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SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD; IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

The social and religious development in early childhood is influenced by interactions with the environment and the role of education. Young children experience an increase in social skills and develop an understanding of religion influenced by fantasy and emotions. Religious education strengthens their faith foundation, shapes good character, and teaches values aligned with their religious beliefs. Factors such as family, educational environment, gender roles, peer influence, and religion impact the social and religious development of children. Parents and teachers play a crucial role in supporting this development through gradual learning strategies and integrated programs. Formal and non-formal education are instrumental in shaping children's mindset and behavior, while the environment helps filter positive influences. In conclusion, formal and non-formal education are review methodology with secondary data collection and critical analysis of relevant sources such as books and journals. The descriptive presentation of the analysis provides an overview of the social and religious development in early childhood and its implications in education.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Environmental Interaction; Religious and Social Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals experience development from early childhood to adulthood, which is progressive, systematic, and continuous. Each individual undergoes the same developmental process but at different speeds and sequences. Factors such as stimulation, nutrition, health, and environment can influence the speed and pace of development.(Khaironi, 2018, p. 1)

There are various perspectives in society regarding early childhood. Some people believe that early childhood is shaped by its environment. Additionally, there is an opinion that early childhood is a miniature version of adulthood. However, some consider early childhood as a pre-school age period characterized by rapid development and growth (Tanfidiyah, 2021, p. 44). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to and fulfill all the needs of children during this period. They need to be provided with stimulation to ensure that their developmental potential flourishes in cognitive, moral, emotional, language, social, and religious aspects.

Early childhood refers to children within the age range of 0-6 years, as stated in Article 28 of the National Education System Law No. 20/2003, paragraph 1 (Fadlillah, 2014, p. 18) Approximately 40% of human development occurs during early childhood, which is considered a crucial period and often referred to as the "golden age." Development during this early stage happens rapidly and is a critical period for providing stimulation to achieve optimal development.(Khaironi, 2018, p. 2)

During early childhood, everything is easily shaped and will influence future development. This is the basis for the importance of conducting careful examination to avoid making fatal mistakes in shaping a child's character. Through education, guidance, parenting styles, experiences, and childhood activities, attitudes and personalities are determined. Someone who receives guidance, parenting, education, experiences, and activities that are religious, respectful, and helpful towards others, empathetic towards difficulties and all social issues in their environment during their childhood, will recognize the importance of religious values in their life and develop a mature religious personality as they grow older. (Putra, 2013, p. 2)

This can be understood because from an early age, children have observed and learned things that are beyond themselves. They have witnessed and followed what adults and their parents do and teach them regarding matters related to the benefits of religion. Thus, obedience to religious teachings becomes a habit that they acquire from their parents and teachers. (Putra, 2013, p. 3)

The growth of early childhood will influence the subsequent period of achieving maturity in social relationships. This research aims to observe the maximum and targeted development of early childhood, enabling the development of all aspects of a child's development, including the social aspect. (Musyarofah, 2017, p. 99)

Early childhood education is the most fundamental education and holds a highly strategic position in human resource development. Considering that early childhood, which encompasses the age range from birth to six years, is a critical and strategic period in the educational process that can influence the process and outcomes of education in later stages. This means that this period is conducive to nurturing various physiological, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and spiritual abilities.(Sujino, 2013, p. 53)

To optimize the achievement of educational goals, the learning process must be designed and tailored to the developmental stages and learning characteristics of children. Children have tremendous potential to optimize all aspects of their development, especially between the ages of 2 and 6 (Muhsinin, 2015, p. 88). This article will further discuss the social and religious development during early childhood and its implications for education.

