



## **A Model of Islamic Spiritual Guidance in Early Childhood (the Case of an Islamic Kindergarten in Salatiga, Central Java)**

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### **Abstract**

Spirituality is an important aspect of human life. Spiritual guidance is an effort which focuses on helping individuals to reach better life. The purpose of the study is to find out what model of spiritual guidance applied at Islamic Kindergarten (RA) Ma'arif, Salatiga. This study used qualitative research as methodology and the object is curriculum at Islamic Kindergarten Ma'arif, Salatiga. This study has found that the kindergarten used thematic-integral-holistic in the learning process to apply the spiritual guidance. The researcher used descriptive qualitative method for analyzing the data. To apply this concept, teachers connect all individual aspect from the students. The spiritual guidance focuses on helping individuals to be better in living and delivering welfare of their life through the understanding, applying of values, meaning the principles of life in accordance with religion and universal values. Giving spiritual guidance for early childhood plays an important role in the form of future personality.

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## INTRODUCTION

The spiritual is the natural dimension of life that includes: thinking and feeling about transcendence; ideas about a creator or creative forces in the cosmos; human values; sense of meaning and purpose in life; love and care for self and others; sense of stewardship for the earth and its flora and fauna; and the aesthetic. Spirituality is the way in which a spiritual/moral dimension enters into, or is implied in, the thinking and behavior of individual (Graham Rossiter, 2010:7).

Early childhood (from birth to six) spirituality and their spiritual and religious development are of central relevance and importance to whom they are and whom they will become. All children are innately spiritual. Their identity, sense of belonging and sense of meaning, as well as their purpose in life, are all inextricably intertwined with, and affected by, their spirituality and the ways through which that spiritual might be nurtured. It is acknowledged that if young children's spirituality is ignored, it will fade and be lost (Crompton, 1998).

Children's spiritual development is an as significant aspect of their wellbeing and 'wholeness', as are their personal, cognitive, physical, emotional and social development. Both implicit and explicit guidance of early childhood's spiritual development is of utmost importance.

Early childhood education in Indonesia is affirmed in Law No.20/2003 about The National Education System Law (SISDIKNAS). As derivatives, the government issued Government Regulation No.19/2005 about The National Education Standards (SNP) and also the National Education's Ministry's Regulation (PERMENDIKNAS). To manage the educator, government makes the Law No.14/2005 about Teachers and Lecturers. Whereas, the specific terms related to Early Childhood Education Standard set in PERMENDIKNAS No.58/2009.

The National Education System Law affirms that early childhood education is a guide for children from birth to six years old with educational stimulation to assist the growth and development of the child physically and mentally. Furthermore, in the National Education's Ministry's Regulation the Republic Indonesia No. 58/2009 about early childhood education center (PAUD), stated that early childhood education was held before the elementary school, through formal shaped Kindergarten (TK), Islamic Kindergarten (RA), and other equivalent forms; in the form of non-formal path Play Group (Kober), Childcare (TPA), and other equivalent forms; whereas in-

formal path from a family education and education organized by the society.

The function of early childhood education is to develop the potential of children optimally, according to nature capabilities. These include cognitive potential, creativity, language, physical, social, emotional and spiritual. PAUD is preschool education institution that provides school environment and culture. As the foundation for developing a child's potential through education when they were aged 0 to 6 years. The experience of education received by children in the family, community, and early childhood environment is a very important process. The growth of knowledge, skills, creativities, talents, interests, attitudes, characters of a child depends on the environments (Mulyasa, 2012:5)

Humans, as the creatures with their own *fitrah* (potential), have a privileged position in God. From this potential, human beings are positioned as holy and faithful and have a higher standard if they are able to develop properly accordance with religion outlined. The belief in Allah has been embedded in human nature and his soul from eternity (Septi Gumindar, 2010:302).

Giving spiritual guidance to children is very vital in the formation of personality in the future. The failure in managing someone's capability will make the children lose their capacity in the future. The spiritual guidance becomes the differentiator between individual with others. Through proper spiritual guidance, humans would be perfect in spiritual.

