Analysis of Characteristics and Initial Ability of Children (New Learners) at PAUD Hangtuah Kota Bengkulu

Ardhea Rizka Mumtadzah [1], **Fesi Purnama Sari** [2] , **Alimni**
UIN Fatmawati Soekarno, Bengkulu, Indonesia
e-mail: [1]ardhea.rizka12@gmail.com, [2]fesipurnamasari09@gmail.com, [3]alimni@iainbengkulu.ac.id

Keywords	*Abstract*
Characteristics; Initial Ability; Children; New Learners	*Every learner has initial abilities, namely abilities that have been owned before he gets certain new terminal abilities. Initial ability shows the status of students' knowledge and skills now to go to the future status that educators want students to achieve. Meanwhile, early childhood has unique characteristics (uniq), both physically, psychologically, socially, morally, and so on. Childhood is also the most important period of his life. The initial ability of students is closely related to the characteristics and learning styles of students. To analyze students' initial abilities, at least an educator can identify three general characteristics of students related to differences in age, physical development, motor development, and academic development. Besides that, you also have to understand the differences in learning styles that exist in students and of course by using certain techniques, while techniques for identifying student characteristics are qualitative descriptive using questionnaires, interviews, observations, tests, and student backgrounds. The ability of educators to analyze the character and initial abilities of students has implications for the learning designs they develop and ultimately results in brilliant learning achievements.*
Kata Kunci	**Abstrak**
Karakteristik; Kemampuan Awal; Anak; Peserta Didik Baru	Setiap peserta didik memiliki kemampuan awal, yakni kemampuan yang telah dimiliki sebelum dia mendapatkan kemampuan terminal tertentu yang baru. Kemampuan awalmenunjukkan status pengetahuan dan keterampilan siswa sekarang untuk menuju ke status yang akan datang yang diinginkan pendidik agar tercapai oleh peserta didik. Sementara itu, Anak usia dini memiliki karakteristik yang khas (Uniq), baik secara fisik, psikis, sosial, moral dan sebagainya. Masa kanak-kanak juga masa yang paling penting untuk sepanjang usia hidupnya. Kemampuan awal peserta didik sangat terkait dengan karakterisik dan gaya belajar peserta didik. Untuk melakukan analisa kemampuan awal peserta didik, setidaknya seorang pendidik mampu mengindentifikasi tiga karekter umum pada peserta didik yang terkait dengan perbedaan usia, perkembangan fisik, perkembangan motorik dan perkembnagan akademik. Disamping itu juga harus memahami betul perbedaan gaya belajar yang ada pada peserta didik dan tentu dengan menggunakan teknik tertentu, sedangkan teknik untuk mengidentifikasi karakteristik siswa adalah dengan menggunakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dengan kuesioner, interview, observasi dan tes, latar belakang siswa. Kemampuan pendidik dalam menganalisis karakter dan kemampuan awal peserta didik berimplikasi pada desain pembelajaran yang dikembangkannya dan pada akhirnya berbuah pada pencapaian prestasi belajar yang gemilang.

* Corespondesi Penulis: ✉ ardhea.rizka12@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In the law on the national education system, it is stated that early childhood education is a habituation effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age which is carried out by providing educational stimuli to help guide and develop physically and mentally so that children have readiness to enter further education (Law Number 20 of 2003 Chapter I Article 14), early childhood is an individual figure who is undergoing a development process rapidly and is fundamental to life. Because the state of early childhood is a child who lives various life circumstances and learns everything he goes through.

Getting a quality education is impossible to obtain in an instant, but through a long process that starts from infancy (Rahman, 2009: 48). In the national education process, learner characteristics are an important element (subcompetency) in pedagogical competence. Even initial ability is one of the internal conditions of students that can affect overall learning outcomes.

Mastering the characteristics of participants is absolute for educators, even mastering these characteristics is one of the indicators of whether or not an educator is professional. As a competency, learner characteristics are not only used as a cognitive variable, but learner characteristics are understood, mastered, and implemented in the learning process, both for educators at the primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels. Differences in education levels only indicate differences in the category of learners. Understanding the characteristics of learners, including those in higher education, cannot be ignored. If ignored, the learning process will not achieve maximum results. In its development, the character building of students is difficult to achieve. On this basis, according to Janawi, educators or teachers need to dive into the world of children, potential, interests, talents, motivation to learn, and other problems related to children.

