 21st century, there have been many changes that have occurred in aspects of human life. This rapid development and change process will be much faster than the previous century. Then with the environment that is constantly changing in order to be able to adapt, there is something new and quickly creative in finding solutions to problems that require humans who can learn these things and always have a strong desire and motivation to continue to enrich knowledge and receive education morals accompanied by character education. Therefore, schools must immediately prepare the output of students who are capable and have the potential to become generations who have skills in life (Megawangi & Latifah, 2008) a more secular nation in understanding changes from various sides of life.

In the general public, discussion of adult human character is a human being who is considered to have an independent personality, has a sense of responsibility, and is able to

live life understanding applicable norms and morals, as well as being able to obey and implement these norms and morals (Teguh, 2011) so Education in Indonesia is projected on the Pancasila ideology and the 1945 Constitution as its philosophy. Therefore, Education aims to produce whole human beings, namely humans, and their behavioural attitudes always influence patterns of thinking and actions by Pancasila values that can be applied in their lives.

Relevant observations on the content and subject matter of Pancasila and Religion morals in schools are apparent and have good indicators. However, the approach relies only on children's cognitive abilities (memorizing chapters, verses and content). In this view, all children only know what is good and bad at the cognitive level. If we agree on this matter, the generation of educators for the nation's children must play a more active role in improving teaching patterns that are more appropriate in delivery. However, it is challenging if we observe how this knowledge can get to behaviour again. Many people know their bad behaviour but are unable to change it. Therefore, in the world of Education, explicit character education is needed, which fulfils all needs, awareness or knowledge about not only good and bad but also comprehensively how to foster a sense of love for virtue and train and continuously apply good deeds in actions that are good. Real, so that good qualities become human characteristics (Megawangi, 2009)

Humans have become trials in Education by being able to develop good behaviour from the knowledge they have obtained. So the current developments in the education system in Indonesia prepare all students to become scientists and thinkers (philosophers) so that all subjects are designed in such a way that it is difficult so that only 10 to 15 per cent of the most brilliant students or those who have an IQ above 115. To Create Indonesian people who master science and technology with all the weighty curriculum loads has wasted tens of years of our nation's energy. If students' potential (IQ) is less than 90 or 100, given any additional lessons, they cannot increase up to 120. If Indonesia had a discourse that led to our energy being more focused on skills to prepare 85 per cent of the population so they are ready and skilled to work professionally, love their job and are committed to high production quality, maybe Indonesia's condition would not be as bad as it is now (Megawangi, 2009)

The education system in Indonesia that has been running where education system in Indonesia prioritizes the potential for cognitive abilities that are not based on or balanced with skills that can foster self-confidence and other characteristics that can develop and advance the nation's children. For this reason, Ratna Megawangi thoughts on character-based teaching methods for early childhood are interesting to study in more depth because several methods lead to teaching in Kindergartens, which are indicated to harm the development of children's character.

## Method

This research is Library Research which is a series of activities related to library data collection methods, reading and recording and processing research materials. Library research is a type of research conducted by reading books or magazines and other data sources to collect data from various literature, both libraries and other places. In this study, the authors apply library research because at least there are several underlying reasons. First, data sources can only be obtained from libraries or other documents in written form, whether journals, books or other literature. Second, a literature study is needed to understand new phenomena that cannot be understood; then, with this literature study, these symptoms can be understood. So that in overcoming a symptom that occurs, the author can formulate a concept to solve a problem that arises. Meanwhile, the third reason is that library data

remains reliable in answering research questions. However, information or empirical data that has been collected by other people, either in the form of books, scientific reports or research reports, can still be used by library researchers. Even in some instances, the field data still needs to be significant enough to answer the research questions to be carried out.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **The Essence of Teaching Methods**

In the world of Education, stated from the results of the discussion about the meaning of strategy is a plan, method, or series of activities aimed at achieving specific educational goals (David, 1976). So Education is a fundamental tool of knowledge that must be obtained for each individual. Therefore, a learning strategy is needed to process a teaching and learning activity. The meaning of a learning strategy can be interpreted as a plan that contains sequential activities aimed at achieving specific educational goals (Pristiwanti et al., 2022).

