

APE (MEANS OF EDUCATIONAL GAMES) UTILIZATION IN BUILDING
CHARACTER OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Sri Kadarwati (kadarwati@ut.ac.id)

Nurmawati (nurmawati@ut.ac.id)

Yusak Suharno (yusaks@ut.ac.id)

Binti Muflikah (binti@ut.ac.id)

UPBJJ-UT Semarang

Abstract

Early children are those in age interval of 0-6 / 0-8 years at which their extraordinary growth and development create a variety of uniqueness on each. The main early age in kindergarten period is an effective age to develop the children's potential. This development effort can be performed in various ways including character building in their teaching process. Early childhood learning must be suited to the child's character, which involve enjoyable, interesting, and encouraging learning for children. APE is a right choice, because APE can facilitate to create imagination and grow the child's character.

APE as a means of play can refer to the current paradigm of learning processes, that of learning while playing, because playing is realization of self-development of the child's life. Along with the development of technology, and the selected APE are media-based APE, in this case the APE is in animated form. Finally, early childhood character building can be performed by activities of playing with Media-based APE in the form of animation.

Keywords: APE, character, early childhood

PRELIMINARY

Character of a child is mainly built in the age of 3 to 10 years, in that age special attention of parents is very crucial. Parents have an obligation to determine what kind of input to be given to their child's mind, so that they can shape quality character of their children. To achieve a quality character is not as easy as reversing palm, it requires a long process. If we, as parents, give correct input into the child's mind, one day the child will grow as someone whose quality character of the parents' dream. Quality characters need to be formed and nurtured from an early age. Early childhood is a crucial time for building one's character. Experts say the failure of character building on someone at an early age will impact to personal problems in adult life. Therefore, moral education through character building as early as possible is the key to be able to create mature human with excellent character.

In the era of globalization with increasingly high competition in all areas, moral decline occurs in our country, this is evidenced by increasingly frequent violence, violations of regulation, frequent fights among teenagers, and damaging juvenile delinquency. Besides, academic achievement of students is not accompanied by good performance in attitudes and

behavior, students are smart in academic field but hard to be polite in front of the crowd. That kind of phenomenon and reality should not be allowed to continue to pass. What kind of future generations will be if this problem does not find a way out. One of efforts to build character of the children is through education at schools. To realize the implementation of teaching and learning activities both in class and outside of class, dynamics and creativity are needed for the teacher and the students to continuously have a new experience and do not feel bored in doing learning activities. Thus, to create a new experience and avoid a feeling of bored, means of educational games (APE) are used in learning.

APE as a means of playing can refer to the current paradigm of the learning process that is learning while playing. Early childhood education is in line with playing itself because playing is realization of self-development in the child's life. Children can develop their potential through playing. Through playing activities containing education, children's cognitive is stimulated to generate emotional development, social development, and physical development. Educational games can also lead to great fantasies in the child's mind, and it will further increase the child's interest in the game. APE is able to create the children's imagination and grow their character, therefore the teaching system in the schools should be in accordance with character of the children, begun with fun and interesting learning. By fun and exciting learning, it will accumulate in the global learning, focused on both good left and right brain.

Character building itself must be suited to Indonesian culture that are virtuous, intelligent and religious. Character is defined as a way of life, evolving through values and beliefs and is not universal. So early childhood character building can be performed through playing activities by means of educational games (APE).

DISCUSSION

Means Of Educational Games (APE)

Learning through play means activities of learning through educational and directed games. In learning through play, children are brought to a various condition in a game to create a truly animates and pleasant atmosphere in accordance with their respective roles. In doing so, learning by playing in early childhood requires a media. Media of early childhood learning is a means of educational games (APE). APE can make children become more happy and able to explore an appropriate learning theme, then the teacher must provide the educational tools.

1. Definition Educational Games Tools

Educational Games Tool, according to Adam (1975), are all forms of games designed to give educational experience or learning experiences to its players, including traditional and modern games which containing values of education or teaching. Educational Games Tool is not just a game, because there are educational values in it. Children do not only perform a usual game but also will acquire a wide range of development according to their age. Educational games can be assumed effective because it can stimulate children's cognitive, including improving their ability to concentrate and solve problems. In addition, educational games are not only required to make children enjoy the game but also to make them be conscientious and diligent when working on such tools.

