Epistemology of Early Childhood Education from The Montessori View

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Abstract

Perkembangan anak pada usia TK memiliki perkembangan yang sangat pesat sehingga perkembangannya dapat melibatkan aspek pengetahuan (kognitif), perasaan (feeling) dan tindakan (action). Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan epistemologi filsafat Montesori untuk anak usia dini. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah literatur research deskripsi untuk menjelaskan epistemologi filsafat Montesori untuk anak usia dini. Hasil dalam penelitian ini dapat dilihat bahwa prinsip-prinsip Montessori berpusat pada penghormatan terhadap individualitas dan perkembangan anak-anak serta keyakinan bahwa anak-anak memiliki kapasitas alami untuk belajar dan berkembang. Metode Montessori juga menekankan kerja mandiri, di mana anak-anak diberi tanggung jawab untuk mengatur waktu dan kegiatan mereka. Penilaian dalam epistemologi Montessori lebih formatif dan berfokus pada perkembangan individu daripada perbandingan antara anak-anak. Pendekatan epistemologis Montessori untuk anak usia dini memberikan landasan yang kuat untuk mempromosikan eksplorasi, kreativitas, dan kemandirian dalam proses belajar anak-anak. Ini menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung perkembangan kognitif, sosial, dan emosional yang seimbang. Dengan demikian, epistemologi Montessori menawarkan alternatif yang berarti dalam pendidikan anak usia dini yang berpusat pada perkembangan holistik anak-anak.

Kata Kunci: *Epistemologi, Anak Usia Dini, dan Montesori.*

Abstrak

The development of children at elementary age has a very rapid development so that their development can involve aspects of knowledge (cognitive), feelings (feeling) and action (action). The aim of this research is library research to describe the epistemology of Montesori philosophy for early childhood. The research method used is descriptive to explain the epistemology of Montesori philosophy for early childhood. The results in this research can be seen that Montessori principles are centered on respect for the individuality and development of children as well as the belief that children have a natural capacity to learn and develop. The Montessori method also emphasizes independent work, where children are given responsibility for managing their time and activities. Assessment in Montessori epistemology is more formative and focuses on individual development rather than comparisons between children. The Montessori epistemological approach to early childhood provides a strong foundation for promoting exploration, creativity and independence in children's learning processes. This creates an environment that supports balanced cognitive, social, and emotional development. Thus, Montessori epistemology offers a meaningful alternative in early childhood education that is centered on the holistic development of children.

Keyword: *Epistemology, Early Childhood, and Montesori.*

INTRODUCTION

Personal character development is very important when children are in their elementary years. Sigmund Freud stated that personality is largely formed by the age of five. Early personality development has a big influence. Freud's understanding of human personality was based on

experiences with his patients, analysis of their dreams, and extensive reading of a variety of scientific and humanistic literature. According to Freud, adult reactions are the result of childhood experiences, especially in the early 5 to 6 year olds (Ericson, 1977). People who have high emotional intelligence are people with good character. If a child's character is formed well, he will have a good personality in the future. Likewise, if a child's personality traits are not formed well, in the future he may also have a bad personality. Children will grow into individuals with character if they can grow in an environment with character, so that the nature of every child who is born pure can develop optimally (Megawangi, 2010). Freud relied more on deductive reasoning than on rigorous research methods, and he made subjective observations with a relatively small sample size. He used the case studies approach almost exclusively, formulating distinctive hypotheses based on the facts of the case known to him. Considering that a child's environment is not only a micro family environment, all parties - family, school, mass media, business community, and so on - take part in the development of a child's character. This shows that the social system is very important in children's cognitive development.

Education is a process of teaching and learning activities that has an orientation towards realizing clear and structured learning objectives in order to hone personal skills, form students' morals, and prepare individuals who are beneficial to the wider community (Akbar, 2017). According to Kristin, education is considered a right that is intended for all people and is something valuable in a person's life. Education as a complex activity has the aim of developing, conditioning and forming humans as insan kamil (perfect creatures).

