

CONCEPTION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION EARLY CHILDHOOD (AUD) ACCORDING TO RATNA MEGAWANGI

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Abstract

The moral (character) degradation that has hit Indonesian society in the 21st Century, such as the high number of cases of violent acts committed by children or children as perpetrators, is an indication of failure in education. The aim of the research is to analyze Ratna Megawangi's conception of early childhood character education as the proponent of the program for 2500 seedling schools spread throughout Indonesia in an effort to shape student character through character education in schools. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with technical data collection through observation, interviews and documentation. As a result, character education is instilled from an early age through PAUD program services in the form of routine reflection for 20 minutes in class with the application of 9 pillars of character and involving 4 aspects, namely knowing what is good, feeling what is good, wanting what is good and acting well is a strategy. effective. will form quality students in academics and character.

Keywords: Character Education, Early Childhood, Ratna Megawangi.

مستخلص البحث

إن الانحطاط الأخلاقي (الشخصية) الذي أصاب المجتمع الإندونيسي في القرن الحادي والعشرين، مثل ارتفاع عدد حالات أعمال العنف التي يرتكبها الأطفال أو الأطفال كمرتكبيها، هو مؤشر على الفشل في التعليم. الهدف من البحث هو تحليل مفهوم Ratna Megawangi لتعليم الشخصية في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة باعتبارها مؤيدة لبرنامج ٢٥٠٠ مدرسة شتلة منتشرة في جميع أنحاء إندونيسيا في محاولة لتشكيل شخصية الطالب من خلال تعليم الشخصية في المدارس. أسلوب البحث المستخدم هو الأسلوب الوصفي النوعي مع جمع البيانات الفنية من خلال الملاحظة والمقابلة والتوثيق. ونتيجة لذلك، يتم غرس تربية الشخصية منذ سن مبكرة من خلال خدمات برنامج PAUD في شكل تفكير روتيني لمدة ٢٠ دقيقة في الفصل مع تطبيق ٩ ركائز

للشخصية وتشمل جوانب، وهي معرفة ما هو جيد، والشعور بما هو جيد، والرغبة فيما هو جيد والتصرف بشكل جيد هي استراتيجيات فعالة ستشكل طلابا ذوي جودة في الأكاديميين والشخصية.
الكلمات المفتاحية: تربية الشخصية والطفولة المبكرة و *Ratna Megawangi*

INTRODUCTION

The urgency of character education in early childhood is based on a hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, Rasulullah said that every human being is born in a state of fitrah, it is his parents who make them Jews, Christians and Majusi. Fitrah is human potential and character that consists of two things, namely physical and psychological. Meanwhile, human character also consists of two things, namely good and bad. With the fitrah bestowed by Allah Swt, humans have the potential to accept religion (goodness).¹

However, the phenomenon of physical and non-physical violence that has occurred lately is like an epidemic virus that occurs everywhere, including in Indonesia. Cases of bullying, brawls between students, drug abuse, child exploitation, motorcycle gangs and other acts of violence are mainly committed by children and children as victims. Children who become perpetrators of violence, mostly because they have been victims of violence before or have seen violence done to other children and imitate it.²

The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia) recorded data on cases of violence against children totaling 1,478 cases (KPAI Pusdatin, October 2023), with the details of the most cases being child victims of sexual crimes totaling 615 cases, child victims of physical/psychological violence totaling 303 cases, children in conflict with the law totaling 126 cases, and child victims of economic/sexual exploitation totaling 55 cases.³In addition, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemen PPPA) noted that the number of women victims of violence who reported their cases and were handled was 32,687 with details of 25,053 victims.

Bullying cases are generally carried out by children, but without many realizing the possibility has been carried out by teachers, principals, staff and even policy makers related to the cognitive-oriented education curriculum which results in students experiencing stress, killing the spirit and

¹ Ahmad Izzan & Saefudin, *Tafsir Pendidikan Studi Ayat-ayat Berdimensi Pendidikan Banten*: Aufa Media Library, 2012, p. 47

² Davit Setyawan, "Violent offenders increase every year", www.kpai.go.id (accessed December 11, 2023).

