



Islamic Religion through Islamic Montessori Learning: A Curriculum Development for Early Childhood

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the inculcation of Islamic religious values for early childhood through the Montessori method. The method initiated by Maria Montessori, Italy has its own challenges due to the different years and places. This research was conducted in a kindergarten with an Islamic Montessori curriculum in Yogyakarta. The method in this research is qualitative analysis with data sources from observation and in-depth interviews with informants. The results of this study indicate that the cultivation of Islamic religious values is carried out in the Montessori learning process. The learning curriculum indirectly contributes to the model of inculcating Islamic values. The form of Islamic religious values is instilled with habituation, collaborative lectures with fun activities for children, and in the provision of teaching materials and food served to children. This method was successfully implemented in kindergarten with the expected results. In addition, Montessori learning does not experience difficulties and is very easy to use to apply Islamic religious values even though they are initiated from different places and distances.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Islamic Montessori, Early Childhood.*

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan penanaman nilai-nilai agama Islam bagi anak usia dini melalui metode Montessori. Metode yang dicetuskan oleh Maria Montessori, Italia ini memiliki tantangan sendiri dikarenakan tahun dan tempat yang berbeda jauh. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di taman kanak-kanak dengan kurikulum Islamic Montessori di Yogyakarta. Metode dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis kualitatif dengan sumber data dari observasi dan wawancara mendalam dengan narasumber. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penanaman nilai-nilai agama Islam dilaksanakan dalam proses pembelajaran Montessori. Kurikulum pembelajaran secara tidak langsung ikut andil dalam model penanaman nilai-nilai Agama Islam. Adapun bentuk nilai agama Islam ditanamkan dengan pembiasaan, ceramah yang dikolaborasikan dengan kegiatan yang menyenangkan bagi anak, dan dalam penyediaan bahan ajar maupun makanan yang disajikan kepada anak. Metode ini berhasil diimplementasikan di taman kanak-kanak dengan hasil yang sesuai harapan. Selain itu, pembelajaran Montessori tidak mengalami kesulitan dan sangat mudah dipakai untuk

menerapkan nilai-nilai agama Islam meskipun dicetuskan dari tempat dan jarak yang berbeda jauh.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum, Montessori Islam, PAUD

A. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood has characteristics like to play so that appropriate learning for children is carried out in a way that is fun for children (Chrysa Pui, 2019: 628). Learning that uses the right method for early childhood will produce meaningful learning for children. This meaningful learning will help children to be able to understand the knowledge provided by the surrounding environment (Batubara, 2017: 30). One of the efforts to provide religious learning for early childhood is to choose the right learning method. The selection of this method is based on educational goals, the needs of the surrounding environment, as well as the conditions and needs of early childhood. One of the methods used in Montessori learning. Montessori learning is integrated with Islamic religious values in the learning process.

Montessori learning was originally coined by Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor. Montessori develops learning that aims to optimize child development as well as possible. Montessori believes that every individual is unique so that activities in Montessori learning are made to suit early childhood and can be developed. The development is carried out not only by developing learning methods but also by learning media. The media used in Montessori learning are designed with media that are attractive to children and not harmful. In addition, the media used will also help children to build their knowledge that can be used individually or in groups with their peers (Loughland, 2019: 2).

One of the developments in the Montessori method is to include Islamic religious values in it. The Islamic religious values applied in the learning process have been compiled and sourced by the teacher. Teachers in searching for Islamic religious values must be following those sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith so that the knowledge given to children can be accounted for (Aslamaci, 2013: 285). These Islamic religious values are not only applied to the learning process in the classroom but are also applied in the preparation of learning. For example, the foodstuffs given to children must be halal and tayyib. The learning media used must be safe and not harmful to children. The media used can collaborate with the media used in the Montessori method. One example is a flashcard of the names of the letters in the Quran contained in the language area. In addition to the names of the letters in the Quran, it can also be with the names of prophets and angels, halal and haram foods, and so on (Ghamra-Oui, 2020: 321). Learning planning from the preparation process, and supporting learning is then compiled in the Islamic Montessori curriculum of the school (Grigg, 2016: 121).

This research is a qualitative research with a case study approach. The research was conducted at the Islamic Montessori Integrated Kindergarten Budi Mulia Dua Seturan. The subjects in this study were educators at the school. Data collection was carried out by observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and school principals, and documentation. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using the data analysis method by Creswell. This data analysis includes data collection, data reduction, data coding, data categorization, and presentation and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2018: 89). The validity of the data was tested by using triangulation, using reference materials, and member checks.