It should be noted that there are two things from the understanding above. These two things are. First, the learning strategy is a plan of action (a series of activities) that includes a methodology for learning and the use of various resources/strengths. Then the learning strategy can help the learning activities to be carried out smoothly. Second, a strategy is designed to achieve certain goals. That is, the direction of all strategic planning decisions is the achievement of the results of the objectives. So the importance of learning strategies is made as much as possible to avoid any obstacles that make the learning process not optimal. The process of learning must be considered besides strategy; there are also learning methods and approaches; there are also several other terms that are difficult to distinguish, namely teaching techniques and tactics. Then teaching techniques and tactics are the elaboration of learning methods.

A technique is a way that someone does in order to implement a method. For example, in order for the lecture method to be carried out to work effectively and efficiently, how should it be done? Thus, it is better to pay attention to the conditions and situation before someone carries out the lecture process. For example, if the lecture is held in the morning with a limited number of students, then the lecture in the afternoon with a large number of students will, of course, be different. So the technique must be mastered in advance by the executor of the activity. Tactics are a person's style of carrying out a particular technique or method. Thus, tactics are more individual. For example, in using language style so that the material presented is easy to understand, for example, even if two people use the lecture method in the same situations and conditions, they will do it differently. Carried out in a planned manner from the beginning of the activity will make the situation and conditions more conducive.

The path of Education can be carried out by teaching or transforming knowledge and knowledge. So therefore, the process of transforming knowledge and knowledge that is carried out will always be found in Education. In essence, Education includes educating, teaching, guiding and training. These educational activities are always carried out as a conscious effort to transform all values. The values in question include religious values, culture, science and technology, art, and skills. The purpose of transforming the value is intended to maintain and develop. In fact, if necessary, change the culture that belongs to the community (Teguh, 2011).

Then certain conditions are needed to achieve an effective transformation process; the conditions referred to include, *First*, that there must be a good educational relationship between educators and the educated. The relationship in question is loving between students

and teachers based on authority. *Second*, there must be an appropriate educational method. The point is that the ability of educators is found in the suitability of methods, materials, conditions of students, goals to be achieved, and environmental conditions where Education takes place. *Third*, there must be educational infrastructure that meets the needs. That is, there is compatibility between the values to be transformed and the required infrastructure, and these facilities must be based on student dedication. *Fourth*, there must be an adequate atmosphere. A pleasant and adequate atmosphere supports the value transformation process so that it runs well.

In learning theory, Reigeluth (Sriuliati, 2019) explains that there are three variables: condition variables, method variables, and learning outcome variables. Then according to Yamin & Sabri (2010), all these learning components interact in a unified whole, forming a learning process. Thus, learning is a process of building learning situations and conditions through structuring the implementation of components of learning objectives, materials, methods, conditions, media, time and evaluation, whose goal is to achieve children's learning outcomes. There is little similarity in the opinion of Reigeluth, Cruickshank, Jenkins, and Metcalf, suggesting that three significant factors influence learning, namely personal characteristics, experience and readiness in education and learning context (Cruickshank, 2006).

The difference between the two lies in Reigeluth's opinion, which does not include the teacher's characteristics in explaining learning. Thus it is clear that learning theory has three variables: learning conditions, methods and learning outcome variables. So from these three variables, educators must master them. Reigeluth suggests that there are three important things in a learning process, namely *first* learning conditions, *second* learning methods and *third* learning outcomes, where aspects of learning conditions rank first and as a determinant in designing learning strategies in achieving learning outcomes (Yamin & Sabri, 2010). Emphasizes components that are concerned with the characteristics of the material (themes), children, goals and obstacles, aspects of learning methods emphasizing components that emphasize strategy and aspects of results that are more seen from the components of effectiveness, efficiency, and attractiveness of learning will run smoothly and achieve the results that have been formulated in the learning objectives.

In terms of the method, namely the way that can be used to implement the strategy. How to implement the plans that have been prepared in actual activities so that the goals that have been prepared are achieved optimally; this is called the method (Chamalah et al., 2013); this means that the method can be used to realize the strategy that has been set. Thus, one learning strategy is used by several methods. For example, to carry out an expository strategy (direct learning strategy "Roy Killen" 1998), and can use several different methods such as the lecture method as well as the question and answer method or even discussion by utilizing available resources, including using learning media.