The present research was designed to identify the model spiritual guidance in early childhood, especially at Islamic Kindergarten Ma'arif Salatiga.

### Significance of the study.

Spiritual is wonderful used for the wellbeing of persons. Study of spiritual guidance is necessary for us to understand the importance of why we should do spiritual practice. Understanding spiritual principles gives us the ability to make better decisions about our life and also about our spiritual practice. For teachers and parents, understanding spiritual guidance makes better decisions about students or child's life and also about students spiritual practice.

Guidance is a concept of helping individuals in discovering and developing their psychological, educational, and vocational potentialities to achieve an optimal level of personal happiness. It is essentially democratic in that each individual has right to shape his own destiny. Early guidance dealt with the immediate problem of vocational placement.

The word 'spiritual' does not refer to religious matters. All activities drive the human being towards some forms of physical, emotional, mental, intuitional, social development.

The term "spiritual" refers to vital principle; this means the principles of life on organisms. Through these principles, a spiritual movement becomes very important in human life. Due to the humans' having four potentials (*fitrah*) they are able to be better in their life. Those potentials are faith (*iman*), physical (*jasad*), spiritual (*rohani*) and ego (*nafs*). Among the four potentials, spirituality plays a crucial role in human beings.

In Islam, spirituality is defined as the linking between actions toward the purpose of life. For instance, the Muslim's purpose of life is to worship to Allah, hence spirituality in this sense is linking the actions of an individual to the purpose of their life.

In the Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary (AS Horby, 1995, p. 11148), the word spiritual related to the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things; and relating to religion or religious belief.

According to Wajiman (2002), the traditional meaning of spirituality is a process of reformation which "aims to recover the original shape of a man, the image of God. To accomplish this, the re-formation is oriented at a mold, which represents the original shape: in Judaism the Torah, in Christianity Christ, in Buddhism Buddha, in the Islam Muhammad." In modern times spirituality has come to mean the internal experience of the individual. It still denotes a process of transformation, but in a context separate from organized religious institutions: "spiritual but not religious."

Wajiman points out that "spirituality" is only one term of a range of words which denote the praxis of spirituality. Some other terms are "Hasidism, contemplation, kabbala, asceticism, mysticism, perfection, devotion and piety."

Spirituality can be sought not only through traditional organized religions, but also through movements such as liberalism, feminist theology, and green politics. Spirituality is also now associated with mental health, managing substance abuse, marital functioning, parenting, and coping. It has been suggested that spirituality also leads to finding purpose and meaning in life.

While religion and spirituality are linked, spirituality can be something independent of religion. For this research spirituality is defined as a means for the individual to find solutions to problems, and meaning in life. It is a deep awareness of one's relationship with self and everything ot-

her than self.

From the new book, Danah Zohar dan Ian Marshall (2005:155) told spiritual from latin language *spiritus*, that means facilitating of principle organism, or *Sapientia* (Greak) the meaning wisdom.

Rothberg (2000) explain about spirituality is to involve the lived transformation of self and community toward fuller alignment with or expression of what is understood, within a given cultural context to be "sacred." This transformation may be supported by doctrines, practices, and social organization."

Thus, the spiritual guidance is an effort which focuses on helping individuals to reach their better life. Through the understanding, application of the value, the meaning and the principles of public life is appropriate with the values of religion and universal. This guidance helps children learn to make decisions by considerations more mature and wise, the maturity of children guide them to realize personal values and moral concepts.

According to Samsu Yusuf (2010), people who have spirituality are marked by various indicators that always inherent to them. The indicators become a barometer of spirituality experienced by each individual. If their indicators in each personal behavior that reflect the spiritual, it can be said that a person has a tendency to make the spirituality and attitudes a commander in his life. The matter that needs to be emphasized in this case is sometimes not all of these indicators attached to each person, but there are certain times when the particular people have some existing indicators.