Furthermore Suratno (2005), suggests that educational game tool is a games tool designed specifically for educational purposes. A means of educational games is known as a manipulative tool—manipulative means be used skillfully, can be used according to the will and the thought and imagination of children. Educational games tools are able to optimally stimulate the interest of children, and develop various types of child potential, and used in a variety of activities.

2. The essence of Playing in Early Childhood

Playing for early childhood is important, because their age is an age of playing. Play is the real world of children, by playing children have activities and socialize with the environment. By playing too, children will develop imagination, creativity, and they will get experience, knowledge, and skills. According to Ratna (2007), there is no reason for not involving play activities as learning activities. It is precisely at the age of children, learning activities will be more effective and quickly understood when they play. So playing is one of basic needs of children as a form of learning activities for them. Furthermore Slamet Suyanto (2005), explained the reasons why early childhood love to play, as follows:

a. energy excess

That children have the energy used for life. If their life is normal, they will take an extra energy then used for playing.

b. Recreation and reaction

In this case a play is intended to refresh themselves. If the energy is already used for activities, children become tired and less passionate. By playing, children regain their energy so that they are more active and cheerful.

c. Instincts

Playing is second nature (instinct), that are useful to prepare themselves for future adult roles.

d. Recapitulation

Play is an event of repeating what has been done by their ancestors as well as preparing for life today.

3. Benefits of Playing

Play performed in learning activities will not only favored by early age children, but also very beneficial for their development. Thus, it's suggested to use playing in every early childhood learning. Therefore, early childhood have no day without playing, and for them, playing is a very important learning activities. More specifically, here are some benefits of playing for early childhood.

Muliawan (2009), suggests the benefits of play for early childhood, as follows:

- a. Motor Benefits, the benefits associated with positive values of the child's playing activity in relation to the physical condition of the child. For example are elements of health, skill, dexterity, and specific physical ability.
- b. Benefits of affection, the game benefits associated with the psychological development of children. For example, the instinct, feeling, emotion, character, and personality.
- c. Spiritual benefits, the benefits of playing activities that become a basis for building values and the sanctity of the whole human morals.
- d. The benefits of balance, the benefits of playing activity functioned to train and develop guidelines between positive and negative values of a game.

4. Requirements to Consider Before Selecting Educational Games

Educational games must function to develop various aspects of children development, such as motor, language, intelligence, and socialization. Besides the tools of educational games must be played with different variations, but not too hard to use in order that the child will not be frustrated, or too easy that a child will get bored quickly. In connection to this, according to Maya (2011), the requirements need to be considered in selecting educational games are:

a. Easy and Simple Design

We recommend simple design of educational games. The most important thing to consider is appropriateness to the goals and target of education, so that children are not burdened with complexity.

b. Multifunction

Educational games are suitable for a boy or a girl, so it can also be used according to creativity and passion of children.

c. Interesting

Educational games should be able to motivate children and does not require intensive supervision, so that the child will be free to express their creativity.

d. Big size

Educational games should be in large or big size because it will be easier for a child to hold and avoid possible harm, for example, is inserted into the mouth, then you should choose large equipment.

e. Durable and as Needed

Educational games should be durable and appropriate to the desired goals, according to needs and do not take large part of a room.

f. Encouraging children to play together.

We recommend to chose a tool that allow them to socialize with their friends using all their creativity.

g. Develop the power of fantasy

Educational games are expected to develop the power of fantasy and imagination of children. Although the design of educational game tools is simple it should remain attractive, both in its color and form. If it sounds, its voice should be clear. Tools of educational games must be accepted by all cultures because the shape is very common and should not be damaged. If there are broken parts, it should be easily replaced. In addition to easy maintenance, the material should be readily available, and the price is affordable by the general people.

5. Why Children Play?

Slamet Suyanto (2005), described the reasons why early childhood love to play, including:

a. Energy Excess

That children have the energy used for life. If their life is normal, they will take an extra energy then used for playing.

b. Recreation and Reaction

In this case a play is intended to refresh themselves. If the energy is already used for activities, children become tired and less passionate. By playing, children regain their energy so that they are more active and cheerful.

c. Instincts

Playing is second nature (instinct), that are useful to prepare themselves for future adult roles.

d. Recapitulation

Play is an event of repeating what has been done by their ancestors as well as preparing for life today.

