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Early Childhood Education according to Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi and Maria Montessori

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi akan adanya konsep Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini yang ditawarkan oleh berbagai tokoh pendidikan sehingga berdampak kepada munculnya teori-teori pendidikan yang semakin dinamis. Permasalahan ini pun tidak luput dari perhatian Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi dan Maria Montessori. Kedua tokoh tersebut memiliki sisi persamaan dan perbedaan pada sudut pandang maupun pendekatan yang mendasari serta tidak dapat terlepas dari kajian filosofis yang melatarbelakanginya. Berdasarkan hal di atas, maka penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelusuri pemikiran kedua tokoh tersebut sehingga dapat melahirkan suatu paradigma baru akan arah pendidikan bagi anak usia dini. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka dengan mengumpulkan berbagai referensi yang dapat mendukung penelitian. Adapun dari hasil penelitian dapat diperoleh bahwa secara filosofis konsep Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini menurut Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi melekat pada pendekatan normatif perenialis, sedangkan pemikiran Maria Montessori lebih menuju ke arah pendekatan konstruktivisme. Kedua pendekatan ini memiliki sudut pandang yang berbeda dalam menyoroti sisi pendidikan. Adapun titik persamaan dari pandangan kedua tokoh ini yaitu pemahaman terhadap konsep pendidikan yang seyogianya bersifat terpadu dan kontekstual, serta memosisikan anak sebagai subjek utama dalam pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: *pendidikan anak usia dini; Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi; Maria Montessori.*

Abstract

This research is motivated by the concept of Early Childhood Education offered by various educational figures to impact the emergence of increasingly dynamic educational theories. Issues on this concept did not escape the attention of Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi and Maria Montessori. The two figures have similarities and differences in their underlying points of view and approaches, and these cannot be separated from the philosophical study behind them. Based on the above, this study explores the two figures' thoughts to give birth to a new paradigm of education for early childhood. The research method used was a literature study by collecting various references that can support research. From the research results, it can be found that, philosophically, the concept of Early Childhood Education, according to Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi, is attached to the perennial normative approach, while Maria Montessori's notion is more towards a constructivism approach. The two approaches have different points of view in highlighting the educational side. The similarity in the points of view of these two figures is an understanding of the concept of education, which should be integrated and contextual, and position the child as the main subject in education.

Keywords: *early childhood education; Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi; Maria Montessori.*

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Introduction

In the last few decades, the world of education has been faced with new discourses philosophically and pedagogically about the urgency of early childhood education. According to Farquhar and White, this issue departs from various paradigms and science that have also developed and emerged with discoveries. For example, neurologically speaking, the human brain is born with trillions of nerve cells ready to absorb the various things it gets (Farquhar & White, 2013).

Psychologically, the child's early period is often referred to as the golden age, a measure of a person's success rate in passing through each stage of their development. (Suyadi & Ulfah, 2013). In line with what Mulyasa has stated, early childhood is also termed as the most critical period. This is because, in addition to growth and development, this period is also a determinant in developing children's character. The first six to eight years are valuable time to perform various stimulations optimally for children. Furthermore, this will later become the basis for the success rate passed and determine the child's development at the next stage (Mulyasa, 2012).

There are pedagogical perceptions currently developing, causing various ideas about early childhood to have multidimensional orientations (Farquhar & White, 2013). The direction of education in modern times has also experienced progress, including early childhood education. At first, children are often seen as mini-adults who have the same developmental and understanding patterns as adults in general. This often causes misunderstandings in the pattern of education provided. Educators often treat children based on their versions and perspectives and ignore various occurring developmental processes. However, children as unique individuals have various abilities and needs that have been carried since birth as part of their nature. Besides, children still have limitations in achieving the various forms of growth and development they will face. Therefore, the role of parenting and a continuous process of guidance is critical to support children through each of these complex stages (Nata, 1997).