For more details, here will be mentioned the various indicators of a spiritual person. That include: 1) Characteristically flexible, which is able to adaptively and spontaneously, 2) Having high consciousness (self-awareness), 3) Having the ability to face suffering and to take lessons from its, 4) Having the ability to confront and to overcome the pain, 5) Having a quality of life that is inspired by the vision and values, 6) Reluctant to do something that causes harm or damage, 7) Tend to see the relationship among different things into something holistic, 8) Tend to ask "why" or "what" and seek fundamental answers, 9) Responsible for spreading the vision and values of other and show how to use them. In other words, he is the giver of inspiration to others (Samsu Yusuf: 2001:23).

Meanwhile, according to Abdul Wahab and Umiarso (2004: 76) someone behavior that showed his spiritual attitudes characterized

as the following: 1) Ability to understand and comprehend the feelings, 2) Ability to know and understand the feelings of others, 3) Ability to lead the feelings based on the desire, 4) Ability to purify the feelings, 5) **Ability to control negative feelings**, 6) Ability to stir feelings in positive behavior, 7) Ability to always hold on the justice and the truth, 8) Ability to always be willing and sincere to the destiny God, 9) Ability to always rely on God will, 10) Ability to make God Love as the pinnacle fall lifegoals.

Facing those indicators, each character will have a different view and some similarities. The author tries to formulate the characteristic some people who have good spiritual. The characteristic, in this case, is used as a reference to provide a difference between people who have a spiritual guidance in his life with those who do not overly emphasize the spiritual aspect.

From various studies conducted psychological character, they agreed that human needs are not only about physical needs such a seating, clothing, living and pleasures but the need for spiritual as well. This need exceeds carnal needs and each individual will develop based on spiritual needs in his life. It is caused, the need includes the needs of nature possessed by human beings and it can not be driven away.

According to Fowler (1995:96), he expressed the belief that the development of individuals is divided into 7 stages. The seven stages of development include 1) Primal Faith (infancy) Primal faith the stage of faith during infancy to age. In this stage, a language disposition of trust forms in the mutuality of the child's relationships with parents and caregivers. The important concept of life Pre-language sense of trust and loyalty with the environment Pre-images of powerful and trustworthy ultimacy Trust versus Mistrust. No distinction between self and environment; self and those providing primary care with time, able to sense the caregiver will return without undue anxiety. The culture of "mothering" if not met, the child is a serious emotional risk; 2) Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood, 2-6). **Intuitive-projective faith** the children who are 3 and 4 years old are in this faith stage. This is a time when children learn their faith intuitively rather than with formal logic. Imagination, stimulated by stories, gestures, and symbols, and not yet controlled by logical thinking, combines with perception and feelings to create long-lasting images that represent both the protective and threatening powers surrounding one's life. The penumbra of mystery invades the child's life. Fantasy and make believe and not readily distinguished

from reality; 3) Mythic-Literal Faith (Childhood and beyond). Mythic-literal faith the faith stage which occurs between the ages of 6 and the middle school years. This stage initiates the beginning of reflection on the feelings and ideas of faith. Children in this stage are able not only to remember facts and the sequence of events but also to discover meaning in them. The meanings, however, are concrete and literal. In this stage, children are able to sort out make-believe from real. The developing ability to think logically helps one order the world with categories of causality, space, and time; to enter into the perspectives of others, and to capture life meaning in stories. One sees the world through the structures of one's needs, interests, and wishes. The Imperial self longs for independence rooted in self-confidence and self-esteem; 4) **Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence and Beyond, 11-13)**. A young person uses logic and hypothetical thinking to construct and evaluate ideas. New cognitive abilities make mutual perspective-taking possible and enable one to integrate diverse self-images into a coherent identity. A persona and largely unreflective synthesis of beliefs and values evolve to support identity and to unite one in emotional solidarity with others; 5) Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young adulthood and beyond). **Critical reflection** upon one's beliefs and values, utilizing third person perspective taking; understanding of the self and others as a part of a social system; the internalization of authority and the assumption of responsibility for making explicit choices of ideology and lifestyle open the way for critically self-aware commitments in relationship and vocation; 6) Conjunctive Faith (Early Midlife and beyond). The embrace of polarities in one's life, an alertness to paradox, and the need for multiple interpretations of reality mark this stage. Implies a rejoining or a union that which previously has been separated. Marked by being porous and permeable. Symbol and story, metaphor and myth (from one's own traditions and others') are newly appreciated as vehicles for expressing the truth; 7) Universalizing Faith (Mid-life and beyond). Beyond paradox and polarities, the person in this stage is grounded in a oneness with the power of being. Their visions and commitments free them for a passionate yet detached spending of the self in love, devoted to overcoming division, oppression, and violence, and ineffective anticipatory response to an in breaking commonwealth of love and justice.