METHODOLOGY

This article is examined using a literature research method, conducting critical and in-depth analysis of relevant literature materials such as books and journals that can be used as references. Literature research, according to Miqzaqon T and Purwoko, is a study used to gather information and data using various materials available in the library, such as documents, books, magazines, historical stories, and so on.(Milya Sari dan Asmendri, 2020)

Apriyanti, Syarif, Ramadhan, Zaim, and Agustina also state that literature review is a form of providing new theories supported by appropriate data collection techniques. (Fatha Pringgar & Sujatmiko, 2020) For data collection in this article, secondary data collection techniques were used by examining relevant objects. After collecting several journals and books related to the topic, a material analysis was conducted through a literature study, with the analysis results presented descriptively.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Early Childhood Development

Hamaris views development as a cumulative process, meaning that previous development serves as the foundation for subsequent development. Therefore, if there are obstacles in early development, the later development is likely to be hindered.(Sujino, 2013, p. 60)

According to Libert, Paulus, and Strauss, development is the process of changes in growth over time as a function of maturation and interaction with the environment. The term development more accurately reflects psychological changes.(Herliani & Heryati, 2017, p. 151)

Development is also defined as the increase in ability or skill in the structure and function of the body, which becomes more complex in a regular and predictable pattern as a result of experiences and maturation processes. Development is also related to motor, intellectual, social, and emotional abilities. (Kebudayaan, 2020, p. 8)

Based on the statements above, it can be understood that development is a process of change that occurs in individuals over time and is influenced by maturation and interaction with the environment. This development involves the enhancement of abilities and skills and the functions of various aspects such as physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects, and it is cumulative, with previous development serving as the foundation for subsequent development.

Early childhood refers to children within the age range of 0-6 years. According to Article 28 of the National Education System Law No. 20/2003, early childhood refers to children within the age range of 0-6 years. (Fadlillah, 2014, p. 18) Based on their uniqueness and development, children in early childhood are categorized into stages: the newborn stage from birth to 12 months, the toddler stage from 1 to 3 years old, the preschool stage from 3 to 6 years old, and the early elementary stage from 6 to 8 years old. (Mansur, 2009:88).

According to Piaget, children in early childhood are in the preoperational stage, which is the stage where children have not yet mastered logical mental operations. This period is marked by the development of the ability to use something to represent something else using symbols. Through this ability, children can imagine or fantasize about various things. (Musyarofah, 2017, p. 103)

Children in early childhood are in the golden period throughout the human developmental range. Montessori stated that this period is sensitive, during which children are particularly receptive to stimuli from their environment. During this period, children are ready to engage in various activities to understand and master their environment. Montessori further emphasized that the golden age is a period when children become sensitive to various stimuli and educational efforts from their environment, both intentional and unintentional. It is during this sensitive period that the physical and psychological functions mature, enabling children to respond and manifest the expected developmental tasks in their daily behavior. (Sujino, 2013, p. 60)

This is the period for laying the foundation to develop physical and motor skills, cognitive abilities, language proficiency, socio-emotional skills, morals, and religious values, as stated in Regulation 58/2009, which encompasses two aspects of development: behavioral development or habit formation, including morality, religion, socio-emotional skills, and independence, as well as basic skills development, including language, cognitive abilities, and physical motor skills. This development is provided as preparation for entering primary education. (Muhsinin, 2015, p. 88)

In conclusion, early childhood encompasses the age range of 0-6 years, with sequential stages of development: infancy, toddlerhood, preschool, and early elementary. During these stages, children have not yet mastered logical mental operations and tend to fantasize using symbols. This

period is also a sensitive period where children are receptive to environmental stimuli. This development helps build physical, motor, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, moral, and religious abilities.

The development of early childhood refers to the process of changes that occur in individuals within the age range of 0-6 years. This development is influenced by maturation and interaction with the environment. Through this development, children experience improvements in their abilities and skills in various aspects such as physical, cognitive, social, and emotional. The development of early childhood is cumulative, where previous development serves as the foundation for subsequent development. Early childhood goes through stages of development, namely infancy, toddlerhood, preschool, and early elementary. During these stages, children have not yet mastered logical mental operations and tend to use symbols in their fantasies. This period is also a sensitive period where children are highly responsive to environmental stimuli. The development of early childhood helps build physical, motor, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, moral, and religious abilities.