6. Benefits of Playing

Muliawan (2009), suggests the benefits of playing for early childhood, as follows:

a. Motor Benefits, the benefits associated with positive values of the child's playing activity in relation to the physical condition of the child. For example are elements of health, skill, dexterity, and specific physical ability.

b. Benefits of affection, the game benefits associated with the psychological development of children. For example, the instinct, feeling, emotion, character, and personality.

c. Spiritual benefits, the benefits of playing activities that become a basis for building values and the sanctity of the whole human morals.

d. The benefits of balance, the benefits of playing activity functioned to train and develop guidelines between positive and negative values of a game.

7. Media-based APE

Learning is defined as a process of cooperation between teachers and students in the use of all existing potential and sources, both potential sourced from within the students themselves, learning styles, as well as potential existing outside the student, such as environment, facilities, learning resources as an effort to achieve specific learning goals. Teachers are required to be able to create an interesting, fun, and never boring learning process, using interesting, creative and innovative media. In order to create a creative and innovative learning model, multimedia-based learning with the use of animation is the right choice for improving quality of learners. However, the development of multimedia-based learning by using animation in improving quality of the young generation must be balanced with the character building of early generation.

Fast evolving Science and Information Technology (Science and Technology) need to be balanced with faith and character of the younger generation that reflects the strong and resilient personality in welcoming the development of science and technology related to learning. With the developments of science and technology, multimedia based teachers can use it in the learning process. Many benefits obtained by using multimedia, such as more interesting learning, and even children can learn while playing. That is why the

selected tool of educational games is a media based. The chosen media based educational games tools is animation. Animation is instrumental in learning to improve the intelligence of students. Intelligence to be developed through means of media-based educational games in form of animation are Linguistic intelligence or intelligence of words, mathematical logic, numbers intelligence and causal Spatial, images and pictures intelligence, social intrapersonal intelligence, intelligence to understand themselves.

Examples on the use of Media-based APE with animation, is learning process to introduce numbers and letters, the students were given the knowledge of:

1. Learn to mention number 1 to 9
2. Learn to mention letters A to Z
3. Learn to Know Form of Numbers And Letters

Media Used are Pictures of Numbers And Letters

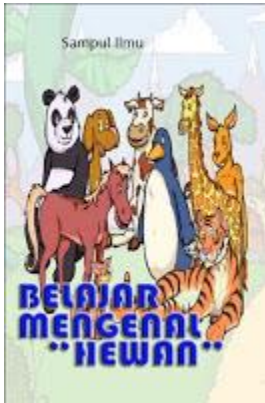


Learn to Know Animals

In This Learning Method, Participants Given Knowledge of:

1. Learn to mention Name of Animals
2. Learning to Know Shapes of Animal
3. Learning to Know Sounds of Animal
4. Learn to Calculate Number of Animals

Media Used is Animal Pictures

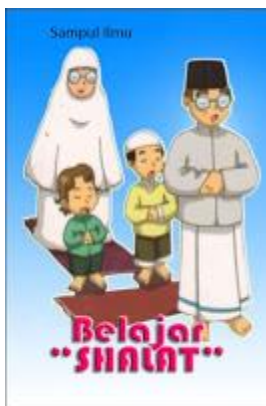


Learning steps of Praying

In This Study Method Participants Given Awareness

1. Learning Stages of Movement in Prayer
2. Learning Stages of Prayer

Media Used is a picture of Prayer Procedure



Character

1. What is character?

Character is a hallmark of someone that differs from others entirely. According to J.P. Caplin (2001) the character, the heart, the behavior, habit are quality or trait that remains constantly and eternally can be used to identify a person, an object or event. Characters more concern on moral values.

Etymologically the term character is derived from the Greek, *karasso* meaning that blueprint, basic format, and prints such as fingerprint. In this case, the character is defined as something that can not be controlled by human intervention. Meanwhile, according to Indonesian dictionary, character is defined as character, traits, and habits. This definition is consistent with the description of Language Center in Department of National Education who interpret the character as innate, heart, soul, personality, behavior, personality, and temperament.