In the world of education, this method is one of the tools to present the material in order to achieve the goals set (Ing. SUIhbukit: 1984:

4). According to the authors, among the method which can be used to guide the spiritual children ISA follows: 1) Hiwar method (conversational), In the context of pre-school education, Hiwar method can be applied to the Hiwar material record according to the development of children intellectual. Based on these pre-school children characteristics, the nature of religion in childhood grew to follow the ideal pattern of authority. The religious concept in children is almost entirely autostarted, the meaning of religious concepts to children affected by many factors outside himself. In preschoolers, this method can be implemented together with the method of fairy tale/story. Because of the story, the child attentively engages with the stories given by the teacher, although the ability to capture the contents of the story is not perfect. Teachers can provide stories ranging from the very simple; 2) Custom Method. In the term of education, this method will always use either from preschool to university level. Certainly, the application is adapted to learner's development mindset. The application of refraction in preschool children is really effective, with an excuse that his behavior has not been contaminated with a variety of life problems. So that, what accustomed to the teachers or the parents to their children will be stuck in his memory, especially if these habits come into the subconscious of the child, thus, the successful of what the purpose of its customizing will increase.

In preschool education, the application of this method can be done with the teacher giving/doing good habits, such as clean living, living in harmony, mutual help, honest and others. To instill and foster a sense of religion or spirituality in children, a teacher can begin to teach and familiarize prayed in daily activities, such as prayer to start and finish studying, prayer to start and finish eating and sleeping, to thank, to be able to apologize if it has errors and so forth. By teaching this way, the child will automatically become accustomed to both school and home; 2) **Modeling method**. Modeling becomes the spirit in educational methods since through this method the learners will be easier to imitate what is done by teachers or parents. A proverb says that pee standing teachers, pupils will pee. This points out that what teachers doing will be inspired learners. Therefore, as educators, the behavior and act must always follow the norms or provisions that have been agreed, both religious and social; 3) **Method and prophetic story Qur'ani**. **The method of storytelling** is one form learning experience for children by bringing story orally either by reading directly from the book or using picture illustrations.

Through storytelling, children are trained to be critical and creative listeners. The critical listener will be able to find a match between the story that has been understood and heard.

Whereas, creative listeners are able to find new ideas from what he had heard. Also, this method disables to train concentration and comprehension as well as foster child's imagination. For instance, the teacher talks about the Princess Kemuning and a group of dwarfs who were measuring the length of wood to make tables, chairs and beds; 3) **Play Method**. The play is an activity carried out by using a tool or not that generates the sense or provides the information, gives pleasure as well as develops imagination in children (Sudono, 2000:1). According to Sally (2008:17) play means that children are doing a fun activity for him. Meanwhile, based on Hildebrand (1986:54), play means practice, exploit, manipulate, repeat any exercises that can be done to transform imaginatively the same things with the adult world.

Regarding the above definition, the play is mean for children to practice, exploit and manipulate performed repeatedly by using a tool or not to obtain information, pleasure and to develop imagination. Thus, the activity of play is not the same as other activities such as learning. While actually, by doing this activity children also have learning activities.