In brief observations, Regrant and Bredekamp concluded in teaching strategies that children will learn well and meaningfully if children feel comfortable psychologically and have their physical needs met; children construct their knowledge, children learn through social interaction with adults and other children, exploration, use, search, learning through play, as well as elements of child differences are considered (Bredekamp, 1997; Yamin & Sabri, 2010). After putting forward several definitions of teaching and teaching methods above, the author would like to remind the focus of the purpose of this discussion, namely the meaning of the method. Optimally arranged. It can be understood that the method can be used to realize the strategy set (Sumantri, 2015). Thus, the method in a series of learning systems plays a critical role. The success of implementing a learning strategy is highly

dependent on the order in which the teacher uses learning methods because a learning strategy may only work by implementing it through the use of learning methods.

Learning is a process of adding new information and abilities (Sarumaha et al., 2022). When we think and know what information and abilities students must have, then at that moment, we should think about what strategies must be done so that all it can be achieved effectively and efficiently (Siagian & Cahyono, 2021); this is very important to understand because what must be achieved will determine how to achieve it. The learning method is a way of doing or presenting (Warabumi, 2020), describing, giving examples, and achieving specific goals by training students on lesson content. The learning method is part of the instructional strategy. However, not all learning methods can achieve specific learning objectives. Also disclosed when the method can be implemented, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the method.

Each method has advantages and disadvantages. Some methods are appropriate for use with a small number of students, and some are appropriate for use with large numbers of students. Some are appropriate for use outside the classroom, and some are appropriate for use in the classroom. Sometimes teachers teach more using the lecture method than giving freedom to students. There is also teaching material that is better delivered in combination and variety with the use of several methods rather than just one method. (Syukur, 2016) Therefore, before stepping in to determine learning strategies and methods that can be used in the process of teaching and learning activities, a teacher needs to pay attention to several considerations as a basis for pre-teaching and learning activities; there are several steps as follows:

- a) There are considerations related to the learning objectives to be achieved.
- b) There are considerations related to materials or learning materials (students' initial knowledge). If students do not have principles, concepts, and facts or have experience, then it is very likely that they cannot use independent learning methods. Fields of study/subject matter/aspects in junior and senior high schools and study programs are organized into three groups. (1) General Education Program, (2) Academic Education Program, and (3) Skills Education (Psychomotor). So the method we will use is more oriented towards each of the above domains in the subject matter/aspect.
- c) Refers to the allocation of time and supporting facilities. In one hour lesson, we need to divide the time that will be used by each method.
- d) View the number of students. Ideally, the method is applied through consideration of the ratio of teachers and students so that the teaching and learning process is effective.
- e) Conditions learning situation. The understanding of teaching and learning situations includes the atmosphere and conditions of adjacent classes, students' conditions such as enthusiasm or tiredness in learning, weather conditions, and teacher conditions such as fatigue or facing problems. All of that can interfere with the teaching and learning process (Syukur, 2016.)
- f) Teacher experience and authority. Experience will make a teacher able to determine exactly which method to use. Authority is an absolute completeness that is abstract in nature because teachers will deal with and manage students with different backgrounds.



## Early Childhood Character

Before examining this issue further, it is necessary to understand the term "**character**". According to *the Big Indonesian Dictionary*, the character is the psychological traits, morals, or manners that distinguish one person from another. However, the character can also be understood as a character or character. (Mustoip, 2018) Thus, people with character are people who have character, personality, or character. Agreeing with the definition of the dictionary above, Suyanto, in *waskitamandiribk.wordpress.com*, wrote that character is a way of thinking and behaving that is characteristic of each individual to live and work together, both within the family, community, nation and state. Individuals with good character are individuals who can and can make decisions and take responsibility for any consequences of the decisions they make. (Zaman, 2019)

Definition of Teaching "Character" According to Experts. Thomas Lickona (Citra, 2012) In simple terms, in his observations, character education can be defined as any effort that can be made to influence student character. But to find out the exact meaning, it can be put forward here the definition of character education according to Thomas Lickona that the notion of character education is a conscious, deliberate effort to activate a child's existing sense of empathy, which is part of his nature, to help and direct someone so that he can understand, pay attention to, and carry out core ethical values. Then Suyanto (Siska et al., 2021), defines character teaching as teaching ways of thinking and behaving that are characteristic of each individual to live and work together within the family, community, nation and state. So on in Psychology (Ahmadi, 2009), character is personality or character because the character can be changed in terms of ethical or moral standards, such as honesty, and is usually related to relatively fixed traits. Because of that, there is character education.