B. DISCUSSION

Islamic Montessori learning at Budi Mulia Dua Seturan Kindergarten has been implemented since 2018. It started with the foundation leader who was interested in Montessori learning and started to learn it. According to him, Montessori learning can help children to grow and develop optimally with interesting and varied activities. Montessori learning also facilitates activities based on the different characteristics of children. Children are unique and active learners. Children construct their own knowledge from what they see, observe, and feel. Adults only need to provide the right stimulation to the child. Giving the right stimulus will have a positive impact on the growth and development of children. This is what finally made him determined to implement a Montessori school that was integrated with Islamic religious values by following under the identity of the foundation.

The main component in learning that supports the implementation of Islamic Montessori is the curriculum. The curriculum is prepared by taking into account several things, such as the culture of a region/country, the needs of students, and the conditions of the surrounding environment (Roy, 2018: 105). When schools feel the need to hold interesting learning through Montessori, then Montessori learning is developed by incorporating Islamic religious values in it. Islam is applied to carry out learning rooted Islam in all aspects of learning. The applied Montessori curriculum is integrated with Islamic religious values. One application is to link all aspects of development in the learning process with Islamic religious values. The provision of halal and thoyyiban food ingredients is also very important in its application. because every food we eat, every water we use, and every wind we breathe must come from halal and thoyyiban substances. which is lawful and good for our bodies.

The curriculum development carried out by the school is carried out by combining the curriculum that has been applied with the Islamic Montessori method. The curriculum is flexible, meaning that the curriculum can be changed and adjusted by educators (Lear, 2019: 160). This is done by looking at the curriculum that has been applied Beforehand. Furthermore, an analysis of Montessori learning is carried out and relates it to Islamic religious values that will be applied. In observing and linking between the old curriculum and the curriculum that will be examined, special accuracy and foresight are needed. Teachers should not be careless in analyzing the old curriculum and the new curriculum. The thing that must be understood and always remembered is that Islamic religious values must be applied in all aspects of learning. Be it in the learning process, activities outside the classroom, even to the food given to children.

After that, the teacher made a detailed description of how to apply Islamic Montessori. How to prepare, how learning will be carried out, what learning materials and media will be used, food ingredients prepared for children, what habits will be instilled in the daily learning process, and so on. All of this must be prepared in detail and carefully so that nothing is left behind so that learning objectives can be achieved properly. In the implementation process, the teacher must make the curriculum a guide. In addition, the teacher must also understand the characteristics of the child. One of the characteristics of children is that they like to play. Play will help children to construct their own knowledge in a fun way. Playing is an interesting activity for children so that in Montessori learning activities are carried out by playing. Children are free to choose their own activities that interest them (Lillard, 2017: 44). Furthermore, the companion will guide the child to carry out the Montessori activity.

Islamic religious learning in Islamic Montessori can be carried out with stand-alone subjects or by including them in daily learning (Daun, 2018: 25). When guiding children when carrying out Montessori activities, the companion will insert Islamic religious values in the process. For example, when the spindle box is made with wood as the main material. The companion will ask the child, "Where did the wood come from? Then who was the tree created by? In other activities, the companion classically provides learning about the continent. The companion explained the names of the continents in the world and the countries in them. Furthermore, the companion explained that God created humans with various skin colors, eye colors, gender, and so on. Then the companion explained that God is great. He is able to create humans of various kinds and nothing is the same. So as humans, we must respect each other.

In learning with habituation, the teacher must be able to provide material and attitudes that do not collide. The point is, between the words and deeds done must be the same, should not contradict each other. Likewise, with routine habituation, all teachers must have the same perception about something, for example reading prayers (Memon, 2016: 76). It would be very strange when in one school, the reading of prayers from one teacher to another was different. This will cause the child to be confused and not understand the material well. In addition to prayer, the habit of praying before and after studying is also applied. At the time before learning, the child will pray in Arabic which will then be translated by the child in English. After that, the teacher gave an apperception about the activities/themes that day in an interesting way. Children will find it difficult to understand something if the theme/discussion given is not close to the child. Children will feel unfamiliar with these activities. The material/theme given must be around the child and keep up with the times. As the curriculum must be flexible with the times, Islamic religious learning is also provided while keeping up with the times. So that the knowledge given is the latest science (Tan, 2015: 158).

Islamic learning methods and materials between educational institutions can be applied in different ways, depending on the goals and needs of the school (Tayeb, 2018: 54). This is based on the resources available in schools, both human resources and natural resources. The utilization of existing resources around the school will be very beneficial. First, the media and materials are easy to obtain. Second, the media and materials provided do not require a fee or are obtained at a low cost. Religious learning also explains the relationship between humans and the Creator as a form of gratitude and harmony in the world (Malik, 2019: 5). Religious learning for early childhood in addition to providing an understanding of their religion and an introduction to how to worship also provides habits that will lead children to behavior based on the Koran. The introduction of children to God is done in a simple way, which does not need to issue verses that will only confuse the child. The existence of God who cannot be seen by naked eyes by children has made them confused about the existence of God. We do not need to add to the burden of their minds by teaching Islam in a complicated way. Children learn from the concrete to the abstract. So that Islamic religious learning, especially introducing children to God is also done in simple things, in language that is easy for children to understand, and with fun activities. Teachers are indeed required to be able to design creative and innovative learning activities. One of its functions is to help children understand a concept easily.