Children have a distinctive character and are different from other people who are over 8 years old". Children are always active, dynamic, enthusiastic, and curious about what they see and hear as if they never stop learning. Early childhood has distinctive characteristics physical, social, moral, and so on the characteristics of early childhood are as follows: a). has great curiosity, b). is a unique person, c). likes to fantasize and imagine, d). the most potential period for learning, e). shows egocentric nature, e). has egocentric, f). has a short concentration span, g). as part of a social being (Elihami & Ekawati, 2020: 25-26). So it is known that the character of early childhood is diverse and different from the character of people who are at the age of 8 years and over and the character of early childhood is always active, dynamic, enthusiastic, and curious about what they see and hear as if they never stop learning.

Although early childhood education is not the main requirement for entering basic education, early childhood education must be understood and understood by teachers and parents. However, not all parents and teachers pay attention to the characteristics and early abilities of the child this is due to the low awareness of parents, the lack of insight of parents, and the lack of understanding of parents of special education about early childhood. Even some teachers pay too much attention to children's abilities in the academic field, namely being able to read and write so they pay less attention to the initial abilities of students. To uncover or explore the peculiarities of each child and their abilities requires patience and a continuous personal approach.

Based on the results of preliminary observations at PAUD Hangtuah Kota Bengkulu, it was found that children have different characteristics and abilities, some like to cry and some immediately blend into the environment, therefore educators must understand the characteristics of a child (learner). The purpose of this study is to determine the characteristics and initial abilities of children

(new students) in the school environment, by looking at the characteristics and initial abilities of children, the teacher can provide appropriate learning services to children.

METHODS

This research uses qualitative research with a descriptive approach, while the data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. For qualitative research such as classroom action research, ethnography, phenomenology, case studies, and others, it is necessary to add the presence of researchers, research subjects, informants who help along with ways of extracting research data, location and duration of research, and a description of checking the validity of the research results.

This research was conducted at PAUD Hangtuah Kota Bengkulu in 2023. The data sources of this research are the class teacher as a resource person and several students as resource persons and documents as supporting data. Data collection using interview techniques, and observation techniques are also used by researchers to find out the surrounding conditions at the research site. The steps taken in data collection are the preparation of a contact summary sheet, making codes, pattern coding, and giving memos. The contact summary sheet is a sheet containing a series of focusing or summarizing questions about specific field contacts.

This research uses the analysis method of Milles and Huberman, which is an analysis that is carried out interactively and continues continuously until completion. The stages of this analysis include (1) data reduction; (2) data presentation; and (3) conclusion drawing. The data analysis process was carried out simultaneously with data collection. This means that data analysis has been carried out from the beginning, not the same as data analysis in quantitative research which is carried out after all data is collected. The interactive process is also carried out both when data collection is still ongoing, for example in the form of comparisons between data units, data grouping, and data collection has ended.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Initial identification of student characteristics in the development of learning programs is very necessary, namely to determine the quality of each individual so that it can be used as a guide in describing learning management strategies. The aspects revealed in this activity can be talent, learning motivation, learning style, thinking ability, interest, or initial ability. The results of identifying students' initial behaviors and characteristics are one of the bases for developing an instructional system that is appropriate for students. By carrying out these activities, the problem of heterogeneous students in the classroom can be overcome, at least much reduced (Magdalena et al., 2020, p. 222).

Discussion

1. General Characteristics of Learners

Characteristic comes from the word character, which is the psychological, character, or character traits that distinguish a person from other people, characters, or characters, turning into characteristics. Meanwhile, according to the Indonesian dictionary, the characteristic is having a distinctive character by certain characteristics. Student characteristics reflect patterns of behavior and abilities resulting from innate and social environments that determine the pattern of activity (Meriyati, 2015: 5).

As previously reviewed, students have their characteristics. The potential of students can be developed if educators can understand these differences. Although in the national education system, the classical system is still the main feature, the demand to understand the character and potential differences of children is increasingly demanded.