The education plan in Indonesia is designed to develop the Indonesian people's self-confidence in the importance of education and is designed to continuously improve their abilities with the aim of creating a good generation in the future. Educational plans must be prepared well to answer the demands of life's problems and challenges in the future (Husnul Qousar, 2019). In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Indonesia (UU RI) Number 20, Article 3, 2003 which discusses the National Education System (national education system): The function of education in Indonesia is to develop personal abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the nation's generation. , the aim of education is to improve one's ability to have faith and devotion to God Almighty (YME), have good morals, be smart, innovative, independent, and have a democratic attitude and have a high sense of responsibility (RI Law No. 20, 2018) .

In the scope of education, teachers have a strategic role in achieving educational goals. Because the success or failure of implementing learning really depends on the presence of the teacher. Teachers have the task of presenting learning strategies that can make children fall in love with learning and have amazing experiences. The success of the learning process can be measured through the students' ability to understand and reflect on the material well (Norhayati, 2017). Education is a joint effort in realizing a nation's intelligence, this effort is also an effort to increase piety and morals in each individual student. National education has the hope of being able to maximize national development. The latest national education curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum, has an integrated presentation system, meaning that all lessons are integrated with religious values. Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia. As we know, Islam is a religion that regulates all aspects of life, both life in this world and life in the afterlife. Therefore, in the teachings of the Islamic religion there are several rules for humans to be able to have a happy life both in this world and in the afterlife. The teachings of the Islamic religion contain various important values.

This child development can confirm that through the school/educational environment, children can do/obtain things such as getting to know the world around them, increasing self-esteem, building social skills, and opportunities to channel emotions. In addition, in an educational environment it can improve language skills, stimulating creativity and imagination, develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, and also develop gross motor skills. Apart from the ideas mentioned above, there are many other big and important ideas of Freud which make him seen as a revolutionary and very influential person not only in the fields of psychology or psychiatry, but also in other fields including sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy, and literature or art. Various activities to develop children's potential, as mentioned above, can be carried out more in the elementary school environment. Thus, this research will explain the role of school institutions in being fully aware of the various developmental needs of children, as outlined above.

This is because not all elementary school institutions can provide maximum function in developing children's potential in relation to the facilities and infrastructure and various supporting devices, including the existence and potential of their caregivers in developing the personality abilities of their foster children.

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with knowledge, understanding, and the way humans obtain knowledge. It addresses questions about the nature of knowledge, how knowledge is acquired, what is considered valid knowledge, and the extent to which knowledge is reliable. Epistemology tries to understand intellectual processes, basic concepts such as truth, belief, doubt, and how knowledge can be justified. This is an important aspect of philosophy that influences many other disciplines, including science, philosophy of science, and even research methods in various fields. Maria Montessori's epistemology is a unique approach to early childhood education that focuses on developing children's understanding through direct experience and interaction with their environment. Maria Montessori, an Italian education expert, introduced this educational philosophy and method which really emphasizes the role of children in directing their learning process. In Montessori's view, children are seen as individuals who are active in exploring their own world.

The Montessori approach emphasizes the use of learning tools specifically designed to develop children's cognitive, motor and social skills. Montessori principles also value children managing their own learning time and activities. In the context of early childhood, Montessori epistemology plays an important role in creating an environment that supports children's holistic development. This approach does not only focus on academic aspects, but also pays attention to children's social, emotional and creative aspects. Through observation, experimentation, and observation, Montessori epistemology helps children develop curiosity, critical skills, and a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

Nurkamelia Mukhtar (2022) title The Early Childhood Educational Method According to Maria Montessori and KH. Dewantara. Based on the analysis result, Maria Montessori method provides freedom for early childhood children to carry out activities according to their interests and talents, and it teaches discipline to children from an early age, while Ki Hajar Dewantara learning method emphasizes Among system method which has the meaning of maintaining student inner survival by accompanying anddirecting students,and it does not only allow student inner development, but it also keep student inner in a good condition. Kasmiati (2022) title Implementation of Montessori Concept in Educating Early Childhood (Case Study of the Role of Early Childhood Education Teachers). The results of this study are the concept of the role of teachers respecting children, teachers respecting child development, teachers as observers, teachers preparing and maintaining the learning environment, teachers as interventions and teachers as catalysts applied by teachers through their role as educators, mentors, facilitators, organizers, evaluators and motivators for children.

Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge, its nature, origin, and limits. In the context of early childhood education, particularly from the Montessori perspective, there are certain distinctive features and gaps in epistemology that set it apart from other educational philosophies. Traditional education models often lean towards teacher-centered approaches. The gap lies in the fundamental belief about the role of the child in the learning process. Montessori places a high value on the child's ability to self-direct their learning, while other approaches may not prioritize this aspect as much. ome educational philosophies may not place as much emphasis on the environment's role in shaping a child's cognitive development. The gap lies in the recognition of the environment as a dynamic contributor to the learning process. Some educational approaches may rely more on abstract and theoretical learning without giving equal importance to concrete, sensorial experiences. The gap here involves the method of transitioning from concrete to abstract concepts in early childhood education. in summary, the epistemological gaps in the Montessori view of early childhood education are often related to its emphasis on child-directed learning, the significance of the environment, the use of concrete materials, the balance between freedom and limits, and the promotion of holistic development. These gaps highlight the distinctiveness of the Montessori approach and its departure from more traditional educational paradigms. In this article, the author will explore more deeply Maria Montessori's epistemology for early childhood, including the main principles, learning tools used, and their impact on child development. With a deep

understanding of this method, we can appreciate how important the Montessori approach is in forming a meaningful educational foundation for the younger generation. The aim of this research is to describe the epistemology of Montesori philosophy for early childhood.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article research uses library research. library research (library research), is research carried out using literature (library), from books, from notes, or from the results of previous reports (Iqbal Hasan, 2002). Meanwhile, according to Zed in library research, library research is not only the first step in preparing a research framework (research design), but also utilizes library sources to obtain research data (Zed, 2014). The data collection technique is by literature review or. This type of research uses analytical descriptiveness where the researcher not only explains certain phenomena, but the researcher also participates in analyzing the phenomena that occur according to what occurs in the field. Primary Data Source, namely the main source that was received directly in writing, namely Maria Montessori's book entitled "Montessori Method; a mandatory guide for teachers and parents of PAUD (Early Childhood Education) students." Meanwhile, secondary data sources are data sources that support or complement the main data. Secondary data is in the form of journals and books related to the research title, namely early childhood education according to Maria Montessor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Maria Montessori's Epistemology of Education

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was an Italian doctor and educator known for creating the Montessori method of education. He developed this approach while teaching mentally handicapped children in Rome in the early 1900s. The Montessori method aims to develop individual potential through a holistic approach that integrates physical, emotional, social and intellectual aspects. This method emphasizes individual freedom, independent choice, and free exploration of the environment. Montessori believed that children have a natural ability to learn and develop on their own, and the teacher's role is to be an observer and facilitator in a well-prepared learning environment. The Montessori method has been used throughout the world and is recognized as one of the most effective educational methods in accelerating children's development (Nursanti, 2023).

Considering the importance of this period, education for early childhood is very important, because during this period it is the basis for the formation of human personality, as the foundation for good character, intelligence and skills. Various studies have revealed that early childhood is the most important period in a child's life. Education in terms of psychoanalysis has a very broad meaning, referring to all actions implemented by adults, experts or non-experts, teachers and parents, to shape and influence the behavior of growing children (students) in the desired way. Considering the importance of the golden age period, the quality of the elementary school program is very important. If we educate children at an early age the impact will be very negative. Because the human brain that grows under 8 years old will be formed from the education and socialization process that they receive at school and in their environment, and the impact will be carried over into adulthood (permanently). This means that poor quality elementary school education can actually harm the development of a child's character, the impact of which can be permanent.

