

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE HOLISTIC EDUCATION PARADIGM

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the idea of early childhood education from a holistic standpoint. A literature review is the technique employed. Using this approach, the author compiles, organizes, and evaluates the literature on early childhood education from the viewpoint of a holistic educational paradigm. According to this study, the fundamental tenet of holistic education is that children are complete individuals with cognition, affection, psychomotor skills, a soul, and a physical body who can discover their identity, meaning, and purpose in life through their interactions with others, the natural world, and spiritual principles. According to the holistic education paradigm, early childhood is seen as a whole being that is both a subject and an object of education. It is multifaceted, has a natural history, and has both strengths and shortcomings. These terms are pertinent to Islamic education, which aims to fully and fairly develop human potential in accordance with the idea of "*kaffah*."

Abstrak

Kajian ini berupaya mendalami konsep pendidikan anak usia dini dalam perspektif pendidikan holistik. Metode yang digunakan adalah tinjauan pustaka. Melalui metode ini, penulis mengumpulkan, mengelompokkan, dan menganalisis literatur-literatur tentang pendidikan anak usia dini dalam perspektif paradigma pendidikan holistik. Kajian ini menemukan bahwa pendidikan holistik memiliki ide dasar bahwa pada dasarnya seorang individu anak usia dini adalah pribadi yang utuh yang memiliki kognisi, afeksi, psikomotor, jiwa, dan raga, yang dapat menemukan identitas, makna, dan tujuan hidupnya melalui hubungannya dengan masyarakat, lingkungan alam, dan nilai-nilai spiritual. Paradigma pendidikan holistik memandang

anak usia dini sebagai makhluk utuh, sebagai subjek dan objek pendidikan, multidimensi, memiliki fitrah, memiliki keunggulan sekaligus kelemahan. Kata kunci-kata kunci itu relevan dengan pendidikan Islam yang berupaya mengembangkan potensi manusia secara utuh dan seimbang yang selaras dengan konsep “*kaffah*”.

Keywords: Early childhood education, holistic, Islamic education.

Introduction

One of the Islamic disciplines that is still being developed is Islamic education. Exploring instructional content from the Qur'an, Islamic teachings, and the Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah are some of the ways that Islamic education disciplines are developed. The creation of Islamic educational disciplines also entails a critical evaluation of the theories, paradigms, conceptions, and approaches to "general" education put forth by researchers, specialists, and educational academics. The various principles are critically examined from the perspective of Islamic education. Islamic education is therefore employed as a tool for analysis in the review of general education topics. The "holistic education" paradigm is one of the educational ideas that is now gaining traction and is being discussed by educational professionals. In accordance with the holistic education paradigm, all pupils' potential—including their intellectual, emotional, physical, social, artistic, and spiritual potential—is developed.

The holistic education paradigm is an educational philosophy that derives from the idea that an individual can find identity, meaning, and purpose in life through his relationship with society, the natural environment, and spiritual values (Dossey et al., 2021). In the discourse of education in Indonesia, holistic education is still relatively new, although not entirely new. Some of the pioneers of holistic education, including Jean Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Johann Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel, and Francisco Ferrer (Hare, 2020). Supporters include: Rudolf Steiner, Maria Montessori, Francis Parker, John Dewey, John Caldwell Holt, George Dennison Kieran Egan, Howard Gardner, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, and Paulo Freire. The core thoughts, and ideas of the pioneers of holistic education had sunk until the cultural paradigm leap in the 1960s. Entering the 1970s, there was a movement to explore the ideas of the holistic adherents. Significant progress occurred when the University of California's first holistic education conference was held in July 1979, presenting The

Mandala Society, and The National Center for the Exploration of Human Potential (Huitt, 2019).

Six years later, proponents of holistic education started outlining its fundamentals, including the interaction or connection between people and their environment (relation). The title 3R is an acronym for Relationship, Responsibility, and Reverence, not 3R, which is known as writing, reading, and arithmetic (reading, writing, counting). It refers to the responsibility to create and maintain a harmonious and synergistic relationship with the universe, the efforts to maintain balance by constantly prioritizing normative and value-laden aspects, which is an honor for humans as perfect beings (Goleman, 2009).

The holistic education paradigm is one of the discourses in the philosophy of education. Because of the philosophical discourse, the concept of holistic education received various responses, and gave rise to different attitudes among educational thinkers (Jarvis & Parker, 2021). Some educational experts, and thinkers welcome the concept of holistic education very enthusiastically; others welcome it "cold"; others do not respond at all, and there are those who reject it.