The learning process will take place well if the teacher can understand the child's character well. Important characters that need to be understood in the learning process include,

a. Identifying the physical and non-physical characteristics of students in the classroom. Children are individuals who are still in the process of growth and development. Growth leads to physical characteristics, while development refers to organ and non-physical functions. Physical character is a characteristic that is easy to observe, such as physical characteristics (the state of the feet, eyes, hands, special abilities, and others). In the learning process, educators should not neglect this element. This element will have implications for classroom management which ultimately has an impact on achieving learning objectives. Children's growth and development are not always linear. In some cases, growth and development are delayed or imbalanced, such as children's socio-emotional state.

b. Identify the learning characteristics of each learner in the class. Children have their characteristics in learning. These characteristics cannot be separated from several things such as talent, interest, children's environment, learning style, children's intelligence, and others.

c. Ensure all learners get equal opportunities to actively participate in learning activities. In the modern education paradigm, teachers are not "teachers", but teachers are facilitators and motivators. Professional educators must be able to play a big role as facilitators. Educators provide equal opportunities to students so that students can participate optimally in the learning process.

d. Organize the class to provide equal learning opportunities for all learners with physical disabilities and different learning abilities. Organizing the class is related to classroom management. Some important things to arrange include

a) Children's seating position. B) Class lighting. C) Educator mobility, d) Learning media position. Position of learning media

e. Trying to find out the causes of deviations in learner behavior to prevent such behavior from harming other learners. Children have different behavioral characteristics. Behavioral deviations are not considered a disgrace. If there are signs of behavioral deviations, then educators seek to counsel children. Educators and school officials should strive to make efforts and psychological approaches. Monitoring and control are carried out continuously. So that educators and schools can provide approaches that can maximize the learning process.

f. Help develop the potential and overcome the shortcomings and delays in understanding students.

g. Pay attention to learners with certain physical weaknesses so that they can participate in learning activities so that these learners are not marginalized (excluded, made fun of, inferior, etc.) (Janawi, 2019, p. 74).

2. Initial Ability

Initial ability is the learning outcome obtained before obtaining higher abilities. The initial ability of students is a prerequisite for participating in learning so that they can carry out the learning process properly. The ability of a person obtained from training during his life, and what is brought to face a new experience.

Analyzing the initial ability of learners is an absolute part that must be done by educators. This is by the theoretical basis and juridical basis as follows (Utomo, 2022). First Government regulation No. 19 of 2005 concerning national education standards that learning development is carried out by taking into account; the demands, talents, interests, needs, and interests of students. second, theoretically students differ in many ways, namely; differences in individual nature, in addi-

tion to differences in family background, social, cultural, economic, and so on (Sya'roni, 2018: 97).

Initial ability can also be called prior knowledge (PK). PK is an important step in the learning process, thus every teacher needs to know the level of PK that students have. In the understanding process, PK is the main factor that will affect the learning experience for students. In the learning process, PK is the framework through which learners filter new information and make meaning of what they are learning. The process of forming meaning through reading is based on the PK in which learners will achieve their learning goals. From this description, initial ability is a prerequisite that students must have before entering the learning of the next higher subject matter (Astuti, 2015, p. 71).

3. **Benefits of understanding students' characters**

Many benefits will be obtained by teachers and students if they know each other's characteristics. Students, will get excellent service, fair treatment, no discrimination, feel maximum guidance, and solve students' problems by paying attention to their character. For teachers, the benefits of knowing and understanding the character of students are:
a. Knowing the strengths they have and can improve them.
b. Detect the weaknesses they have and improve them
c. Knowing the potential that exists in themselves and optimizing it for future success
d. Make them realize that they still have a lot of shortcomings so they should never be arrogant and demean others
e. Can find out what type of work is most suitable for them in the future according to their personality and character so that we can direct them for the better
f. Knowing oneself can help students to compromise with themselves and others in various situations. Knowing their personality can help them sincerely accept all their strengths and weaknesses, as well as tolerate the strengths and weaknesses of others (Meriyati, 2015: 8-9).

4. **The Importance of Understanding Early Childhood Characteristics**

Early childhood has distinctive characteristics (Uniq), both physical, psychological, social, moral, and so on. Childhood is also the most important period of life. Because childhood is a period of foundation formation and a period of personality that will determine the child's next experience. In such an important age, understanding the characteristics of early childhood is absolute if you want to have a generation that can develop themselves optimally (Utomo et al., 2022). The experiences that children have at an early age will have a strong influence on later life. The experience will last a long time. It cannot be erased, although it can be covered but only temporarily. If one day there is stimulation that provokes life experiences that have been experienced, the effect will reappear even though in a different form.