The latent phase itself here is very good for supporting existing development, the latent phase is called the shady phase. This is a very long period that lasts until puberty. During this time libidinal activity decreases and we observe disexuality in interactions with other people and in the child's emotional life. From here, shame and aesthetic moral aspirations begin to form. It turns out that psychosexual development from the first year is completely forgotten as if there was sexual activity. The phase here is identical to seven, eight years of adulthood (Freud, 2006). In another statement, the latent phase is a calm period because the child does not pay too much attention to himself and his body parts. Because children are starting to go to school, children's attention will generally be devoted to learning activities. Apart from that, children are busy socializing, including learning to differentiate between right and wrong and the concepts of law and praise.

In another journal it is said that the latent period/phase is a time of exploration where sexual energy remains, but is directed to other areas such as intellectual pursuits and social interactions.

This stage is very important in the development of social skills, communication and self-confidence. Freud described the latent phase as one that is relatively stable. For this reason, this phase is not always referred to in theoretical descriptions as one stage, but as a separate period (Habiebie, 2017).

By applying previous learning theories, Montessori first used the observation method, namely. monitor students' morphological growth. This observation method is based on the fundamental foundation of student independence (freedom) in its spontaneous manifestations. From the perspective of educational philosophy, Maria's method is an applied form of existentialism which emphasizes four things, namely; human existence, an active way of communicating, open and unresolved existence, and emphasizing existential experience (Gandhi, 11: 86). From this point of view, Maria then turned her attention to environmental issues, starting with playgrounds and parks which are directly connected to the classroom, so that children are free to visit these places as they wish (Montessori, 2013). The fundamental change made was the removal of benches or chairs and tables that did not move. He made a table with octagonal legs that were light and strong so a four-year-old child could easily move it. In addition, the table is designed in a rectangular shape that can be used by two or three children, so that they can be close to each other and easily interact with the subject.

Apart from that, there are also smaller tables and chairs that can only be used by one child, so they can be used when children need to work individually and the child is very good at moving the table and chair into position. which is comfortable for children. Once again, this method gives children the freedom to determine their own learning methods, even if it starts from just arranging tables and chairs. Apart from that, Maria also made a small sink that is installed low so that even a three year old child can use it.

This is done to support the child's independent attitude, so that he gets used to it and can fulfill his personal needs without having to depend on other people. Maria said discipline must be born through independence. This is a good principle that is difficult for adherents of the public school method to understand. How can one enforce discipline in a class of carefree children! It is true, in our system, we have a concept of discipline that is very different from the generally accepted concept of discipline. If discipline is based on independence or freedom, then discipline itself must be active. We do not think that a person is disciplined only when he becomes mute and motionless, as if paralyzed. This method is not disciplinary, but eliminative (Montessori, 2013).

In the Indonesian context, Ki Hajar Dewantara also gives freedom to children in the education process, but the freedom given is still limited by certain rules, whereas Maria frees children without restrictions (Nuryatno, 2013). This method is quite difficult to apply when contextualized with the reality of children and the current educational process. For many people, the most difficult thing is being a perfectionist teacher, where they must be able to discipline children and carry out activities in a free learning situation. Maria says in her book that to make this happen, teachers need several criteria, namely; he must prepare and maintain his imagination; the teacher becomes a guardian and guardian of the environment, he pays more attention to the task, rather than worrying about and disturbing the noise of the children (Montesorri, 2008: 493).