The explanation above fits for early childhood education to become an essential element that receives special attention in education. The success of a child's life in the next period is a turning point from the beginning of the life they have been through and a period that can be used optimally in providing various stimuli and the right education (Ulfah, 2015). The development of educational theories today also affects the dynamic direction of thinking about early childhood education patterns. Therefore, paying attention to the importance of the period and the child's characteristics also demands an approach that determines the desired learning activities.

Based on these problems, an education system approach becomes the basis for achieving the expected educational goals. This will later affect the curriculum arrangement, which is inseparable from the educational paradigm behind it so that the results obtained will be right on target for children as subjects in education (Arief, 2002). On the other hand, various approaches are the answer to the various educational narratives described above. Therefore, it can be understood if the initial foundation determines every aspect of education. This also shows that the concept of education offered does not escape from philosophical studies, incredibly educational philosophical schools as a center for implementing learning.

Referring to various ideas and paradigms that have developed in education, it turns out that they have attracted significant attention from two educational figures, Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi and Maria Montessori. Viewed conceptually, the two figures depart from one view and special attention regarding early childhood education and children's golden age as a starting point for developing life in the next. On the other hand, both have different historical and ideological backgrounds. Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi is an educational figure from the East, while Maria Montessori is an educational figure born from the West.

An-Nahlawi has a detailed view of children's freedom and independence that began to be developed at an early age based on Islamic Law. This is stated in his phenomenal work, *Ushulut Tarbiyah Islamiyah wa Asalibiha fil Baiti wal Madrasati wal Mujtama'*. This problem departs from An-Nahlawi's concern with the inclusion of ideas from modern educational philosophers who can erode children's parenting in their development (An-Nahlawi, 1995). Ulwan also explained

that An-Nahlawi's view gave a signal that the wrong educational system could lead to a person's failure to achieve their nature as a human (Ulwan, 2017).

An-Nahlawi's concern for child development is reiterated in his writing, that development is the fundamental asset in human life. An-Nahlawi also firmly adheres to the primary sources in the religion of Islam, the Qur'an and As-Sunnah as an educational direction and the perfect manhaj Rabbani in guiding the nature of children to become *insanul kamil* (human beings). This view influences Islamic education, including early childhood education, through various principles and methods of promoting Rabbani education (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

Maria Montessori began to dedicate herself to early childhood education, starting from her study of special needs children (Montessori, 2013). According to Montessori, the first years of life are the most appropriate times to instill education in children (Suparlan, 1984). Besides, at this time, children can also be very fast to perceive everything received by the five senses. Montessori often terms this as an absorbent mind. This ability can help children teach themselves naturally (Montessori, 2008). Montessori also views that the occurring development of education cannot represent the life of early childhood as a whole from the beginning of its development (Montessori, 2008). Therefore, freedom is one of the keys in the child's learning stage through a structured environment (Montessori, 2013). This is the basis for Montessori education to produce appropriate educational methods for the individual child's stages and needs. At the congress to celebrate the Montessori movement's century, it was noted that the Montessori method had been used by more than 22,000 Montessori schools in about 110 countries (Magini, 2013).

Departing from the above points, this study aims to examine Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi and Maria Montessori's views on philosophical early childhood education. This is where each character's various uniqueness and educational patterns will be found without neglecting the orientation both An-Nahlawi and Montessori want to convey. It is also directed to look for points of similarity and difference between the two to develop ideas for early childhood education.

Methods

This research uses library research by focusing more on theoretical data management than (empirical) data found in the field (N. Muhajir, 2011). Cited from Bakker and Zubair, this research was conducted by collecting figures' works, either personal or monographical. Apart from that, it also comes from other supporting works (Bakker & Zubair, 1990). Furthermore, a description of the two figures' views on early childhood education and the philosophical approach is carried out by exploring various supporting literature.

The data collection technique used is the documentation technique. This study's point of view uses a philosophical, historical, and psychological point of view. Through a philosophical approach, analysis is carried out openly and dynamically to find clarification between an idea and a philosophical reflection on the problem studied (Muzairi et al., 2014). The historical approach explains research studies based on historical facts (Muzairi et al., 2014). The psychological approach is carried out to study based on a psychological perspective, especially in early childhood development.