³ KPAI Public Relations, *Rakornas and KPAI Expos 2023: Building an Indonesia Free of Violence Against Children*, <https://www.kpai.go.id/publikas> (accessed December 11, 2023)

love of children to learn so that many experts argue that the traditional curriculum (cognitive oriented) is a failed product in education.

The failure of education can be felt by the occurrence of moral degradation, for example the functioning of parents and the role of teachers as a figure who is *digugu* and imitated, tends to no longer be a role model, so that respect and respect for teachers is a culture that has almost faded. Such conditions are very relevant to Thomas Lickona's statement that the existence of a country will be destroyed if its people do not care about the importance of character education.⁴ Thomas Lickona's statement is reinforced by Ratna Megawangi's statement, based on the results of her research on Indonesian children who have deviant character behavior, one of which is the increase in violence among children/adolescents. occurs because of one's inability to control morals.

Daniel Goleman states that a person who is controlled by the impulse to commit violence is incapable of moral control. The ability to control impulses is the basis of will and character. Meanwhile, the root of love for others lies in empathy, which is the ability to read other people's emotions, without sensitivity to the needs or suffering of others, compassion will not arise.⁵

Such is the close influence of a sense of affection that is not owned by a person not only results in the death of a sense of empathy and sympathy, but will cause permanent damage to the physical, as Dale H. Schunk argues that violence is the attitude of someone who does not have compassion for others due to damage to the central nervous system (CNS) and one of the causes is the factor of the role of parenting from parents or caregivers/teachers who do not provide a sense of security and affection for children. This will result in permanent damage to the growth and development of the child's brain.⁶

⁷Regarding the inappropriate parenting system of parents or teachers, Ratna Megawangi stated that wrong parenting not only inhibits the growth and development of children's brains, but has contributed to killing children's character. Ratna argues that a child who is often violent, has a dominant brain stem and midbrain function like animals. While the limbic and cortex parts become less functional. Another factor that can influence a child to commit violence is a school education system that makes children feel pressured and threatened. Difficult lessons, fierce teachers, boring

⁴ Dr. Ratna Megawangi is a Lecturer at IPB, Founder of Indonesia Heritage Foundation, pioneer of Character-Based Holistic Education (CBHE) in Indonesia, and founder of 2500 SBB (Early Childhood Education) and 600 Character Elementary Schools spread throughout Indonesia. Born in Jakarta, August 24, 1958. His work on CBHE began with his experience as an *independent research post-doctoral program in the US*, in the field of *family and child development*.

⁵ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 1996. Translation, T. Hermaya, *Emotional Intelligence*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2000), xiv.

⁶ Dale H. Schunk, *Learning Theories an Educational Perspective*, 2012. Translated by Eva Hamdiah, Rahmat Fajar, *Learning Theories an Educational Perspective*, Yogyakarta: Library, 2012, p. 84.

⁷ Ratna Megawangi, *All Rooted in Character Issues of National Problems*, Jakarta: IHF, 2015, p. 15.

lessons, fear of bad grades unhealthy competition are some of the contributing factors. All of these have the potential to become problematic children because their reptilian brains are more developed.⁸

Therefore, providing children with feelings of security and love (affection) is a strategic effort so that children can grow and develop into children who are gentle and sensitive to the suffering of others (empathy, sympathy and tolerance) or pro-social individuals. And this needs to be instilled from an early age because the growth and development of early childhood is at a critical period.⁹

The critical period of early childhood is based on the theoretical basis that the physical growth of the brain in early childhood (5 years) is experiencing rapid development, namely the size of the brain has reached 90% of the adult brain.¹⁰ Meanwhile, psychological (moral) development in early childhood (4-6 years) is in the phase of authority-oriented morality (morality based on authority figures), such as parents or teachers.