In Indonesia itself, the concept of holistic education has not only enlivened the discourse or discourse of the world of education in the country, but even several educational institutions have also implemented the concept, and offered it to the public as an alternative to providing education for children (Dewi, 2021). Even the research conducted by Herry Widyastono concluded that the primary, and secondary education curriculum documents essentially already contain holistic education, because the principles, references, and procedures for curriculum development are in line with the understanding, goals, and principles of the holistic education paradigm. But the study also found that the holistic education paradigm has not been implemented comprehensively in learning activities. Learning activities in general only develop the realm of knowledge and have not yet developed the realm of skills and student attitudes (Magolda, 2020).

From this explanation, it is very interesting if this educational paradigm is used to analyze the concept of early childhood Islamic education. By examining the concept of early childhood Islamic education in the perspective of a holistic education paradigm, will not only add to the richness of the concept of Islamic education but can also be identified, and trace to the shortcomings, and advantages of that paradigm when used as an alternative in the implementation of early childhood Islamic education.

Methods

This research adopts the literature review method. Through this method, the researcher collects, selects, categorizes, and analyzes a number of literatures relevant to the concept of early childhood education. The researcher also conducted a search on the literature on the holistic education paradigm. Text analysis is carried out using deductive and inductive techniques, so that results are obtained that are not only coherent with existing theoretical truths, but also correspond to the results of the author's reflection.

Early Childhood Education: Holistic Education Paradigm Perspective

Etymologically, holistic comes from the English vocabulary holistic. This term comes from the word holy, which means holy, and wise. While the root of the word holy itself is whole, which means comprehensive. So, according to Ratna Megawangi, the meaning of the holy man is a human who develops in its entirety, and is balanced in all its dimensions (Miller, 2021). The comprehensive Psychology Dictionary defines holistic as “a general term applied to any philosophical approach that focuses on the whole living organism. The basic axiom of a holistic view is that a complex phenomenon cannot be understood through an analysis of its constituent parts alone. Holistic means is the opposite of elementarism (separately), and atomism (disaggregated). Gestalt and Freudian theories are classic examples of a holistic approach in psychology (Moore, 2021).

The term holistic contains a comprehensive or whole meaning. The holistic approach views humans as a whole, in the sense of humans with cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. Humans also cannot stand alone, but are closely related to their environment. Humans can not be separated from other humans, as well as the physical environment or the natural surroundings. Humans also depend on God Almighty as the creator, and determinant of his life (Ormrod, 2021).

Terminologically, holistic education is an educational philosophy that comes from the idea that basically an individual can find identity, purpose, and meaning in life through his relationship with society, spiritual values., and the natural environment. Historically, holistic education is not a new thing. Holistic education is also often referred to as comprehensive, holistic education (Orr, 2020). Comprehensive holistic education is education that aims to give students the freedom to develop themselves not only intellectually, but also to facilitate the development of body, and soul as a whole so as to create Indonesian people with strong

characters who are able to elevate the dignity of the nation, create independent humans, namely whole humans. independent, whose inner, and outer life does not depend on others, but relies on his own strength. While comprehensive holistic education is holistic education based on multiple approaches, such as psychological approaches, character approaches, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual approaches, and so on (Ben-Peretz, 2009).

Comprehensive holistic education is education that departs from the philosophy of God, humans, society, the universe, science, and noble character based on religious values. The results of the study of all these aspects can be used to formulate various components of education, namely vision, mission, goals, curriculum, teaching, and educational staff, students, teaching, and learning process, infrastructure, management, financing, environment, cooperation, and assessment (Peltz, 2017).

Thus, comprehensive holistic education has characteristics, and features that are reflective, curriculum integration, prioritizes fun learning, human resource development, and utilizes all approaches, and learning methods that combine teacher-based, and student-based. According to John P. Miller—founder of the *Journal of Holistic Education Review*, Holistic education is a philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values such as compassion, and peace. Holistic education aims to call forth from people an intrinsic reverence for life, and a passionate love of learning (Miller, 2020). Because the practice of education has failed to answer the challenges, and turmoil of the times, so holistic education is often considered an alternative education. Robin Ann Martin explained that at its most general level, what distinguishes holistic education from other forms of education are its goals, its attention to experiential learning, and the significance it places on relationships, and primary human values within the learning environment.

Holistic education provides an understanding of global issues such as human rights, social justice, multiculturalism, religion, and global warming, so that it can give birth to students who have global insight, and character, and can provide solutions to humanitarian, and peace problems. Thus, holistic education aims to form students loyal to understanding environmental problems, and try to be directly involved in efforts to solve local, and global problems (Latifah, 2009). This requires adequate competence, and militancy from each learner about themselves, the social environment, and Technology, Information, and Communication (ICT).