In order to get to know someone, we need to know their character types so that in that way, we can adjust everything to each other's character and avoid misunderstandings and prejudices that continue. Therefore, the science of "character" needs to be known by the head of the family, people in his work, groups of people in many classes, and especially educators. Because it is educators who must educate character. In educating this character, educators must first know the character that already exists in the children so that it will be easier later to solve it if unexpected things happen. We develop the good aspects as perfectly as possible while we turn the bad ones into a good direction, or we take care not to develop them but suppress them.

According to existing traditional beliefs, some humans are born with social traits, and some are not. People who reflect more on themselves and prefer to be alone than with other people, also called introverts, *naturally* have this character. Those who are social and whose minds are more focused on things outside themselves, also called extroverts, are like that because of heredity. So there are people who oppose society, namely people who are anti-social, and people who usually become criminals, according to traditional opinion, inherit "bad blood" from one or both parents (Novitasari, 2018).

But the nature of early childhood can be observed naturally, judging from the different development of children, both from intelligence, talent, interests, creativity, emotional maturity, personality, and independence, as well as from physical and social. But research on the brain shows that if children are stimulated from an early age, superior potential will be found in them. Every child is unique, so there are differences, and they have an unlimited capacity to learn *that* already exists within them to be able to think creatively and productively, independently. Because of that, children need educational programs that can unlock these hidden capacities through meaningful learning as early as possible. If a child's potential has

lost significant opportunities and momentum in his life, then the child's development is far behind at age.

Abraham Maslow has explained the meaning of hierarchy and basic human needs because each individual is different in terms of gender, temperament, interests, learning styles, life experiences, culture, and needs. So each individual is also different in developing independence, self-concept, and ability level. In this method, it can be determined that early childhood is a decisive period for children's development and further growth because it is a sensitive period and a golden period in a child's life; This can imply that all parties need to understand the importance of early childhood for optimizing growth and development.

The age of 4-6 years is a sensitive period for children, where children begin to be sensitive to accept various efforts to develop the child's full potential. This sensitive period is when the physical and psychological functions are ripening that are ready to respond to the stimulation provided by the environment; This is the time to lay the first foundation for developing physical abilities, cognitive, language, social-emotional, self-concept, discipline, independence, art, morals, and religious values (Depdiknas, 2004). Therefore, at this early age, a learning environment, strategies and stimuli are needed that are suitable for children's needs so that children's growth and development are achieved optimally. With a learning style that is more relaxed and familiar to young children, it is easier to master and relevant to them.

In essence, humans are creatures that grow and develop gradually. Therefore, growing and developing, humans are always dynamic and never stagnant in their lives. To achieve a better life, humans always intend to explore nature and each other and strive to achieve the best in life. To be able to achieve the best, then humans continue to learn. As long as humans grow and live, Education will continue (Teguh, 2011). By treating it like a small tree that has the potential to become a big tree, caring for it with love is very necessary. When a tree grows, weeds will grow around it, preventing it from becoming sturdy. Even weeds will be faster and easier to grow more significantly than trees. Therefore, as gardeners who take care of it, we must continue to clean the weeds and pull them out when they are still small. If it is not always cared for and does not pay attention, then the tree we are caring for will grow stunted and cannot become the sturdy tree we want (Megawangi, 2007).

Likewise, in humans, children with a pure nature are born with a pure nature, but in the process of growth and development, they will indeed be surrounded by weeds (bad traits) that try to grow to compete with the growth of this nature. As "gardeners", of course, we have to be aware of this. So from an early age, children must be cared for and educated with values that will nourish nature (human sanctity) so that children can grow strong.

According to Ibnu Jazzar Al-Qairawani: "Actually, the bad qualities that arise from children are not born from their nature. These traits mainly arise due to a lack of early warning from parents and educators. The more mature the child is, the more difficult it will be for him to leave his bad traits, but unable to change them. Because these bad traits are deeply rooted in him, and become his habits that are difficult to leave. So happy are the parents who always warn and prevent their children from bad traits from an early age, because by doing so, they have prepared a strong foundation for their children's lives in the future." (Setiawan, 2017)

There is little evidence to suggest that people are born *social*, *unsocial*, or *anti-social*, and much evidence to the contrary suggests that they are so by learning. However, learning to be a social person can only be achieved slowly. Children learn in cycles, with periods of rapid progress followed by plateaus. On this horizontal line, only a little rapid progress is sometimes followed by a decline stage to a lower level of social behaviour. Observing how

quickly children can improve again from the horizontal line largely depends on the strength and weaknesses of their motivation to socialize.