Social Development in Early Childhood

Hurlock states that social development is the acquisition of behavioral abilities that align with social demands. In line with this viewpoint, Allen and Marotz argue that social development is an area that encompasses emotions and refers to individual behaviors and responses in their relationships with others. (Musyarofah, 2017, p. 104)

Social development is the attainment of maturity in social relationships. It can also be understood as a learning process to adapt to group norms, morals, and traditions, merging into a unified whole, and engaging in communication and cooperation. The social maturity of a child will lead to their success in becoming more independent and skilled in developing their social relationships. (Abdurrahman, 2018, p. 106) The social development of a child is greatly influenced by the treatment or guidance provided by parents in the family, teachers, school principals, and other educational personnel at school in introducing various aspects of social life or societal norms. They encourage and set examples for children on how to apply these norms in their daily lives. (Musyarofah, 2017, p. 101)

The scope of social-emotional development according to the child's age level consists of: (1) Self-awareness, which includes demonstrating self-ability, recognizing one's own feelings and self-control, and being able to adapt to others; (2) Sense of responsibility for oneself and others, which includes the ability to understand one's rights, comply with rules, self-regulate, and take responsibility for one's behavior for the benefit of others; and (3) Prosocial behavior, which includes the ability to play with peers, understand feelings, respond, share, respect the rights and opinions of others, and display cooperative, tolerant, and polite behavior. (Kebudayaan, 2020, p. 22)

The process of a child's social development, according to Moh Padil and Triyo Supriyatno, can be achieved through two ways: first, the process of social learning, often referred to as socialization, and second, through the formation of social loyalty. (Musyarofah, 2017, p. 105)

According to Hurlock, to achieve social development and the ability to participate in society, an individual requires three processes. These three processes are interrelated, so if there is a failure in one process, it will decrease an individual's level of socialization. The three processes are as follows: (1) Learning socially acceptable behavior: Each social group has its own standards regarding acceptable behavior for its members. To be accepted in a social group, a child needs to know what kind of behavior is considered acceptable. This allows them to behave in accordance with the accepted norms; (2 Learning to play socially accepted roles: Each social group has predetermined patterns of behavior that its members must adhere to. These patterns of behavior must be followed by every member of the group. For example, there is a shared agreement on classroom behavior between teachers and students, and (3) Socialization process development: To socialize effectively, a child needs to enjoy interacting with people and engaging in social activities

within a group. If they can do so, they will easily adapt and be accepted as a member of the social group they belong to. (Musyarofah, 2017, pp. 105–106)

It can be concluded that social development in young children involves an improvement in their ability to interact with others and acquire behaviors that are appropriate to social demands. They learn to adapt to group norms, understand their rights, and take responsibility for their actions. The role of parents, teachers, and educators is crucial in helping children develop social aspects. The social development of children encompasses self-awareness, responsibility towards oneself and others, and prosocial behavior. The processes of socialization and the formation of social loyalty assist children in achieving positive social development. Our support in understanding and fostering the social development of young children will help them become independent, skilled individuals with positive social relationships.

Religious Development in Early Childhood

The development of religious values in early childhood refers to the efforts to cultivate religious values aimed at children from birth to six years old. It involves providing educational stimulation to assist in their physical and spiritual growth and development, preparing them for further education. (Ananda, 2017, p. 28)

Religious and moral values encompass the ability to recognize and practice religious beliefs, engage in worship, behave with honesty, helpfulness, politeness, respect, sportsmanship, personal and environmental cleanliness, knowledge of religious holidays, and respect and tolerance towards others' religions. (Kebudayaan, 2020, p. 21)

In general, the objectives of developing religious values in children are to lay the foundations of faith with piety towards God and moral beauty, develop competence, self-confidence, and readiness to live in and contribute to society in a manner that is pleasing to God. (Ananda, 2017, p. 26)

The specific objectives of developing religious values in preschool-age children are to cultivate faith and love for God, familiarize them with worshiping God, ensure that their behavior and attitudes are based on religious values, and help them grow and develop as individuals who have faith and piety towards God. (Oktarina & Latipah, 2021, p. 143)

In order to successfully shape a child's personality with religious values, it is essential to have the support and role modeling from parents and teachers. To achieve this goal, teachers can implement gradual learning strategies and develop activity programs such as routine programs, integrated activity programs, and special activity programs. (Anggraini, 2015)

The development of religious and moral values is a significant aspect of a child's overall development and educational objectives. Religious and moral values involve the ability to determine right from wrong and good from bad behavior or character, which are closely linked to social attitudes. Therefore, in line with the national educational goals, having moral behavior aligned with religious values will cultivate morally upright students who adhere to ethical conduct. (Anggraini, 2015, p. 141)