Without the word holistic behind it, education—theoretically—has always been comprehensive or complete. Whole in the sense that it aims to produce students who have knowledge, emotional, and spiritual intelligence, and are skilled. Likewise with the curriculum, methods, media, and evaluation. This is read for example in Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Chapter 1 Article 1 Point 1, that: Education is a conscious, and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere, and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by himself, society, nation, and state (Widyastono, 2021).

It's just that in practice it often deviates, especially in schools/madrasas without strong leadership, and a clear vision. In fact, education requires careful planning, execution, and assessment/evaluation. So it's not an instant process, as long as it's on the way, let alone managed, and run by unprofessional staff. Just like when there was a buzz about the importance of anti-corruption education, and character education, holistic education does not have to be an additional new subject in schools/madrasahs. The problem is how educators integrate classroom learning with social, religious, economic, and legal issues. Holistic education is education that understands students about the problems that occur around them, plus skills them to solve these problems (Schreiner et al., 2021). Holistic education is not solely intact in terms of educational goals. More than that, students are required to be able to understand themselves, and their environment; curriculum, methods, and educators must also be directed according to the character, and principles, as well as the core of holistic education.

The purpose of education is essentially to develop human potential as a whole, namely: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. Several mappings, and terms appear in the context of developing human competencies that are the responsibility, and or goals of education, ranging from religious perspectives to psychology. The goal of holistic education is to produce students who can develop all their potential. First, the body or the body. The Indonesian education system recognizes the importance of physical health for the younger generation. Somehow the history, in college, students are not required to exercise as in the upper, middle, and elementary levels. Sport or exercise is important for physical health. In a healthy body there is a clear mind.

The success of health education must manifest in the fact that people are not only aware of the importance of exercising regularly according to their respective choices, and economic abilities, but avoiding bad habits that interfere with body health in the short, medium, and long term, such as

smoking, taking drugs, and liquor. On the other hand, the public is aware of the importance of consuming balanced food, and drink containing nutrients, nutrients, and vitamins, such as milk, rice, tofu, tempeh, meat, vegetables, and fruits (Spector & Anderson, 2020). The level of eating should not be excessive, stop before being full, drink enough water, and get enough rest or sleep.

Have Indonesians chosen to live a healthy life or vice versa? This is where the importance of health education. Education that is able to instill awareness to the younger generation that they must always take their time for the benefit of body health. Pursuing a career, and working with great loyalty, and dedication is important, but it should not leave you with a balanced sport, and rest. Thus, a long, and healthy life can be achieved. Second, reason, and or brain. Education fills the human mind or brain with knowledge. Deep knowledge leads people to intelligence, and skills that are very useful for working capital in various fields. Intelligence, and skills lead humans to economic prosperity, so that they are able to fulfill their basic needs as humans, such as housing, food, vehicles, security, love, recognition, self-actualization, and so on (Supratiknya, 2021).

Changes in the world that appear in the progress of education, civilization, economy, culture, technology, and information, science, show the progress of the human mind, where the main door is education. It is education—in its various forms—that enables creative, and innovative ideas to emerge in the midst of life. The intelligence, and brilliance of the human mind enable human life to be easier, and simpler. Far distances become close. Heavy burdens become lighter. Difficult problems become easy. Even something expensive becomes cheap. Examples that are easy to give are the presence of the internet, and mobile phones, as well as airplanes.

Third, spiritual, and heart. Education also touches the deepest side of humans, namely spiritual, and heart. It aims to give birth to a generation that is able to make the best choices in life. Good for yourself, and the environment. Beneficial actions. Phenix writes, "the essence of the meaning of ethics or moral knowledge is right action, that is what one ought to do" (Dewi, 2021).

Intellectual intelligence, and intelligence as described above must be balanced with emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence so that humans find the meaning of life, namely the happiness of the world, and the hereafter. The design of the building is sturdy, tall, majestic, and beautiful; Luxurious cars, stately homes, dapper clothes, and sophisticated cell phones, that's what the current generation is proud of, but forgets the importance of character building. In fact, in today's contemporary world more attention is

paid to buildings, tools, equipment, and materials, than to personality, and character. Education is successful if it is able to produce students who are able to do good in the midst of difficult choices. For example, he can cheat but does not; he can lie to his parents but does not do so; later he is capable of corruption but does not do so; etc. Education aims to develop the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence of students (Yoshida, 2021). In humans, it is hoped that spiritual piety will emerge as well as social piety. Thus, the form of community, and national life is colored by the values of compassion, sincerity, responsibility, honesty, sacrifice, obedience, discipline, shame, respect, appreciation, glory, humility, love for the environment, and nationalism. These values should become the culture, and character of the nation.