Based on the above conception, it is very important for caregivers, both teachers and parents, to understand that the concept of character education is to develop children's potential as a whole (holistic) such as spiritual, cognitive, psychomotor, social-moral and emotional-religious potential) which is instilled in children from an early age, so that it is possible for children to have quality intelligence and character if raised through proper education. But on the contrary, the potential will not develop properly if the teacher or parents educate it wrongly. In fact, it becomes a permanent failure, because it is carried over to adulthood.¹¹

The concept of Early Childhood Character Education in its application uses a reference to universal moral values, which is a standard that applies absolutely universally, where every religion and culture recognizes it.¹² These values are summarized in 9-character pillars that are reflected in the form of character modules.¹³

METHOD

This research is a qualitative type, namely research aimed at describing and analyzing phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes beliefs, perceptions, thoughts of people individually or in groups while the approach uses descriptive methods. analysis and survey. The descriptive analysis method is defined as a problem-solving procedure investigated by describing or describing

⁸ Ratna Megawangi, *The Best for My Baby*, Bandung: Khansa, 2006, p. 87.

⁹ Dale H. Schunk, *Learning Theories an Educational Perspective*, p. 73.

¹⁰ Desmita, *Developmental Psychology*, Bandung: Teenage Workshop, 2012, p. 128.

¹¹ Ratna Megawangi, *Character Education The right solution to build the nation*, Jakarta: Indonesia Heritage Foundation, 2015, p. 21.

¹² Ratna Megawangi, *A Decent and Fun Education Applying DAP Theory*, p. 5.

¹³ Sukmadinata, N.S, (2016), *Educational Research Methods*, Bandung: Teenage Workshop, p. 60.

the state of the subject and object of research (a person, institution, society and others) at the present time based on the facts that appear or as they are.¹⁴ The characteristics of the descriptive method are research methods that focus on solving current problems, collecting data, classifying the data and simultaneously analyzing it.

In collecting data sources, researchers collect data sources in the form of primary data and secondary data. Data sources are subjects from which data can be obtained, both in the form of library materials and in the form of people.¹⁵

Data collection technique is a method used to collect information or facts in the field. According to Sugiono, data collection techniques are the most strategic step in research because the main purpose of research is to get data.¹⁶ Without knowing and mastering data collection techniques, we will not get data that meets the established data standards. Data collection in qualitative research through interviews, observation and documentation. After collecting data, it is then analyzed to be concluded based on the data that has been collected. Technical data analysis can be done through: a) data reduction (data reduction) summarizes, sorts and selects the main things, focuses on important things, looks for themes and patterns, b) data presentation (data display): through text that is narrative and easy to understand. This presentation is used to improve understanding of the case and as a reference for taking action based on understanding and analyzing data presentation, c) conclusion drawing or verification.¹⁷ Researchers make conclusions based on data that has been processed through data reduction and data exposure.

The testing of data validity in qualitative research needs to be determined to avoid biased or invalid data. This is intended to avoid dishonest answers and informants.¹⁸ The validity of data in qualitative research includes: a) credibility test (internal validity), namely before the researcher interprets the data, first checks the validity with several checking techniques including extending participation, persistence of observation and mainly using triangulation, namely testing the credibility of data by checking the data that has been obtained through different data sources. b) data transferability (external validity) with the aim that other people can understand the results of the research, so there is a possibility to apply the results. c) dependability (reliability) and

¹⁴ Department of Education and Culture, (1990). *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* cet. 3rd, Jakarta: Balai pustaka, p. 66; Jayusman, I., & Shavab, O. A. K. (2020). *Quantitative descriptive study of student learning activities using edmodo learning media in history learning*. *Journal of artifacts*, 7 (1).

¹⁵ Yaya Sunarya, (2009). *Education Research Methodology*, Bandung: Azkia Pustaka Utama, p. 171.

¹⁶ Andi Prastowo, 2012. *Qualitative Research Methods in the Perspective of Research Design*, Jogjakarta: Ar-ruzz Media, p. 208.

¹⁷ Miles & Huberman and Saldana. 2014. *Qualitative Data Analysis*, London: Sage Publication, p. 16.

¹⁸ Sugiyono. 2014. *Statistics for Research*. Bandung: Alfabeta, p. 228.

confirmability (objectivity) by auditing the entire research process that has been carried out d) confirmability (research objectivity / certainty) by confirming data with informants and experts.¹⁹

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background to Ratna Megawangi's Character Education Concept

1. Experience in Parental Care

Inform a number of important data (original) fields obtained from questionnaires, surveys, documents, interviews, observations, and other data collection techniques. It can be completed with a table or graphic to clarify the result.