Based on some definitions of character described above, it can be concluded that the character is closely related to all forms of person's behavior in everyday life. In everyday life, a person's character will have an impact on him, and all agree that the character is an important aspect for the success of a person in the future. A strong character will bring to strong mentality, hard work, dare to wade a long process, and braved to struggle opposing storm and danger. People with strong character can be a leader and role model for their surroundings. Successful people have a lot of positive character. Instead, people with weak character, has no chance to be a winner, he just will be a loser, easy to give up, do not have principles, timid, careless, and his/her movements can be easily read by other people. Therefore, character building is necessity for the nation to build a winner mentality for the young generation in the future.

According Doni Koesoema Albertus (2011), a character is associated with a temperament giving him a definition emphasized on psychosocial factors associated with educational and environmental context. Character is considered the same as personality. Personality regarded as characteristic or style or unique trait of a person, which is formed by values received from the environment, such as family influence on childhood and innate from birth.

2. Objective of Character Building

According to Zubaedi (2011), some objectives of Character Building are:

- a. Develop the heart / conscience / affective potential of learners as human beings and citizens who have character values of the nation.
- b. Develop commendable habits and attitudes of learners and in line with universal values and cultural traditions as religious nation.
- c. grew up spirit of leadership and responsibility of learners as the future generation.
- d. Develop the ability of learners to be independent, creative, human with insightful nationality.
- e. Develop a school environment as a safe and honest learning environment which is full of creativity and friendship, with a high sense of powerful nationality

3. Character Building Benefits

Through Character Building, is expected to reduce the negative issues affecting students. Starting from unfavorable behavior, delinquency, dishonesty, disrespectful, had a habit is not good. All this is inseparable from Character Building has not been established at each of the students in the school.

According to Muhammad Fadillah & Lilif Mualifatu Khorida (2013), the benefits of character building is to lead people to return to their nature, which is always decorate their

lives with virtues naturally embedded in human. By Character Building, moral degradation in this nation is expected to be reduced. Of course this is not easy, it requires a struggle and hard work from all parties. Character Building in early childhood is one concrete manifestation to prepare strong character generations that will bring to progress and prosperity of Indonesia.

Related to the statement Muhammad Fadillah & Lilif Mualifatu above, character building is very correct to start from early childhood. Because if children has been introduced and taught to good behavior, religiocity, decency, honesty, respect for others in their early age; later the child will adopt it as a habit since an early age and eventually forms a character with their respective characteristics.

4. Function of character building

According to Zubaedi (2011), there are some functions of Character Building include:

a. The function of potential establishment and development

In this function, Character Building serves to establish and develop the potential of learners in order to have good thought, heart, and behavior in accordance with the life philosophy of Pancasila. Therefore, in this context, education should be able to provide more flexibility for learners to develop their potentials and talents in accordance with existing norms.

b. Function of improvement and reinforcement

improvement and reinforcement function means that Character Building serves to improve and strengthen the role of family, educational units, communities, and governments to participate and be responsible for developing potential of citizens and build the nation towards developed, independent, and prosperous nation.

c. Filter function

The latter function of character building is filter function, meaning that Character Building is meant to select its own national culture and screen the cultures of other nations that do not conform with cultural values and character of nation's dignity.

In harmony with the ideas of character building functions proposed by Zubaedi, the implementation of Character Building in schools should be performed well and use proper media in order that education implementation went according to our expectations and ultimately all of Character Building programs in the schools can function properly.

5. Principles of Character Building

The principles here serves as basic reference in the implementation of Character Building. In other words, Character Building should be presented according to the principles determined. Zuaedi (2013), mentioned some of the principles used in the development of Character Building, including:

- a. Sustainable, that the development of character values is an endless process, starting from the beginning of learners entered until completion of an educational unit, even until they have role in the society.
- b. Through all subjects, including the development of self and school culture as well as local content.
- c. Values are not taught, but developed and implemented, this can be conducted through development of their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor capabilities.
- d. The education is conducted by learners with an active and fun process, the teachers must plan the learning activities that lead the students to actively ask questions, finding resources, and gather information from a source, managing the already owned information, and foster cultural and character values in themselves through a variety of learning activities that occur in the classroom, school, and tasks outside the school.