Early Childhood Education Curriculum Holistic Education Perspective

Early childhood education curriculum in holistic education is subject matter, practice, activities, and all experiences of students in schools that are carefully designed so that students are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually intelligent. The school curriculum includes habits, rules, extracurriculars, and examples from educators, staff, and principals. Eisner explained the meaning of the curriculum, namely "all of the experience the child has under the aegis of the school." He also explained that, "the curriculum of a school, or a course, or a classroom can be conceived of as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students." Ronald C. Doll states, "The commonly accepted definition of the curriculum has changed from content of course of study, and list of subjects, and courses to all the experiences which are offered to learners under the auspices or direction of the school..." (Zunker, 2022). Because education aims to develop holistic human potential, physical-spiritual, mind-heart, and intellectual-emotional-social-spiritual, the educational curriculum must also contain materials, rules, activities, and programs that can, and are related to the achievement of the goals of these various aspects.

Early childhood education curriculum must be based on religious norms and culture. Muhammad Qutb in *The Role of Religion in Education*, thirty years ago wrote, "Religion has been isolated, and alienated from our lives, and feelings because we do not practice it in real life...Our life, in all aspects, is not an example of Allah's curriculum which consists of from beliefs, religious duties, work, feelings, behavior, politics, economics, social, and so on (Qutb, 1990).

School quality culture as a hidden curriculum must be maintained properly because it will greatly affect students' intellectual development, skills, and attitudes. Bruner wrote, “for the limits of growth depend on how a culture assists the individual to use such intellectual potential as he may possess.” In the modern era, the pillars of oppression against the weak by the strong, and powerful are still strong, and the seeds of defense against what are clearly wrong are still strong. This is what must be taught to students, that the reality of this world is full of things that are not proper. Therefore, in the future they must become enforcers of justice, and freedom—according to their respective capacities. According to Kohlberg, “Wanted to see people advance to the highest possible stage of moral thought. The best possible society would contain individuals who not only understand the need for social order, but can entertain visions of universal principles, such as justice, and liberty (Kohlberg, 1977).

Economic, environmental, political crises, violence, corruption, bribery, nepotism, and collusion occur because of weak ethics, and character. Therefore, educators need to gain insight into the character that may be taught, and exemplified to students, without exception. Character education does not have to be a subject, because the core of education is character building, and every existing subject contains main values. The problem is that teachers/educators have lost their legitimacy as role models, because their attitudes, and actions do not match what is said. Henson writes, “Teachers cannot avoid teaching ethics. Teachers must be concerned with ethics is that, in any society, education serves to help initiate its young into its culture, and certainly moral beliefs are a large part of any culture (Thornton, 2005).”

It is difficult to develop character if the teacher loses confidence, and moreover does not realize that he is the hope of society, and the nation. The teacher is a curriculum for the formation of the character of students. The principal is a curriculum for teacher attitudes. The leader is the curriculum for the improvement of the culture of his subordinates. The president is a curriculum for the development of the character, and soul of the people. Thus, upholding the character of a generation will be in vain without the example of teachers, society, and leaders.

The early childhood education curriculum includes all things that can enlighten, and teach students, directly or indirectly. The educational curriculum is textbooks, teacher-student interactions, students, and students, students, and employees, libraries, canteens, parks, programs, rules, atmosphere, and conditions of classes, and schools. Therefore, all of these things must be carefully designed for learning. Routine early childhood education programs can be in the form of workshops on crucial themes such

as corruption, street children, floods, drugs, brawls, terrorism, economic crisis, global warming, human trafficking, and Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI). In addition to workshops, schools can create programs that directly touch communities related to these problems. Thus, students know the root of the problem, and contribute to solving certain problems. From this kind of activity, students are expected to learn about social problems, know their position in the midst of these problems, and make them more mature.

Methods of Early Childhood Education Holistic Education Perspective

A good goal must be done in a right, and good way too. Early childhood education methods affect educational success. Among the early childhood education methods that can be used in holistic education are all learning methods that can develop all the potential of students, including habituation, parables, stories, *targhib-tarhib*, dialogues, examples, practices, demonstrations, simulations, assignments, and advice. In the practical method, students should be trained to solve problems around life, and their environment. Thus he has learned how to solve problems, and learn in context.