Ratna Megawangi was born in Jakarta, August 24, 1958, to husband-and-wife Drs. Harmoni Djaffar and Sri Mulyati. She was born as the second of six children. Her father, originally from Banjarmasin, was a professional who worked for a foreign-owned pharmaceutical company. His mother, Sri Mulyati, was of mixed Javanese and Sundanese descent. Even though her parents lived a well-off life, Ratna received a form of upbringing and education in hard discipline, frugality, and a simple and hardworking life.²⁰

Likewise, about wealth, long ago his parents warned him not to expect anything, such as receiving material or inheritance from his parents. Because parents only provide provisions or pedals as a provision for life, namely education. It was this principle that spurred Ratna and her siblings to excel academically.

Even though Ratna's parents own a car, the children are accustomed to going to school by public bus or angkot, even though little Ratna wanted to be picked up by the family car.²¹

School pocket money was very limited. If Ratna and her siblings wanted something, there was no other way they could save up for it. The struggle to save from a small amount of pocket money must be proven and shown to her parents. Accustomed to being educated with a simple lifestyle, little Ratna and her siblings grew into children who were not spoiled.²²

This education of hard discipline, frugality, simplicity and hard work has greatly influenced Ratna Megawangi's success as a pioneer of character education in Indonesia. Ratna Megawangi's childhood experiences have benefited her as an adult.

2. Character of Indonesian Society

¹⁹ Riduwan, (2012), *Learning Research for Teachers-Workers and Beginner Researchers*, Bandung: Alfabeta, cet 8, p. 54.

²⁰ Author interview with Ratna Megawangi on 21-09-2016 in Yogyakarta.

²¹ Interview with the author on 21-09-2016 at Wanitatama Building, Yogyakarta.

²² Sky, *Ratna Megawangi, Pioneer of Character-Based Holistic Education* (<http://www.langitperempuan.net/ratna-megawangi-pelopop-pendidikan-holistik-berbasis-karakter/> December 2023).

Starting from the phenomenon of Indonesian society in 1998 which faced various kinds of riots, such as riots between ethnicities, elements of shara” and so on. This had an impact on the credibility of the Indonesian nation in the eyes of the international world which was considered low. This situation certainly greatly affects the economic, educational and social systems. Such conditions resulted in Indonesian society at that time experiencing various kinds of crises (multidimensional crisis), ranging from economic crisis, moral crisis and so on.²³ This is one of the impacts of globalization in the form of economic integration, political fragmentation, high technology, interdependence and new colonization in culture. This impact is due to the fact that globalization is driven by a Western ideology based on pragmatism, hedonism, positivism, rationalism, and materialism rooted in anthropo-centrism which does not involve the role and power of God.

In this case, hedonistic, materialistic, pragmatic and secularistic Western culture often dominates the lives of Indonesians as seen in its impact on social patterns, communication patterns or lifestyles that are not in line with the nation’s own values. This situation will ultimately threaten the integrity of the human self which actually has two sides of nature, namely good and bad.²⁴

3. Spiritual Experience

Ratna Megawangi’s thoughts on Character Education are also motivated by her spiritual experiences during her master’s and doctoral studies in the US. Ratna learned a lot about Sufism from Bawa Muhaiyaddeen. The main teachings of Sufism essentially lead a person to the highest level, namely how a person can feel his closeness to Allah SWT. ²⁵Ratna stated that to achieve closeness to Allah, one must have a heart that is always clean (character) from negative emotions. She gave an example of many people who are diligent in worshipping but sometimes still worship wealth (love of wealth) and even worship themselves (selfish), so that with their selfishness other negative traits appear, such as arrogantly considering themselves the best worship and then considering the best religion and perfect faith.

With arrogance, the person will increasingly behave in a way that does not respect others, which is then reflected in acts of bullying, intolerance, and others which ultimately lead to conflict between individuals and groups. Therefore, Ratna Megawangi states that sufficient

²³ Abudin Nata, *Capita Selecta of Islamic Education Contemporary Issues on Islamic Education*, p. 264.