Epistemology of Maria Montessori Education in Early Childhood

To implement her ideas, Montessori created educational institutions for preschool children. This educational institution is unique among educational institutions in general. This includes, in addition to educators, the appointment of a specialist to carry out educational activities in educational institutions (Montessori, 2013). This school is known as "Children's House". This is where children develop; Children's Home and children's development; that Montessori applies various teaching methods. Early childhood refers to the early period in human development, which typically includes newborns through 8 year olds. This is an important period in an individual's life where rapid physical growth, cognitive, social, and emotional development occurs. Some of the main stages in early childhood include:

Babies, From birth to 2 years old. Babies experience rapid physical growth, learn to communicate, and develop relationships with parents or guardians. Toddler (toddler): Age 2 to 3 years. At this stage, children begin to learn to walk, talk, and recognize themselves as separate individuals. Preschool (pre-school): Ages 3 to 5 years. Children begin to develop more advanced social, cognitive and language skills. They may also start interacting with peers in pre-school. Early

Elementary (beginning in elementary school): Ages 6-8 years. This is the initial stage of formal education in elementary school. Children deepen their reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

Montessori philosophy is an epistemological view that underlies the early childhood education method developed by Maria Montessori. This philosophy focuses on the understanding that children have a natural ability to learn and develop themselves through observation and interaction with their environment. The following is the content and discussion of the epistemology of Montessori philosophy for early childhood: Respect for Children: Montessori philosophy respects children as individuals who are competent and active in their learning process. Maria Montessori believed that children had extraordinary potential to learn and develop, Preparatory Environment: Montessori emphasized the importance of creating an environment that supports children's learning. This involves providing tools and materials designed to facilitate exploration and understanding, Observation and Independence: Montessori epistemology emphasizes the importance of observation. Teachers in this approach act as observers who understand children's interests and development, so they can guide them in activities that are appropriate to their level of development, Learning Through Action: Montessori promotes learning through physical Action and hands-on experience. Children are taught to do real activities that help them understand concepts and skills in a concrete way.

Montesorr Indicator View

The Montessori method is a learning method with elements of play (learning by play) so that students feel motivated, active and full of enthusiasm in learning. The use of the Montessori method works well when used in conjunction with play equipment. Playing makes learning comfortable for children without making the learning offered boring. Using this toy also helps children stimulate their motor skills. The development that children receive at this age influences their future lives. Because child development during this golden age only occurs once in human development, therefore we need to develop children and their skills from an early age, these skills become a value for children.

According to Maria Montessori, the Montessori method is a method that emphasizes adapting children and the learning environment according to their level of development and the role of physical activity in the acquisition of learning concepts and practical skills. Montessori's view of children can be understood through the following concepts: (a) Children create their own mental development (Child's Self-Construction). b) Sensitive period. (c) Absorption of thought. (d) Formation of one's soul (self-building). (Jaipul L.R, 2011; James E.J, 2011). One of the most important goals of the Montessori learning model is for children to have the freedom necessary for their own development. (Masitoh, 2010). The use of the Montessori method is very beneficial for children in their development, because this method is suitable for children's growth and development, especially for the development of their independence. (Montessori, 2013). Independence is the behavior or attitude of being able to take the initiative, being able to overcome obstacles/problems, being confident and doing everything yourself without the help of others (Yamin, 2013).

After collecting information, researching and evaluating Maria's educational theory, here the researcher analyzes Maria's methods through the lens of educational philosophy. From the results of the analysis of parenting methods carried out by researchers and Maria, we actually see the core of Maria's thinking or parenting theory, namely that Maria wants freedom in raising her children. In the philosophy of education, there are three theories related to the knowledge transfer process, namely the theory of nativism, the theory of empiricism, and the theory of convergence. Nativist theory supported by naturalistic theory states that innate factors are stronger than external factors. This opinion was initiated by Schounpenhouer and supported by J. J. Rousseau with his theory of naturalism. The theory of empiricism is supported by J.F. Hebart with psychological association theory. Empiricism was formed by John Locke with his very famous theory, namely tabublarasa. He stated: children from birth are still like tabularasa (white paper). A child can only act if he receives something from outside through his sense organs. Therefore external influences are stronger than human nature.