Hidayat states that the development of religious values in children encompasses three aspects: age, physical, and psychological aspects of the child. The development of religiosity in children has its own characteristics at a young age. Ernest Harms discusses the development of religion in early childhood, which falls under the stage of fairy tales. This stage begins when children are between 3-6 years old. During this stage, a child's concept of God is largely influenced by fantasy and emotions. The child's understanding of the concept of divinity corresponds to their intellectual development level. At this stage, a child's life is still greatly influenced by fantasy, and their response to religion is based on fantastical concepts and fairy tales that may seem illogical. Therefore, it is important to adapt religious education at this stage to match the child's developmental level and effectively support their spiritual development. (Anggraini, 2015)

It can be understood that between the ages of 3-6, children go through the stage of fairy tales or "The fairy tale stage" in their religious development. During this stage, their concept of God tends to be influenced by fantasy and emotions, and their understanding of divinity is adjusted

according to their intellectual development level. Therefore, it is important for the development of religious values in early childhood to consider psychological aspects and integrated education in order to strengthen the foundation of faith, foster good character, and cultivate attitudes aligned with religious values in everyday life. The role of parents and teachers is crucial in supporting the development of religious values in children through the use of gradual learning strategies and the development of integrated activity programs.

Characteristics of Social and Religious Development in Early Childhood

The characteristics of social development during this period are marked by an expanded social environment. Children begin to detach themselves from their families and approach others outside of the family circle. They enter the world with surprising perceptual and motor skills, making early childhood an ideal time to learn motor skills and a set of abilities to interact with others. They possess the capacity to learn, which is ready to be utilized from the moment they are born. (Musyarofah, 2017, p. 108)

According to Piaget, the characteristics of social development in children aged 4-6 years (early childhood) are divided according to their age, as described in the table below: (Musyarofah, 2017, pp. 109–110).

Age of child	Level of Developmental Achievement
4 years old	Highly enthusiastic
	Prefers working with 2 or 3 selected friends
	Likes wearing other people's clothes
	Can clean up their toys
	Dislikes being held by the hand and drawing attention by being praised
5 years old	Enjoys being close to their mother at home
	Like to be instructed/helped
	Enjoys going to school
	Feel shy and have difficulty speaking
	Plays with a group of 2 or children
	Their work is motivated by competition with other children
6 years old	Starts to become independent from their mother
	Becomes more self-centered
	Prioritizing oneself
	Impulsive enthusiasm
	Can be a disruptive factor in the classroom
	Likes their work and always wants to take it home

Tabel 1. Characteristics of Social Development in Children aged 4-6 Years

The content standards regarding the level of achievement in the development of religion and morality in early childhood are based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 concerning the national standards for early childhood education. These standards can be described in the following table: (Tritjahjo Danny Mozes Kurniawan, 2018, pp. 143–144).

Age of child	Level of Developmental Achievement	
Age 2-3 years old	Meniru gerakan berdoa/sembahyang sesuai agamanya	
	Memahami kapan mengucapkan salam,	
	Mulai terima kasih maaf dan sebagainya	
Age 3-4 years	Knowing opposite behaviors, although not always acting upon them, such as understanding good and bad behaviors, right and wrong, politeness and impoliteness.	
old	Understanding the meaning of love and respect towards God's creation.	
Age 4-5 years old	Starting to imitate short prayers according to their religion.Knowing the religion they follow.Imitating the proper sequence of worship movements.Saying prayers before and/or after doing something.Recognizing good/polite and bad behaviors.Developing the habit of behaving well, greeting and responding to greetings.	
Age 5-6 years old	Knowing the religion they follow.Performing religious rituals.Behaving honestly, being helpful, polite, respectful, sportsmanlike, and so on.Maintaining personal hygiene and cleanliness in the environment.Knowing religious holidays.Respecting (tolerating) other people's religions.	