²⁴ Abudin Nata, *Capita Selecta of Islamic Education Contemporary Issues on Islamic Education*, p. 265.

²⁵ Interview with Ratna Megawangi on 21-09-2016, at Mandala Wanitatama Building, Yogyakarta Sufism has inspired Ratna Megawangi in initiating character education. While the figure who greatly influenced her thinking about character education is the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, which she wrote specifically in her book entitled *“Learning from the exemplary character of Muhammad PBUH (2015)”*.

religious education does not guarantee that a person has a good character, because in general, religious education given to children only covers the cognitive aspect (knowledge of religious morals), not involving the feeling and loving aspects. So, it is not surprising that the increasing number of corruption cases are committed by people who have sufficient religious education.

4. Experience as a Research Personnel

In 1991-1993 Ratna Megawangi was offered to do a post-doctoral program at Tufts University, Massachusetts, USA. Ratna Megawangi conducted research with Marian Zeitlin on the topic of Strengthening the Family and Child Development (published by UN University Press, 1995). Marian Zeitlin once stated that “it is actually very easy to create a peaceful and prosperous society without having to go through a complicated and expensive process by encouraging mothers to breastfeed the right way, telling them to hug, kiss and stroke their babies often and encouraging them to make eye contact with their babies while smiling.” Ratna thought this statement was too common sense (common and logical knowledge that everyone knows). But Ratna started to take common sense seriously when she did research together that proved how important it is to strengthen the family institution in preparing quality children.

Marian Zeitlin is a pioneer who developed the theory of Positive Deviance.²⁶ This theory explains how the metabolic process of the child’s body when it gets a touch of affection so that the child can grow and develop properly. Based on his research in an area where the community is very poor and the children are generally poor (malnourished and their social and mental development is hampered), but there are a handful of children who are healthy and smart. To answer what factors, play a role and influence this positive deviation, he collected data from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Niger and Mexico. Her research is micro, looking at parenting practices at home, breastfeeding patterns, the frequency of mothers talking to children, playing, eye contact, stroking, positive words and so on. As a result, the children who were positively deviated, although in very poor conditions, had very responsive and loving mothers.

From this background, Ratna became more interested and found something to look for that she had never felt before, namely how to provide good character intake so that humans will have a calm soul (*nafsu muthmainnah*) She analogizes that food intake is for physical needs, while character is food for psychological needs. If both nutritional needs, namely nutrition for physical and psychological needs, can be fulfilled properly, it will produce good and intelligent humans. And if the human resources of the Indonesian nation are good (character) and

²⁶ Ratna Megawangi, *Mother-Child Attachment Key to Nation Building* (Jakarta: Indonesia Heritage Foundation, 2015), p. 3.

intelligent, it will bring the Indonesian nation into a developed and highly civilized nation, because the people live in peace and prosperity as a result of individuals with character.²⁷ Since 2000, Ratna and Sofyan agreed to do something concrete for the nation, namely building a nation of character. They established the Indonesia Heritage Foundation with only 75 million of their savings that were prepared for this purpose. The foundation successfully recruited 12 of IPB Bogor's best students as initial workers. In 2001, character-based holistic education began to be tried. And in 2003 internal evaluation, monitoring, improvement and all kinds were carried out, including researching 600 students conducted by a number of IPB students. They examined the impact of holistic education based on nine characters on children's daily behavior. This program was followed by children with the name *Semai Benih Bangsa* or SBB with those who did not or entered ordinary kindergarten.²⁸ The results were extraordinary. Statistically significantly better character compared to the usual kindergarten (non-character-based).