Childhood ends, and most children are still very dissatisfied with their progress in social development; this is true even if their development is normal. Several studies on the sources of unhappiness reported by young men and women have paid much attention to social problems. For example, teenagers think they still have not mastered the ability to socialize, treat friends to avoid quarrels and the loss of friendships, be flexible in social situations, and develop leadership skills. (Teguh, 2011). Nowadays, many people think that Education is not only done in school but can be done anywhere, at school, outside of school (at home, in the community), and so on. In addition, learning activities also do not only take place during childhood but are continuous activities until they die. Such Education is called lifelong Education. So, lifelong Education lasts from birth until he dies (Natawidjaya, 1979).

Education also does not only educate students to become intelligent human beings; in this case, it is also determined that Education builds their personality so that they have noble character. At present, Education in Indonesia is considered by many as having no problem with the role of Education in educating its students. However, it is considered less successful in building the personality of its students so that they have noble character. Therefore, character education is seen as an urgent need in the long term of Education.

Character education is critical for all levels of Education, namely from Elementary School to Higher Education. In general, character education is needed from an early age. If a person's character has been formed from an early age, as an adult, he will not change easily even though temptation or seduction comes so tempting. With character education from an early age, fundamental problems in Education, which have recently become a common concern, can be overcome. Indeed, Education in Indonesia is expected to produce a generation of superior educational alumni, namely faithful children of the nation, *pious, noble character, expertise in their fields, and character* (Azzet, 2011).

In connection with this character education, there are also those who argue that character education aims to shape each individual into a human being who has these main values, especially judging from his behaviour in everyday life, not on his understanding. Thus, the important thing in character education is emphasizing that students have good character and manifest it in everyday behaviour (Azzet, 2011). Since the time of Comenius until now the importance of talking about early childhood has become the subject of discussion. The age of birth to eight years is a very important period for an individual to live further. Where in this case, the Indonesian government has realized the importance of early childhood with the birth of government policies regarding RI Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning child protection and Article 28 concerning the National Education System and the formation of the Directorate of Early Childhood Education.

The impact of the importance of early childhood education can be seen in the government's seriousness towards the high awareness and participation and community needs for the importance of early childhood education in producing quality human resources as set forth in Article 1 paragraph (1) of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning National Education System. (Indonesia, 2003) Some of these foundations are:

- a) RI Law, Number: 20 of 2003, concerning the National Education System:
  - 1) In Chapter I, Article 1, point (14), establishing early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth up to six years old, which is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to enter further Education.



- 2) In Chapter II, article 3, National Education functions to develop capabilities and form dignified national character and civilization in the context of educating the nation's life, aiming at developing the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have a noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become a democratic and responsible citizen.
  - 3) In Chapter III, article 4, point (1), Education is organized in a democratic and fair manner, is non-discriminatory, and upholds human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national pluralism.
  - 4) Article 28 point (2) states that early childhood education can be carried out through formal, non-formal and informal education channels. Article 28 point (3) states that early childhood education in the formal education pathway takes the form of Taman Kanak-Kanak (TK), Raudhatul Athfal (RA), or other equivalent forms.
- b) Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number: 27 of 1990, concerning Preschool Education, Chapter I, Article 1, point (1) Preschool Education is Education to assist the physical and spiritual growth and development of students outside the family environment before entering Education Elementary, which is held in the path of Education outside of school.
  - c) Decree of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 39 of 2008 concerning Student Development, Chapter I, Article 1, point (b) determines the personality of students to realize school resilience as an educational environment so that efforts and negative influences are avoided and contrary to educational goals. Point (d) Preparing students to become a society that has a noble character, is democratic and respects human rights in the framework of creating a civil society.

Early childhood education is based on the *philosophical* values embraced by the environment around the child. In laying the foundations for the growth and development of children, conducive situations and conditions are needed when children provide stimulation and educational efforts that follow the needs of children, which of course, differ from one to another. The basics of social Education laid in educating children are to accustom children to behave following the ethics and order in society. Among them are: *Axiological, Ontological, and Epistemological*.