Convergence theory (fusion theory). Pioneer W. Stern. According to W. Stern, the two forces represented by the two groups above can be combined into one because they influence each other. It could be that a child's abilities will not develop if everything in his environment does not influence

him. As with the environment, it has no real influence unless the human spirit reacts. The result of the combination of these two factors was described by W. Stern as the diagonal of a parallelogram. Of these two factors, the factor that most strongly determines a person's or individual's personality traits (Prawira, 2012: 344-346). In the context of Islamic educational philosophy, these three concepts are also known, because children have innate (blessed) qualities which in Islamic educational philosophy are called fitrah, namely recognizing the influence of the environment, also recognizing both; innate elements and environmental influences. In Islam there is a process of inspiring two elements, namely negative elements and positive elements in humans (fa alhamaha fujuraha wa taqwaha). If we analyze Maria's teaching method using these three theories, it can be said that Maria's educational method adheres to nativism. This analysis is shown by Maria's attitude of giving complete freedom to her students.

There are many values in the Islamic religion, but the integration is very visible in this research, the researcher: Montessori philosophy places a strong emphasis on active learning and exploration by children. This supports constructivist epistemology, which argues that knowledge is constructed by individuals through experience and interaction with their environment, The Montessori approach also values the teacher's role as an observer and facilitator, not just a transmitter of information. This reflects an epistemological view that emphasizes the importance of formative assessment and a deep understanding of children's learning processes, Montessori epistemology is closely related to child development theory, especially Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which emphasizes developmental stages and the importance of children's understanding of the world (George, 1912).

Epistemology in Montessori philosophy for early childhood emphasizes different approaches to learning. Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor who created her method in the early 20th century, viewed children as individuals who were active in their learning process. Some key elements of Montessori epistemology for early childhood are: Active Learning: Montessori believed that children learn by doing. They stimulate exploration and experimentation, allowing children to experience their own physical and social worlds, Freedom of Choice: In Montessori epistemology, children have the freedom to choose their own learning activities. This develops a sense of responsibility and autonomy in the learning process, Equipment and Environment: Montessori creates an environment that supports children's learning with equipment adapted to their size and needs. This helps children to develop motor and cognitive skills, Independent Learning: Montessori promotes independent learning where children are taught to manage their time and focus on their own tasks. This allows the development of deeper understanding.

It is Observation and interaction: Montessori teachers act as observers who monitor the child's development and provide guidance when needed. This allows for a more appropriate response to the child's individual needs. Montessori epistemology emphasizes a holistic learning process, which combines the physical, cognitive and social aspects of children. This approach gives children the opportunity to understand the world around them through hands-on experience and focuses on developing lifelong skills, not just the accumulation of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The case study discusses the epistemology of Montessori philosophy for early childhood education, emphasizing active learning, independence, freedom of choice in learning activities, and holistic development. Montessori created unique educational institutions for preschool children, implementing her ideas with specialized staff. The Montessori method promotes independent work, with a formative assessment focusing on individual development rather than comparisons. Children are encouraged to be active explorers, building understanding through direct experience, fostering cognitive and social skills, providing a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Islamic education holds great importance for Muslims, shaping individuals into noble, devout, and morally upright beings. It guides thoughts, behaviors, actions, and emotions based on Islamic teachings, aiming to fulfill the goals of Islamic teachings in all aspects of life. Islamic education encompasses beliefs, rituals, ethics, as well as physical, mental, and health aspects. Scholars like Zakiyah Daradjad and Noeng Muhadjir emphasize that Islamic education covers various fields, including religion, faith, practice, morals, manners, and physical well-being. The Qur'an, specifically Surat Luqman (verses 12-19), exemplifies the ideal model of Islamic education. Luqman Al-Hakim is portrayed as

an educator who obtains wisdom from Allah, showcasing how Islamic education contributes to personal growth and maturity according to Islamic teachings. The verses provide insights into the comprehensive nature of Islamic education, emphasizing a holistic approach to human development.

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