Ratna Megawangi's Character Education Concept

According to Ratna Megawangi, education is to develop all human potential holistically, which in the process must be able to form a whole person who is capable of facing a challenging and rapidly changing world, and has a spiritual awareness that he is part of the whole (the person within a whole).²⁹ Education aims to shape children to be happy and motivated to continue learning. Because one's enjoyment of the learning process will carry over into old age.³⁰ Meanwhile, what is called character is "to mark", which is to mark one's actions or behavior. So that a person can be said to be a person of character if his behavior is in accordance with moral rules. Therefore, Ratna argues that character education is to carve morals through the process of knowing the good, feeling the good, and acting the good, namely the educational process must involve cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects so that noble morals can be carved into the habit of the mind heart and hands.³¹ Character education is an active effort to form good habits (habit), so that the child's character has been engraved since childhood, because having noble morals is not automatically owned by every human being once he is born, but requires a long process through care and

²⁷ Sofyan Djalil is Ratna Megawangi's husband, who works daily to fulfill his family's needs as a pure professional engaged in consulting specializing in the implementation of *good corporate governance and good corporate communication*. After being appointed as a minister, to the national elite and government environment, Sofyan is expected to slip the moral message.

²⁸ The results of the author's interview with Ratna in Yogyakarta on 21-09-2016, the number of character-based schools (seed nation) spread throughout Indonesia has reached 2500 institutions.

²⁹ Dr. Ratna Megawangi, *Holistic Education Application of Curriculum Based on Education Unit Level (KTSP) to Create Lifelong Learners*, Jakarta: IHF, 2015, p. 24.

³⁰ Ratna Megawangi, *Character Education the Right Solution to Build a Nation*, p. 39.

³¹ Ratna Megawangi, *All Rooted in Character*, p. 137.

education. Ratna's view on character education has similarities with Thomas Lickona who states that good character traits have three components, namely: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.³²

Character education is therefore central to the ECD curriculum as the basic core of building mental health and learning motivation, thus ECD programs that do not use the right educational concepts, by emphasizing learning to read, write and count (*calistung*) in ways that are not in accordance with the basic principles of decency and fun learning will hinder the development of children in the future. Ratna says that services in early childhood programs ideally require the role of a professional and characterful teacher in order to achieve the goal of education, which is to create good and smart children, an explicit character education curriculum, and use a value reference in the form of 9 pillars of character as follows:

a. Have character teacher standards

Teachers are the main and most important element in determining the success of a quality educational institution, because the role of the teacher is directly dealing with the object of education (students, materials, media, and so on).

Character teacher standardization includes five components: 1) Teachers as builders of children's positive self-image. 2) Teachers as models or idol figures, 3) Educating by immersing themselves, 4) Teachers are full of inspiration, and 5) Spread the seeds of virtue selflessly.

b. Using an explicit character curriculum

The explicit character curriculum is the teaching of the 9 pillars of character in the form of modules that must be given during a specific time during the children's learning in the classroom. Pillar reflections are carried out for 15 to 20 minutes before core activities with alternating pillar themes for 3 weeks.³³ The explicit character curriculum uses 2 methods/patterns, namely: formal (specialized) pattern, and non-formal (integrated) pattern.

c. Using the 9 Pillars of Character Value Reference

The character education pioneered by Ratna Megawangi contains 9 pillars of character that are integrated in every activity. The nine pillars of character are:

1. Love of God and His Creation,

³² Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*, 1991. Translated by Juma Abdu Wamaungu, *Educating for Character How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*, Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2022, p. 84.

³³ This documentation was obtained by the author from the material of the Seminar/Akbar Training on Character Education Practices and Scientific Approaches that Successfully Build Character, Critical Thinking, and Child Creativity by IHF in collaboration with Oase, Yogyakarta, 21-09-2016.

2. Independence and Responsibility,
 3. Honesty/Amanah, Wise,
 4. Respect and Courtesy,
 5. Generous, Helpful, and Mutual Cooperation,
 6. Confident, Creative and Hardworking,
 7. Leadership and Justice,
 8. Kind and Humble,
 9. Tolerance, Peace, and Unity.
- d. Implementing Co Parenting

Ratna Megawangi states that parents must be partners in shaping children's character, and even have a major role in maintaining and caring for children's nature. According to Imam Al-Gazali, the child is a trust for both parents, and his pure heart is a very expensive jewel. Therefore, if it is familiarized with goodness and taught with goodness to him, then he will grow in that goodness and he will get happiness in this world and the hereafter.³⁴ Based on the above concept, co-parenting is very important to be organized by schools, so that there is synergy between schools and parents.