Teachers in providing religious learning must be able to create a comfortable and friendly classroom atmosphere for children. A comfortable and friendly classroom atmosphere will increase children's interest in learning (Memon, 2016: 76). When the teacher succeeds in creating a pleasant learning atmosphere, the children's interest in

learning will increase and learning objectives will be achieved. Conversely, when the teacher fails to create a pleasant learning atmosphere, the child will feel bored and the child will feel forced to learn. If this happens, the learning objectives will not be achieved and will affect the children's learning spirit. In providing material, the teacher should not be biased and side with something that is not believed to be true. Teachers must always learn and look for information that can be accounted for (Aslamaci, 2013: 285). The teacher must give the truth in everything he says to the child. the teacher must not provide wrong information, which can lead to divisions, especially divisions between religious communities. Islam as a religion that brings peace must be applied in daily behavior. Instilling the value of tolerance is one of the important things in religious learning, especially for early childhood.

The tolerance taught to early childhood is in the form of tolerance with fellow friends, with their teachers, and also with people who have different beliefs from them. Tolerance with friends is shown by mutual respect between friends, not forcing the will and thoughts. Tolerance to the teacher is shown by respecting the teacher and listening when the teacher is talking. tolerance with people of different beliefs is shown by not judging and remaining willing to be friends with others. God created human beings with various kinds of differences and it is those differences that unite them. Media in Montessori activities can be adapted to the cultivation of Islamic religious values. For example, in the language area, companions can tell stories to children about matters related to Islam. Like telling stories about the journey of the Apostle called Isra 'Miraj, the importance of tolerance and empathy, and so on. Moral messages from stories can be conveyed to children as children's knowledge of language vocabulary and Islamic religious values (Zia, 2017: 101).

These Islamic religious values include the values of tolerance, empathy, procedures for worshipping, acting, and thinking (Achituv, 2019: 463). Islamic religious values in the Montessori curriculum will also provide children with the habituation to carry out daily activities based on Islamic religious values (Abu-Nimer, 2017: 164). Other activities in the theme of the homeland can be carried out by Montessori activities in the form of introducing maps of Indonesia and introducing Indonesian culture. The value of Islam is included in the introduction of religions in Indonesia. The companion explained about the diversity of cultures in Indonesia, one of which was religion. As human beings, we must respect each other and not attack or hate each other, because Islam is a religion of peace.

1. Islamic Montessori Learning

Montessori learning values differences in individual characteristics. The learning is designed as attractive as possible and can be done by children with various characteristics. All knowledge is given through interesting and complete media and tools so that all children's curiosity can be answered in this lesson. When children feel interested in an activity, they will repeat it. They will really concentrate and stick to that one activity (Gobry, 2019: 65).

Taking advantage of this, arranged learning that is interesting for children. Learning that will stimulate all the senses in him. On the one hand, learning is fun and carried out by learning, as well as meaningful learning for children. Where children will be able to absorb the informations they receive and be able to apply it to their daily activities. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has slightly hampered the learning process. Montessori learning, which is usually done in class, during this pandemic must be carried out at home. However, this situation does not dampen the enthusiasm of teachers to continue to provide

learning services. Montessori learning during the pandemic is carried out by providing tools and materials that children can take home. For example, in the language area, children will be given each card related to the learning theme. For the learning process, it is carried out by video conferencing or with video tutorials from the teacher. Montessori learning which was initially carried out in schools consisted of 2 to 3 activities. However, because learning is carried out from home, 1 to 2 Montessori lessons are given. The rest is done by working on the worksheet.

2. Implementing Islamic Religious Values in Islamic Montessori

Islamic Montessori will help children to better understand and know Islam in a fun and varied way. In circle time, the teacher will explain the theme of the day and have a conversation with the children. Do not forget the teacher provides opportunities for children to speak and express their opinions. Giving children the opportunity to speak will increase their confidence so that they will want to express what they feel and think. Furthermore, the teacher will provide opportunities for children to play with Montessori tools according to the child's interests. This opportunity and freedom provided will foster a sense of recognition in children and will make children make decisions with considerations that do not harm themselves and others (Wang, 2018).