The success of education, especially Character Building is a major goal in the character building of children in the school, thus, the implementation of Character Building should pay attention to the principles of Character Building proposed by Zuaedi.

Definition of Building Character

According to Zainal Aqib (2010), character building is a process or efforts to build, repair, or attempt to form character, habit, traits, morals (manners), human beings (people) that show good temperament and behavior based on the values of Pancasila.

From the definition above, there are three important things, include improving child's character to be a better one. Improve the character, means if a child has a bad character, it is necessary to improve. Whereas, forming character is the work performed by teachers.

Early childhood

Early childhood are individuals undergoing a process of rapid development and are fundamental to their next step of life. they have their own world and characteristics differing from adults. Early childhood has tremendous potential that have to be developed. In developing the potential, the early childhood needs stimulation. Therefore, children need to be stimulated since early with various stimuli so that their potential can grow up well.

Early childhood education is a development effort aimed at children from birth to 6 years conducted through the provision of educational stimulation to help the growth and development of their physical and psychological aspects so that they are ready to enter higher education.

Kids are the parents' greatest asset for their future, lots of great expectations are given by parents to them. Every parent wants the best education for their children. Therefore, the

family is the first and the primary education for children before they entered to formal education in schools.

CONCLUSION

Early childhood is a golden period to give a Character Building for your children, so they can achieve success of life in their future. At an early age, the child's development of physical, mental and spiritual began to form. The character of the child will be formed as a result of learning. At this early age, mental development happened very rapidly and the child's feeling is more sensitive. They like to practice something new.

Early age children are in a period of play. Therefore, in the learning process at schools, it will be more effective by using playing media. In this case, the right tools of game used during early childhood learning are tools that contain educational elements. The game tools or media is means of educational games (APE). Along with the development of science and technology, the APE used in early childhood education for children is Media-based APE, especially animation. Through Media-based APE in the form of animation, the child can make a learning process, especially in the building of character.

Media-based APE in the form of animation is only a supporting media, a key that must be met is creativity and innovation of teachers who carry out the process of the character building. Animation is a moving image depicting an activity in accordance with the theme. In accordance with the theme and objectives to be achieved in the framework of early childhood character building, children will pay attention to that animation. They will mimic the activity shown in the animation. By mimicking the activity shown in the animation as well as implementing in everyday life, it will eventually become a habit. An ongoing habit will eventually form a character according to our expectations. Through Media-based APE in the form of this media, early childhood can learn in a fun and exciting situation while playing.

Efforts of teachers in building character of early childhood require creativity and innovation so that the process of establishing and building the character of early childhood will come smoothly. Therefore Media-based APE in animation is the right choice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aqib Zainal. 2012. *Pendidikan Karakter di Sekolah*. Bandung: CV Yrama Widya
- Dharma Kesuma, dkk. 2011. *Pendidikan Karakter; Kajian Teori dan Praktik di Sekolah*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Doni KoesoemaA. 2010. *Pendidikan Karakter; Strategi Mendidik Anak Zaman Global*. Jakarta: Grasindo

Doni KoesoemaA. 2007. *Pendidikan Karakter*. Jakarta: Grasindo

<http://mayadikina.wordpress.com/2011/05/22/permainan-edukatif-sebagai-media-belajar-anak-usia-dini/>

J.E. Caplin.2001. *Kamus Lengkap Psikologi*. Jakarta: Grafika Persada.

Jasa Ungguh Muliawan. 2009. *Manajemen Play Group dan Taman Kanak-Kanak*. Yogyakarta: Diva Press.

Pius. A.Partanto dan Dahlan Al-Barry. 1994. *Kamus Ilmiah Populer*. Surabaya: Arkola.

Ratna Mega wangi. 2007. *Character parenting Space*. Bandung: Read Publishing Huose

Slamet Suyanto. 2005. *Dasar-dasar Pendidikan anak Usia Dini*. Yogyakarta: Hikayat

Zubaedi.2011. *Desain Pendidikan Karakter; Konsep dan Aplikasinya dalam Lembaga Pendidikan*. Jakarta: Kencana