Tabel 2. The Characteristics of The Development of Religion and Morality in Early Childhood

Factors Influencing the Social and Religious Development in Early Childhood

The social and religious development in early childhood is influenced by various factors. The following are the factors that affect the social and religious development in early childhood:

Family: The family serves as the primary environment for children to learn and develop socially and religiously. The parenting style, values, and norms practiced within the family environment significantly impact the social development and the establishment of moral and religious norms in children. (Oktarina & Latipah, 2021)

Environmental Factors (Education): Formal and non-formal education received by young children also influences their social and religious development. The process of socialization occurs through education in schools, where proper behavioral norms are intentionally imparted to students. (Musyarofah, 2017, p. 112),

Gender Role: In the early stages of life, children learn the gender roles prevalent in their culture. Each boy and girl develops behaviors, attitudes, and commitments defined, directly or indirectly, as attributes of their gender. Children's perceptions of masculinity and femininity are influenced by their playmates, opportunities for play, types of toys, television shows, and especially influential adults (family, neighbors, teachers). (Kebudayaan, 2020, p. 11);

Peer Influence: Peers also play a significant role in children's social development. Children learn to interact and build social relationships with their peers, gain knowledge about their environment, develop moral reasoning, and more. (Muhsinin, 2015, p. 98);

Religion: Religion also plays a crucial role in the social and religious development of children. Religion helps shape a child's morals, ethics, and provides guidance for interacting with others. Children growing up in religious and morally upright families are more likely to exhibit religious and moral behavior, whereas children from chaotic families may display unruly or

uncontrolled behavior. Both aspects of development not only affect their present lives but also determine their future lives. (Kogoya, 2018, p. 63)

In conclusion, the social and religious development in early childhood is influenced by factors such as the family, educational environment, gender roles, peer influence, and religious. The family serves as the initial environment that impacts children's social growth and religious values, while education aids in the process of socialization. Gender roles, peer interactions, and religious values also play significant roles in shaping children's social and religious development. Therefore, it is crucial for parents and the surrounding environment to provide appropriate support and guidance to promote the social and religious development of children.

Implications of Social and Religious Development in Early Childhood on Education

The education system plays a crucial role in the overall development of children, encompassing their physical, moral, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth. Established educational programs can aid in the optimal development of each of these aspects. The behaviors and stimuli provided to children, whether intentional or unintentional, have an impact on their formation and development. Therefore, conscious education provided by educators or caregivers is expected to have a more positive effect than spontaneous behaviors or stimuli received by children. (Yusuf & Jurniati, 2018, p. 32)

Stimulation is a means to help children develop well and achieve various aspects of their development effectively. Early childhood education can provide stimulation through play-based learning (Fitriani, 2018, p. 26). Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is provided before children enter primary school, and appropriate stimulation during early childhood can influence their development in subsequent stages. (Fadlillah, 2014, p. 67)

Education for early childhood has several functions, including developing children's abilities in accordance with their developmental stages, introducing them to the surrounding world, fostering socialization, introducing rules and instilling discipline, and providing opportunities for children to enjoy their playtime. (Sujino, 2013, p. 52) The development of young children is related to the development of their various potentials, which require a supportive environment or situation that facilitates the development of these potentials.(Sujino, 2013, p. 53)

From a pedagogical perspective, the early childhood period is considered a foundational stage for subsequent growth and development. Creating conducive conditions for providing appropriate stimulation and education based on children's needs and interests is crucial to achieving optimal growth and development.

Formal and non-formal education can have a significant influence on children's social development. In formal education, children learn proper behavioral norms and socially acceptable behaviors, which help them understand and develop the necessary social skills for interacting with others. (Siti Anisah et al., 2021, p. 72) Education also assists young children in developing positive social values such as empathy, cooperation, and appreciation for cultural diversity. This is important because appropriate socialization from an early age can shape children's thinking patterns and behavior in a positive direction, aiding them in their development and adulthood. (Lubis, 2019, p. 49)

Furthermore, formal and non-formal education can also introduce children to religious values and spirituality, helping them understand and develop positive beliefs and values in their lives. This can contribute to building good morals and character. Religious education can also help children understand and respect religious differences and beliefs, thereby strengthening tolerance and diversity in society. This helps children grow into individuals who are open, sensitive, and caring towards religious and cultural diversity in their surroundings. (Putra, 2013, p. 11)