- a) *Axiological* is where the early childhood education curriculum must be accountable so that all potential children can develop and relate to artistic values, harmony, ethics, aesthetics and values.
- b) *Ontologies* sees children as beings with biological, psychological, sociological, and anthropological dimensions.
- c) *Epistemology* is where early childhood learning should refer to the concept of learning while playing, learning with reality, learning by directly doing

Islamic, the foundation for early childhood education is evident, and many verses in the Qur'an explain and state the importance of Education for children from an early age. Besides the verses of the Qur'an, there are also many Hadiths of the Prophet that explain the importance of educating children from an early age; this can be seen in the following hadith: "*Indeed I (Muhammad) was sent solely to perfect noble morals*" (HR Bukhari Muslim). The sense of another hadith is also narrated: "Verily, every child is born in a state of fitrah; it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian." Allah SWT., Saying in the Qur'an is also found in surah At-Tiin: 3, "*Verily, We have created man in the best form possible.*" (At-Tiin; 3). It is written in the Qur'an that Islam advises its people to have strong offspring, good offspring,

and offspring with solid personalities, and experts in worship, and not to inherit weak offspring.

It is also stated in the Qur'an that the child's position is as a trust entrusted, *good news, jewellery, Allah's power, Allah's warning*, not the property of the parents who are free to be directed wherever the parents wish. A newborn child is likened to white paper (Tabula Rasa); this means that children are influenced by the environment and the Education they receive. Environment: *geographical, historical, sociological, cultural and psychological*. In essence, the creator of the jinn and humans is to be a loyal servant to His creator in the concept of Islamic teachings that Islam emphasizes (QS.51:56). So that the duties and responsibilities can be realized correctly, then God sent His Apostle as a teacher, example, and role model. This apostolic treatise was passed on to the clergy in the next relay. However, the primary responsibility is focused on the parents. The Apostle ordered that babies are born in a state of fitnah, namely the urge to serve His creator; however, whether or not the way and form of service he does depends entirely on each of his parent (Jalaluddin, 2011). This fact shows that humans are spiritual beings. However, this diversity requires guidance in order to grow and develop properly. For this reason, in line with the stages of development that they experience, children need guidance and counselling. The most influential figures in fostering a sense of religion are both parents.

### **Early Childhood Character According to Ratna Megawangi's Thoughts**

In teaching "character" for early childhood, Ratna Megawangi put several methods, such as planting and applying the nine pillars of character, which are done explicitly and systematically, namely by *knowing the good, reasoning the good, feeling the good, and acting the good* by combining the concepts DAP (*Developmentally Appropriate Practice*), in the application of character, has succeeded in building children's character. Children are used to thinking about what is good by knowing the good. *Reasoning the good* also needs to be done so that the child knows why he should do well. For example, why should children be honest, what are the consequences if children are honest, and so on? So children not only memorize goodness but also know the reason.

Moreover, by *feeling good*, we build children's feelings for goodness. Children are expected to love kindness. Then, in *acting good*, the child practices kindness. If children are used to *Knowing, Reasoning, Feeling, and Acting the Good*, their character will form over time. (Megawangi, 2007). Also, according to Ratna Megawangi the DAP concept, this method has been proven to increase children's motivation to increase creativity, exploration, and great curiosity. Children can develop *high levels of caring, empathy, tolerance and cooperation* by including the DAP method in character education (Megawangi & Latifah, 2008). According to Ratna Megawangi, this character learning method builds and makes the environment totally to create conducive environment for the growth of students with character. The curriculum is structured based on the principle of interrelationships between learning materials, not compartmentalized but made classically and can reflect dimensions and skills by displaying interesting and contextual themes. Fields of development in kindergarten and subjects in elementary and junior high schools that are developed in the concept of life skills education related to personal and social Education, thinking/cognitive development, character development and development of motor perception can also be well intertwined if the material teaching is designed through integrated and comprehensive learning (Holistic).