Ratna Megawangi's Character Education Method

Ratna Megawangi's character education method is to apply knowing the good, loving the good, desiring the good, and acting the good (4M, namely Knowing, Loving, Desiring, and Doing Good) simultaneously and continuously.

Knowing the good is implementing character education in children by emphasizing the cognitive aspect (knowledge). Loving the good is in the emotional area and the most difficult to teach, unless it has been taught since childhood. Desiring the good is how to foster in children to have the desire to love goodness and finally want to do the goodness. Acting the good is the result of the previous three components, namely knowing the good, loving the good and desiring the good.

Principles of Character Education

The principles of successful character education according to Ratna Megawangi are 11 factors, namely:

1. Character education must contain character values.
2. Character must be defined as a whole that includes aspects of thinking, feeling and action.

³⁴ Sujoko, *Child Character Education in Javanese Muslim Families*, Proceedings of the National Seminar on Islamic Psychology, 2012.

3. Effective character education requires a comprehensive and focused approach from the aspects of teachers as role models, school discipline, curriculum, learning processes, classroom and school management, integration of character materials in all aspects of classroom life, cooperation of parents and the community.
4. The school should model a peaceful and harmonious society.
5. School as a miniature society, where each individual can respect each other, be responsible, care for each other and be fair.
6. To develop character, students need opportunities to practice, how to behave morally, how to practice social work, resolve conflicts, practice being a responsible individual and so on.
7. Character education should include curriculum materials that are meaningful to children's lives (life skills) so that children feel able to face and solve life problems.
8. Character education must generate internal motivation in children, for example by generating guilt in children if they commit negative actions or generating empathy in children to be sensitive to the difficulties of others.
9. All school staff should be involved in character education. The school plays a big role in mobilizing staff to be part of the character education process.
10. Character education in schools requires moral leadership from various parties; leaders, staff and teachers, and in collaboration with parents and the surrounding community.
11. There should be regular evaluations of the success of character education in schools and have standards of success for character education, which include how teachers/staff are developing as character educators, and how students are developing.

Discussion

The foundation of Ratna Megawangi's thinking about character education uses various approaches that are multi-perspective in nature that aim to build holistic humans, such as religious approaches, scientific approaches, psychology, philosophy and so on for this purpose, Ratna developed her concept through the foundation of universal values which are strongly supported by relevant and actual theories. Some of these theories include: child development theory, neuroscience theory, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).

Child development theory is used as a theoretical basis for building character from an early age by considering aspects of the child's age, the stages of the child's abilities or interests and talents, as well as the surrounding socio-culture. For example, applying the value of honesty can use Piaget's cognitive theory through picture media that explains in that direction or concrete

media, because children aged 4-6 years are in the pre-operational phase, where children's knowledge will be obtained through something concrete, because children are not yet able to think abstractly.³⁵

Erik Erikson's Emotion Theory can be used as a theoretical basis for character education, among others, to understand the phases of child development so that teachers or parents will find it easier to implement character education in children, such as the stage of 18 months of age is in the Trust vs Mistrust phase, which is the most critical period of a child's early life so that it greatly determines the child's further growth and development, ages 18 months-3,5 years old is in the autonomy vs shame/doubt phase where children feel capable of doing something so that teachers or parents who often prohibit will make children have shame and doubt about their abilities, while at the age of 3.5 -6 years children have the potential for a better direction if the previous stages are good, such as creative, enthusiastic in doing something, actively experimenting with imagination, daring to try, taking risks, enjoying hanging out with friends, and so on.³⁶

The theory of moral development is also part of the foundation of character education which is very crucial, such as Kohlberg's opinion that this early age is called the "reciprocity" phase (exchange stage). According to Thomas Lickona, this phase is unconditionally obedient (authority-oriented morality) ranging from 4-6 years is easier to obey and cooperate so that they want to do the orders of parents or teachers. However, there are times when children in this phase still show the behavior of phase 1 children (egocentric). This means that the moral development of these children is not optimal.³⁷ Furthermore, Vigotsky's socio-cultural theory which is more oriented towards children's language development, Bronfenbrenner's ecological-contextual theory which develops the theory that child development is influenced by 4 (four) factors that surround human life. In addition to the theories mentioned above, character education also uses theories related to neuroscience, brain-based learning, multiple intelligence, and so on.³⁸

From some of the theoretical foundations of character education that Ratna applies, the author argues that the concept of character education theory is very relevant to be used in early childhood education program services with the aim of forming the character of a smart and characterful Indonesian generation.