In practice, formal and non-formal educational institutions, such as schools and religious centers, need to pay special attention to religious education for young children. Religious education should be delivered systematically and purposefully, utilizing age-appropriate teaching methods and strategies. (Oktarina & Latipah, 2021) Additionally, religious educators or teachers need to have a good understanding of the conveyed religious values and be able to deliver them in a fun,

interactive, and engaging manner that captivates children's interests. This helps children better comprehend and internalize the conveyed religious values.(Ananda, 2017, p. 30)

As mentioned above, optimal child development requires support and stimulation from adults. The support and stimulation provided should align with the child's developmental stage. Educators must have the competence to accompany children during their stimulation process to maximize their development. The developmental stimulation provided encompasses various aspects, including religious and moral values, cognitive, language, physical motor skills, socio-emotional, and artistic development. Stimulation is provided on various occasions, from when the child arrives until they leave, both in routine activities and play. (Kebudayaan, 2020, p. 24)

Stimulation/guidance for socio-emotional and religious-moral development aspects can be implemented as follows: (Kebudayaan, 2020, p. 24)

Development Aspects	Stimulation / Guidance
	Introducing self-competence; Introducing self- awareness and self-control, as well as the ability to adapt to others
	Introducing a sense of responsibility for oneself and others, including the ability to recognize one's rights
Social-Emotional Values	Encouraging obedience to rules, self-regulation, and taking responsibility for one's behavior for the benefit of others
	Encouraging play with peers, understanding feelings, responding, sharing, and respecting the rights and opinions of others; exhibiting cooperative, tolerant, and polite behavior
	Introducing and familiarizing with religious practices
	Introducing and familiarizing with behaviors such as honesty, helpfulness, politeness, respect, and sportsmanship
Religious-Moral Values	Introducing and familiarizing with personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness
	Introducing religious holidays
	Introducing and fostering respect and tolerance towards other religions

Tabel 3. Stimulation fro Socio-Emotional and Religious-Moral Development Aspects

It can be concluded that the social development of young children is influenced by both formal and non-formal education, which plays a crucial role in shaping their mindset and behavior in facing a complex and dynamic social and cultural environment. Religious education is also an important part of helping children understand religious values and beliefs, building a positive relationship with God and fellow human beings, and shaping their character in a positive way.

Educating morals, spirituality, social values, and conscience is best developed during the early childhood years, as children are still responsive to the stimuli provided by parents and teachers. The environment also plays a significant role in children's development during this period, so it is important for parents and teachers to filter out what is good and bad in supporting the development of learners.

CONCLUSION

The development of early childhood refers to the process of changes that occur in children involving various aspects such as physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. This

development is influenced by maturity and interaction with the environment. The stages of development include the infant stage, toddler stage, preschool stage, and early grades. Young children have the ability to engage in social interactions and acquire behaviors that are appropriate to social demands. The role of parents, teachers, and educators is crucial in helping children develop social aspects. Social development of children also includes self-awareness, responsibility towards oneself and others, and prosocial behavior.

In the context of religion, young children go through the fairy tale stage in their religious development. Their understanding of God tends to be influenced by fantasy and emotions, and attention should be given to psychological and educational aspects to strengthen the foundation of faith, good character, and attitudes aligned with religious values in everyday life. The role of parents and teachers in supporting the development of religious values in children is essential through gradual learning strategies and integrated activity programs.

The social and religious development of young children is influenced by factors such as family, educational environment, gender roles, peers, and religion. The family plays a significant role in the social and religious growth of children, while education aids in the socialization process. Additionally, gender roles, interactions with peers, and religious values also contribute to shaping the social and religious development of children. Therefore, it is important for parents and the surrounding environment to provide appropriate support and guidance to foster the social and religious development of children.

Formal and non-formal education play a crucial role in shaping the mindset and behavior of children in facing a complex and dynamic social and cultural environment. Religious education is an important part of helping children understand religious values, building a positive relationship with God and fellow human beings, and shaping positive character traits. Furthermore, moral, spiritual, social values, and conscience education should be developed during early childhood as children are still responsive to stimuli provided by parents and teachers. The environment also plays a significant role in children's development during this period, so it is important for parents and teachers to filter out what is good and bad in supporting the development of learners.

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