So this learning is called "Character-Based Holistic Education"; the curriculum used is a "Character-based Integrated Curriculum", an integrated curriculum that "touches" all aspects of children's needs and aims to develop all human dimensions. Following the principle of

holistic Education, a human being with character is a human being who develops all of his dimensions as a whole (holistic) so that humans can be called *holy* (holy and wise). The root of the word *holy* is *whole*, so the meaning of *holy man* is a human being who develops as a whole and balances all his dimensions by instilling the nine pillars of character, namely universal noble values (Megawangi & Latifah, 2008). The purpose of learning Character-Based Holistic Education is "Building a holistic/whole person *who* is capable of facing a world that is full of challenges and rapidly changing, and has emotional and spiritual awareness that he is part of the whole (*the person within a whole*)" (Juliani & Widodo, 2019).

This holistic learning can occur if the curriculum can display themes that encourage exploration or events authentically and naturally. With the emergence of themes or natural events, a meaningful learning process will occur, and the designed material will be interrelated with various curriculum development areas. Ratna hopes that in the implementation and implementation of Character-Based Holistic Education with the methods and concepts mentioned above that are applied in Character Kindergarten (Kindergarten) and SBB (Semai Benih Bangsa), nine pillars of character are taught continuously and in an environment conducive so that these character values can grow. These values are what we teach in school so that the child's brain gets used to good things. Thus, dendrites or synapses that come that will grow in the brain will only store good memories. If the child is not taught at home, at least at school, he will get character values so that in the child's brain, there will be a good memory so that later he can do good. If these values are never taught, we cannot expect children to behave according to moral values. So, how to teach kindness, as we have done so far in religious lessons, which is only rote, will not work. Real examples that occur around many people memorize "cleanliness is part of faith". However, we know, we memorize it, but trash is everywhere. We know, but why don't we do it? Because we are wrong in the way we teach these values.

According to Ratna Megawangi, there are several teaching methods applied in Kindergartens that can harm children's character development, including:

a) Orientation (*Read, Write and Count*)

Many Kindergarten and PAUD schools are more concerned with academic abilities (*listing*) than the development of children's emotional and social aspects; this is inseparable from the demands of parents, including elementary schools, which require student acceptance by conducting a *listing ability test*. Ratna said that according to a professor of Education from Tufts University, namely David Elkind, he thought that forcing children under the age of 6 or 7 to learn *calistung* would risk short-term stress and damage the child's mental development in the long term; When we instruct children in academic subjects too early, we miseducate them; we put them at risk for short-term stress and long-term personality damage for no useful purpose. There is no evidence that such early instruction has lasting benefits, and considerable evidence that it can do lasting harm."

Ratna Megawangi also said that according to Elkind, children who are rushed (early) too early would damage their self-confidence, can reduce children's natural enthusiasm for learning, and hinder the development of children's talents, which will have a permanent impact. Passive Learning Process, Not Involving Concrete Experience (Zubaedi, 2013). *Pre-operational Thinking*" stage, namely the ability to think "*concrete, here, and now*". That is, early childhood should not be given material that is abstract or does not involve concrete experiences (Marinda, 2020). For example, teachers often tell children to count numbers to 100 or memorize the alphabet. Alternatively, the child is asked to repeat what the teacher says ("parrot"); this method can make children memorize quickly, but the material they memorize is too abstract, so children do not understand

what they are learning. In addition to the child experiencing it, this method does not involve the "child's thoughts, hands and feelings" simultaneously, so the child learns passively.

Sometimes things happen in the field where the teacher introduces concepts that are not "here and now". After understanding the environment, the concept of "Tropical Forest" was introduced. Unless the school environment is in a tropical forest area. The learning process that gives meaning to children will make children interested and motivated to learn more about the material. So, educators teaching by memorization, abstract material, and filling out worksheets are boring for children; this is dangerous for the development of children's character because children's learning motivation will decrease. As a result, it is difficult for children to become true learners. So these teaching methods also do not involve the active role of children in discussions, so the child's critical and analytical thinking processes are challenging to develop. In addition, there is this passive way of learning, where children are not actively involved physically, verbally, or emotionally, which will hinder children's creativity.

b) Educator Focus on giving grades and reports, as well as criticism and negative communication

Lots of this happens in schools to teachers who still give value to children's work, giving report cards with numeric or letter grades, even rankings. Even though this age is a very important period for the growth of self-confidence, Megawangi said that according to Erik Erikson, between 3.5 years and six years is the age to build an attitude of " *Initiative vs. Guilt*", namely an enthusiastic attitude to take initiative, full of ideas and imagination. At this age, children must be creative, imaginative, experimenting, daring to take risks and be wrong. If you fail to form an attitude of initiative, guilt and fear of taking the initiative, develop because he lost his self-confidence.