There are several characteristics that distinguish play with other activities, such as playing can create a fun atmosphere for the children and it can be done spontaneously and voluntarily without any coercion because the child who creates his own game.

The object of this research is the curriculum at Islamic Kindergarten Ma'arif Pulutan Salatiga. The writer chooses Ma'arif Pulutan Salatiga as the object of the study because there is a special method to improve their students' spiritual, for example, teacher and students are always praying with a *small human* (the names good from God) before teaching the process. Besides, the teachers always improve students' interpersonal skill.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the writer used qualitative research as the methodology of investigation. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011:3), qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices

transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

In this paper, the writer used the qualitative method because the human spiritual always grows up. Qualitative research related to a research has a quotations character, by using a qualitative approach; people can observe religion, myth, or other irrational problem. Qualitative method related to a people and also their character that the character is unique and difficult because this method has a more special position than quantitative research. The result of qualitative does not give an answer surely, and sometimes in a question pattern too.

The research of Giesenberg (2007) describes that spirituality is an innate ability to show awareness or consciousness of the surrounding words **show through wonder, a sense of compassion, and love** toward this word show and everything it, and for some people a relationship with transcendent being, who can also be immanent in the individual. The result of the study pointed out that the children were able to express spiritual aspect in their play, discussion, and artwork, such as painting and drawing. The children were asked to paint and draw their experiences in selected pieces of chamber music, of a beautiful day, love, and dreams.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The application of spiritual guidance at Islamic Kindergarten (RA) Ma'arif, Salatiga is integrated with the learning process. This kindergarten used **thematic-integral-holistic in the learning process**. To apply this concept, teachers connecting all individual aspect from the students.

The spiritual guidance at this school applied by giving understanding toward students related to religion. Religion approach is easier to apply for children since it is able to provide many aspects to improve human spiritual.

The topic for the learner is adjusted to the class level, group A (4–5 year) and B (5–6 year). In fact, the concept is similar, but the difference is the level of difficulty.

To perform spiritual guidance, RA Ma'arif,

provides the materials which include:

1. Daily praying (confessions "*shahadah*", before and after studying, pray for parents and goodness of life and hereafter, etc)
2. Reciting of hadith (sayings of Prophet Mohammad)
3. Affirmative sentences
4. Habitual action
5. Reciting of holly Qur'an

The spiritual guidance focused on characteristics and attributes that comprise the very essence of children's spirituality and suggest a pedagogy that acknowledges responds and nurtures those characteristics in each child. RA Ma'arif recognizes and acknowledges that children's sense of *belonging and becoming* becomes relational, resilient and active members of their families and communities. These ways are applied to reach the educational goal for children, *learning to know, learning to do* and *learning to live together*.

RA Ma'arif commits to developing children's spiritual implicitly and explicitly by giving attention to the cognitive, affective, *psychomotor* domains.

In the term of the cognitive domain, the nurturing children use the material from Islamic thought, such as Qur'an, hadith, and other sources from Islamic literature. Meanwhile, affective domain uses the sense of transcendence of Allah by encouraging them to wonder about God and explore many images of God provided in scripture; exploring images of the Divine revelation from other religious traditions represented in the setting; giving time and space for children to pray.

In addition, the *psychomotor* is applied based on the daily activities dealing with the lesson. For instance, appreciating others, loving, and tolerance.

Further, the Fowler states, confidence intuitive projective faith (childhood, ages 2 to 6 years) is used as a mean of cognitive and expressive arrangement that creates a new qualitative relationship with other people, around the world, and himself. Through language, children are led to understand the abstract things become more concrete.

## CONCLUSION

Spirituality is an important aspect of human life. Spiritual guidance is an effort which focuses on helping individuals to reach **one's better life**. Through the understanding, application of the value, the meaning and the principles of public life is appropriate with the values of reli-

gion and universal. Islamic Kindergarten (RA) Ma'arif Salatiga used thematic-integral-holistic in the learning process that is still related to Islam as a foundation.

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