According to Ibn Khaldun, sciences in relation to the educational process, are very dependent on teachers, and how they use various appropriate, and good methods. Therefore, teachers are required to know the benefits of the method used (Khaldun & Muhammad, 1858).

In carrying out the educational process for early childhood, teachers are required to: First, be patient. Peltz states, "Teaching skills is hard work; it requires great patience, tenacity, and sensitivity. We need to realize how difficult it is to change behavior." Second, avoid corporal punishment. The obedience born of corporal punishment is only superficial. On the other hand, obedience must be born from personal self-awareness (inner self) because they understand the goodness, and benefits of their actions (Peltz, 2017). Brumbaugh, and Lawrence wrote, "If we wish to establish morality, we must abolish punishment." Third, try to be an example. Ormord writes, "Some aspects of moral thought, and behavior seem to be influenced by observation, and example" (Brumbaugh & N.M., 1998). Because teachers are also human, being a good role model in front of students, and the community is a relentless effort, and full of struggles, and obstacles.

Early childhood educators must master educational methods, and should not despair in educating (Sit, 2018). No method is better than any other. Each method has its own effect (Dahlberg et al., 2007). What needs to be considered by educators is their ability to choose methods that are

appropriate to the material, the situation during which education takes place, and the available facilities (Sit, 2018).

The selection of the right method will determine the success of early childhood education, whether or not the educational process is fun. The application of inappropriate methods makes the learning, and education process boring, so that students find it difficult to accept lessons (Mastiyah, 2017). Even easy material will feel difficult. Educating the wrong way often leads to rejection. On the other hand, choosing the right method will make the transfer of knowledge, and attitudes easy, and enjoyable. Therefore, an early childhood educator is required to practice, and practice often, practice, and practice, in addition to mastering theoretical teaching, and educational methods. The limitations of school facilities—which often happens—should not hinder the creativity of teachers in delivering certain fun methods.

Early Childhood Teachers in Holistic Education Perspective

Nothing can replace the position of a teacher in education. The success of education depends on the competence of teachers. Teachers must have pedagogic, personality, social, professional, leadership, and spiritual competencies. Being a teacher is required to master the material to be delivered, choose the right method, understanding students; and able to convey ideas well, so that students really learn, and get something meaningful (Das, 2018). It is important for teachers to understand students, because they are required to help students understand their identity, so that they can become good, useful people for society, and their nation. Henderson wrote, “We can find the basis for morality in our own natures, in the conduct necessary to realize our best potentialities, and the kind of society in which man could live as man” (Henderson, 1990).

The essence of the figure of an early childhood teacher is in his personality or character. Therefore, not everyone can become a teacher. Becoming a true teacher must be born from the calling of the soul. Teachers should try their best to be an example. Some important aspects of education in the example written are (1) Humans influence each other through words, actions, thoughts, and beliefs; 2) Actions have a greater impact than words; 3) The exemplary method requires no explanation. According to Husain, and Ashraf, "If it is agreed that education is not only training humans to live, then the character of the teacher is very important" (Dean, 2008).

The highest competence of early childhood teachers is their personality. That is, he must be a role model in all aspects. The teacher here is positioned as a perfect human (*insan kamil*). The teacher's job is to shape,

and influence students' personalities so that they grow, and tend to be good. Henderson wrote, "Many aspects of moral thinking, and moral behavior are apparently influenced by observation and modeling" (Henderson, 1990). That is, many aspects related to moral thinking, and observations, and examples influence moral behavior (Barr & Linebarger, 2010). The character of early childhood teachers in the context of holistic education is first, the learner. A teacher must be learned, pious, and experienced. Second, be wise. The teacher is not only a human learner but becomes a wise person, a pious person who can influence the minds of the younger generation. Third, be willing to sacrifice. A teacher must come to a degree, rational altruistic, that he develops a high moral system so that he is willing to sacrifice for the benefit of others (Lee et al., 2012).

Conclusion

The fundamental tenet of holistic education is that young children are full beings with cognition, emotion, psychomotor abilities, souls, and bodies who may discover identity, meaning, and purpose through their interactions with others, the natural world, and spiritual principles. The goal of holistic education is to allow young children the flexibility to develop their minds independently and to promote overall motor, mental, and physical development in order to build strong, intelligent, skillful, competent, and well-rounded individuals. Humans who seek holistic education are fully independent beings whose inner and exterior lives depend only on their own power and not on the strength of others.

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