But unfortunately, this happens a lot; teachers often criticize or judge the results of children's work, even scolding children when they make mistakes. Even though children get stressed easily when their work is being assessed, let alone being criticized and scolded. The learning process like this will be unpleasant, and the child will feel burdened. Giving marks will also make children afraid to take the initiative to try something for fear of being wrong. Teachers often use harmful words, criticize, say harsh words, and even physically punish children (twisting, being punished in front of the class). Or teachers who like to compare children or label children. Even if the child does something right and well, the teacher rarely gives praise.

Teaching methods like this will have adverse effects. Namely, children will be afraid to take risks, and it is better to be passive than not dare to try because they are afraid of being wrong (guilt), which can eventually undermine children's self-confidence. In addition, because children do not dare to do something new, it is difficult for children's imagination and innovation to develop. So with these various incidents, the teacher's teaching pattern needs to be changed. So this makes children feel they have no ability. This unpleasant learning process will make children feel burdened and always feel compelled to do their work; this can lower motivation and, ultimately, work ethic.

c) Silent Classroom and One-Way Learning Process

Many teachers think a quiet class is a good one; this is not true, especially for kindergarten/PAUD classes. At this age, children need to develop their verbal skills (as a strong foundation for reading and writing skills). In addition, many teachers only act as "heralds" of the curriculum, without children being passive listeners or being told to

imitate what the teacher says. It cannot stimulate the development of reason and higher thought processes.

Rvygotsky's opinion (Megawangi & Latifah, 2008) is that there is a connection between language and thought. By actively speaking (discussion), children will better understand the concept. The more difficult a concept is to learn, the more it requires the child's verbal involvement. Children need verbal interaction (two-way discussion) in the learning process so that the learning atmosphere becomes more lively and fun so that children become excited. The negative consequences of the one-way learning process, not involving children in discussions, are as follows: a) The child's verbal abilities do not develop; the child does not dare to speak in public; b) He is not able to express his thoughts systematically, both verbally and in writing; c) Metacognitive abilities (ability to think independently, think philosophically) do not develop depending on the teacher and require continued support. Not a true learner; d) Deep thinking and easy belief in issues must improve higher thinking processes (logic, analysis, critical).

d) Sitting in Class for a Long Time

Many teachers tell children to sit, listen, and write for long periods in class. In fact, according to natural law, kindergarten and elementary school children will tire more quickly if they sit still than when running, jumping or cycling. Playing is a natural learning method for children, so if a child feels like playing while learning, he will do it without feeling bored and tired. Ratna Megawangi said that according to Katz and Chard, children need physical involvement when learning to prevent them from getting tired and bored. With active learning, their fine motor and gross motor will develop properly. Besides that, by moving, oxygen flow to the brain will increase so the brain can function more optimally. Katz and Chard developed an educational model called *the Project-based Approach*, in which the learning process involves more of all child dimensions (physical, verbal, feeling and reasoning) (Banawi, 2019). For example, inviting students outside the classroom to observe types of trees around the school, having them collect all kinds of leaf shapes and bones, and so on. The negative consequences of the learning process that sits more in the classroom are as follows: a) Because it violates the laws of nature, children are not motivated to learn; there is no motivation/enthusiasm for school, and it is not easy to be a lover of learning; b) Fine and gross motor skills do not develop optimally; c) Hinders academic ability and creativity.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that character-based teaching methods for early childhood. The study of Ratna Megawangi thoughts can be seen in the application of character-based teaching methods requiring teachers who have a deep understanding of character values to be developed skills in integrating character learning into the curriculum and daily activities. On the other hand, it also involves parents and the child's social environment in the educational process to create an environment that supports the development of children's character. According to Ratna Megawangi, several teaching methods in kindergarten can be a concern for educators in developing children's character, including reading, writing and arithmetic schemes, linked to giving grades and report cards, criticism and information on learning outcomes that tend to be negative, class quiet and one-way learning process, as well as intense in the classroom without ice-breaking for a long time. So from the results of this study, an educator must be more thorough and able to understand the conditions of early childhood in the process of appropriate learning activities to get maximum results without



having to use dangerous learning methods or methods that are not appropriate for students at the early childhood level.

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