Early childhood education, namely the age range of 0-6 years, is a golden age or what is commonly referred to as the golden age or critical period on the grounds that the development

³⁵ Fatimah Ibda, *Cognitive Development: Jean Piaget's Theory*, Journal of Intellectualita-Volume 3 No.1, Jan-2015.

³⁶ Ratna Megawangi, *Education that is worthy and Fun*, p. 10.

³⁷ Ratna Megawangi, *Character Education*, p. 10.

³⁸ Author interview with Ratna Megawangi, dated 21-09-2016.

obtained in this period greatly affects subsequent development until adulthood. This golden period is very important as the basis for the formation of the human personality as a whole, namely for character building. Early childhood education is a very important and very effective period in building character foundations compared to adolescence because it is considered too late. Early childhood is an individual who is undergoing a process of rapid growth and development.³⁹ According to the National Education System Law No.20 of 2003 article 1 paragraph 14 explains that early childhood education is:⁴⁰ A coaching effort aimed at children from birth to 6 years of age which is carried out through providing educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter further education.

By the time a baby reaches 2 years of age, its brain size is on average 75% of that of an adult, and by 5 years of age, it has reached about 90% of the adult brain. The growth of the brain during early childhood is due to the growth of myelination, which is a process in which nerve cord cells are covered and insulated with a layer of fat cells. This process has the effect of increasing the speed of information traveling through the nervous system.⁴¹ Bobbi DePorter and Mike Hernacki argue that by the age of 4 the structure of the lower brain has developed as much as 80%, and higher intelligence begins to develop if properly cared for and the child is emotionally healthy (positive emotions).⁴² Children's emotional health will develop well if they receive proper and loving education. But on the contrary, the wrong education will kill the child's creativity and sense of empathy.

Children who have aggressive tendencies and social problems are a manifestation of early childhood education that imposes punishment by criticizing, threatening and being harsh on children. In addition, they will become adults who tend to break the law and commit more crimes with physical and psychological violence.⁴³ It is important for children to have positive emotions because they affect the love hormones (serotonin, oxytocin, endorphins, and dopamine), enriching the network of connections that make the child's cortex grow optimally. Conversely, negative emotions stimulate the production of stress hormones that will cause synapses (connecting nerve cells in the brain) to be inhibited in growth, and will be trimmed, including in the hippocampus

³⁹ Ratna Juwita, *Improving Children's Counting Skills Through Water Measuring Games at Aisyiyah Koto Kaciak Maninjau Kindergarten*, Journal of PAUD Enchantment Vol.1 No.1, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Editorial Team Nuansa Aulia Set of Legislation on the National Education System RI Law No. 20 of 2003 Along with its Explanation Bandung: Nuansa Aulia.

⁴¹ Desmita, *Developmental Psychology*, Bandung: Teenage Workshop, 2012, p. 128.

⁴² Bobbi DePorter & Mike Hernacki, *Quantum Learning: Unleashing the Genius in You* (1992, Translated by Alwiyah Abdurrahman, *Making Learning Comfortable and Fun*, Bandung: Kaifa, 2001.

⁴³ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 1994. Translated by T.Hermaya, *Emotional Intelligence Why EI is more important than IQ*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2000, p. 281

which stores memory, so that the child's intelligence is hampered.⁴⁴ Education that contains elements of violence will have a negative impact on child development.

Based on the theory above, it shows that early childhood education is basic education to form religious moral, cognitive, language, psychomotor and social-emotional intelligence (character). The success of character education is very influential not only the formation of good character but will also form children who are successful in their academics.

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⁴⁴ Ratna Megawangi, *Mother and Child Attachment is the Key to Building a Nation*, Jakarta: Indonesia Heritage Foundation, 2015, 110

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