When the child chooses one of the Montessori activities, the teacher will ask the child to pick up the equipment on the shelf. Children have been told and taught how to carry Montessori tools. Activities are carried out one on one or one child is guided by one teacher. It can also be in groups depending on the material or time available. Then the play tool will be brought to the work area. This work area is made of a small carpet measuring 1.5 x 1 meter. The teacher will give instructions on how to do the activity with several rules such as: with a low volume, not too much explanation, and more emphasis on the child's observation power. When the child does the activity, the teacher will observe calmly and do not interrupt directly when the child makes a mistake. With this, the child will learn to think for himself about his actions and the consequences. He will also learn how to solve problems when he makes mistakes.

During this Montessori activity, the teacher instills Islamic religious values. For example, by inviting children to say "*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*" and "*Alḥamd lillāh rabb al-Ālamīn*" before and after carrying out activities. The activity of praying before and after this activity will make children accustomed to always saying prayers in every daily activity and in their hearts the name of Allah will always be embedded.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Islamic Montessori

In its application, there are several things that are supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing Islamic Montessori. The inhibiting factor will be an advantage for the school if it can be managed properly. Some of the inhibiting factors that occur can be analyzed for their causes and then followed up for resolution. This will be a very good input for schools to develop themselves.

The first supporting factor is the increasing awareness of parents about early childhood education, which does not only prepare them to enter elementary school. But more than that, early childhood education, in kindergarten is primarily a place for children to develop themselves with various activities. Interesting activities will lead children to be able to build their knowledge well. In early childhood education, children will also understand their own existence, their role in their social environment, and how they should behave in that social environment. Parents who realize the importance of early childhood education will be very supportive of the school program. This will lead to harmonious cooperation between school and home in helping the development and

growth of children. On the other hand, parents who do not understand the importance of early childhood education will find it difficult or easy to disagree with school programs. This will later lead to a harmonious relationship between school and home so that learning will be hampered.

Even during the pandemic, parents are able to divide their time to work and help their children learn from home. Parents want to be invited to work together to provide a comfortable learning environment for children to continue to grow and develop from home. The teacher gives the activities that the child will do that day to the parents. Then the teacher provides learning guidance through video conferencing. When participating in video conferences, children participate enthusiastically and parents also accompany children beside them. After that, parents don't forget to report the child's progress while at home. Parents also consulted with teachers about the obstacles they found while they were guiding their children to study at home. Based on this consultation, schools can arrange lessons that are easy for children to carry out from home.

On the other hand, religious values are also important to be given to children as provisions in the hereafter. For now, the introduction of religious values can be done in various ways. One of them is through the daily habituation of children. In Montessori activities, Islamic religious values are applied in a fun way. This method is done by being non-judgmental and forcing the child to sit, listen, and obey what he is told. Children are invited to think and build their own thoughts about Islamic religious values. The teacher only provides the right stimulus and provides opportunities for children to process it themselves. This will be a meaningful learning for the child and will familiarize the child to always think when going to do something.

Meanwhile, the inhibiting factor of planting Islamic Montessori is that not all schools are able to apply Montessori learning in the learning process. The high cost of learning tools and media is one of the causes. Montessori tools and media are specially designed for Montessori learning by considering several things such as beauty and safety for children. In addition, not all schools and teachers understand Montessori learning well. There are several levels of learning materials, various tools and media, and language instructions used in Montessori. A special license is required for schools to be able to apply Montessori learning in the process.

The inculcation of Islamic religious values is carried out from an early age to instill knowledge and one's religious behavior. Early age which is in the age range of 0-6 years is a golden age for children to learn something optimally. Instilling Islamic religious values in early childhood can be done by various methods, such as by example, lectures, and habituation. The selection of the right materials and methods will help children to understand the cultivation of values well. Montessori learning that is integrated with Islamic religious values is considered capable of helping children to understand Islamic religious values well. The activities carried out in Islamic Montessori are varied and interesting for children. Islamic religious values are given by paying attention to the content of the material and interesting methods. Before being given to children, Islamic religious material is reviewed by the teacher by discussing with teachers who have a good understanding of Islam.

C. Conclusion

The application of Islamic Montessori is carried out in every aspect and sequence of learning. When the child arrives at school, when the child is active in the classroom,

outside the classroom, and when the child returns home. The provision of food for children that is halal and thoyyiban is also a must. It is believed that everything that is good that enters our body, will produce good behavior and thoughts as well. On the other hand, all the bad things that enter our bodies will result in bad behavior and thoughts.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, learning must be carried out at home. Therefore, the teacher anticipates by providing Montessori media and materials that can be brought to the children's homes. The learning process is carried out by video conferencing or with video tutorials from the teacher.

In the end, humans as representatives on earth and Islam as a mercy for the universe must be implemented as well as possible. We as Muslims must carry out our duty on earth by giving and behaving well. Because all our actions are a representation of Islam itself. A good and appropriate teacher's example to children will make them behave the same as a better teacher. Teachers are superheroes who are highly idolized by children. Therefore, each of our actions must be in accordance with Islamic religious values.

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