As stated earlier, each individual has their uniqueness, and that each individual is different from one another. However, in general, early childhood has characteristics that are relatively similar to one another. These characteristics are as follows:
a. Unique

Uniqueness is owned by each child according to innate, interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds of life that differ from one another. Although there is a general sequence pattern in child development that can be predicted, the pattern of development and learning is still different from one another.
b. Being in a period of potential

Early childhood is often said to be the "golden age" or the most potential or best period for learning and development. If this period is not passed well, it can affect the development of the next stage.
c. Relatively spontaneous. In this time children will behave as they are and are not good at pre-

tending. They will freely express their thoughts and feelings without caring about the responses of those around them. Tend to be careless and lack calculationEarly childhood does not consider whether an action is dangerous or not. If they want to do it, they will do it even though it may cause them injury or harm. Active and energetic childhood is always moving and can never be still unless they are asleep. So it is often said that early childhood "has no death".

d. Egocentric. They tend to see things from their point of view and based on their understanding only. They also assume all the objects they want are theirs.
e. Have a strong curiosity
f. Adventurous
g. Have a high imagination and fantasy
h. Tend to get frustrated easily
i. Have a short attention span (Tatminingsih, 2016).

There are several reasons why it is important to understand the characteristics of early childhood, including: a) Knowing the things needed by children that are beneficial for their life development, b) Knowing the developmental tasks of children so that they can provide appropriate stimulation to children so that they can carry out developmental tasks properly, c) Knowing how to guide the child's learning process at the right time according to their needs, d) Putting realistic expectations and demands on children, e) Being able to develop children's potential & achievements optimally according to their circumstances and abilities (Idris, 2016: 38).

Techniques for Identifying the Characteristics and Initial Skills of LearnersEntery behavior is the knowledge and skills that students already have before they continue to the next level. According to De Cecco in H. Nashir, initial behavior has the characteristic that it is a prerequisite needed to follow the next lesson and has a relevant relationship with the objectives of the results achieved.

Three groups of student characteristics need to be considered, namely:
a. Characteristics related to physiology. These characteristics include gender, physical condition, chronological age, five senses, maturity level, and so on.
b. Characteristics related to psychology. These characteristics include aptitude, interest, motivation, intelligence, learning style, emotions, and so on.
c. Characteristics related to the environment. These characteristics include ethnicity, socioeconomic conditions, culture, and so on (Meriyati, 2015).

Meanwhile, to analyze the initial abilities of students, at least an educator can identify three common characteristics in students related to age differences, physical development, motor development, and academic development. Besides that, it must also fully understand the differences in learning styles that exist among students and of course by using certain techniques (Sya'roni, 2018: 102). According to Reigeluth 1983 cited by Sya'roni in his journal revealed that 7 types of initial abilities can be used by educators to facilitate the acquisition, organization, and re-disclosure of new knowledge for students in a learning process. The 7 types include:
a. Unorganized meaningful knowledge (arbitrarily meaningful knowledge), is a place to link memorized knowledge (which is not meaningful) to facilitate retention.
b. Analogical knowledge, which relates new knowledge to other very similar knowledge that is outside the content being discussed or learned.
c. Higher-level knowledge (superordinate knowledge)

d. Coordinate knowledge. This level of knowledge has the same level of generality and specificity as what is being learned.

e. Lower level knowledge (subordinate knowledge), which has a function to concretize new knowledge or also provide examples.6. Experiential knowledge has the same function as subordinate knowledge.

f. Cognitive strategies, which provide ways of processing new knowledge, ranging from encoding, storing, to re-expressing knowledge that has been stored in memory. It functions to assist the mechanism of making connections between new knowledge and the knowledge already possessed by the learner.

If a teacher wants to know the characteristics and initial abilities of the learners, it can be done by giving a test (pre-test). The test given can be related to the teaching material by the curriculum guidelines. In addition, educators can conduct interviews, and observations and provide questionnaires to students, teachers who know the abilities of students or prospective students, and teachers who usually teach the subject. Techniques for identifying student characteristics are using questionnaires, interviews, observations and tests, and student backgrounds (Sya'roni, 2018, p. 98).

CONCLUSION

A learner's initial ability is the ability that learners already have before they acquire certain new terminal abilities. Initial ability shows the current status of students' knowledge and skills to get to the future status that educators want learners to achieve. Learners' initial abilities are closely related to learners' characteristics and learning styles. To analyze learners' initial abilities, at least an educator can identify three common characteristics in learners related to age differences, physical development, motor development, and academic development. In addition, it must also fully understand the differences in learning styles that exist in

students and of course by using certain techniques, while techniques for identifying student characteristics are by using questionnaires, interviews, observations and tests, and student backgrounds.

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