The data collection technique used is documentation techniques through three stages in data management, i.e., data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Data reduction is useful for collecting general data from biographies, works, and rationale and then converging on the problems to be studied, i.e., philosophical early childhood education (Sugiyono, 2013). Data presentation is in the form of systematic data presentation so that it is easy to understand (Sugiyono, 2013). Data verification is used to answer the formulated research objectives and find conclusions in line with the studied data (Sugiyono, 2013). Based on the above, the authors examine each reference obtained both textually and contextually, then proceed by comparing the two so that the similarities and differences between the two are obtained.

Results

The Concept of Early Childhood Education According to Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi

An-Nahlawi's direction of thought is more focused on the concept of Islamic education. This can be seen from the seriousness of An-Nahlawi in giving his attention to education and placing that education on the noble values of Islam. An-Nahlawi states that Islamic education is developing human thinking, attitude development, and emotional control based on Islam. This is to realize Islam's goals, both individually and collectively, in every aspect of life (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

On the other hand, An-Nahlawi mentioned the word education using the term *tarbiyah*, which has a broader meaning than other related terms (Setiawan, 2019). Therefore, An-Nahlawi offers a concept of Islamic education as excellent education, or in his terms, as "*Manhaj Tarbiyah*" (An-Nahlawi, 1995). For An-Nahlawi, Islam is a Rabbani curriculum that perfectly plays a role in maintaining human nature and forming a perfect personality (An-Nahlawi, 1995). Referring to Arifin's opinion, the *fitrah* referred to here are the child's various fundamental or innate potentials since birth (Arifin, 1991).

An-Nahlawi also views that normative teaching is one way to maintain and save humans from modern society's various problems today (An-Nahlawi, 1992, p. 40). This expression is reinforced by Nata's notion that Islamic education has a foundation that can contribute to problem-solving by integrating perennialist normative values in its concept and practice (Nata, 1997).

In general, three prominent aspects underlie the direction of An-Nahlawi's education, i.e., aspects of faith and belief, sharia, and servitude (An-Nahlawi, 1995). These three aspects will direct the education obtained by children towards the highest educational goal, Islam. On the other hand, An-Nahlawi views that education has a purpose that includes aspects of creation and human existence in life as a form of obedience to Allah and human leadership as the purpose of its creation. (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

Discussing the role of the environment in early childhood education, for An-Nahlawi, four available educational facilities play a significant role in supporting an education's success, i.e., mosques, houses, schools, and communities. The environment's role is none other than a determinant of the maintenance of children's nature and all its potential through the provision of education in line with Islamic law and in realizing obedience to Allah. (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

As for educators, educators' two main functions are to play a role in purification and teaching. These two aspects are the leading indicators to show that educators should act as the leading role models for children by reflecting *Rabbani* traits in their personality. (An-Nahlawi, 1995). An-Nahlawi also added that the best educational method is the method of Islamic education that is in line with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The educational method is the method with Quranic and nabawi dialogues, Quranic and nabawi stories, parables, exemplary, practice and experience, *ibrah* and *mau'izhah* well as *targhib* and *tarhib*. (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

The Qur'ani and nabawi dialogues are divided into several types, including *hiwar khitabi* (dialogical conversation), *hiwar washi* (descriptive conversation), *hiwar qishashi* (narrative conversation), *hiwar jadali* (dialectical conversation), and *hiwar Nabawi* (the conversation used by the Prophet for the companions) (An-Nahlawi, 1995). In the method of Quranic and Nabawi stories, it is carried out by bringing up events that occurred and were published in the Qur'an and during the time of the Prophet. This has a significant influence on the emotional development of children. Besides, children will learn from the good and bad sides of a real event at the time of the Prophet and his companions. In the form of stories that can arouse children's imaginations, the stories also depicted real events, although it is not close to the child's life events. Children also have a picture of ideal role models based on Islam (An-Nahlawi, 1995). Another method, such as parables, explains a parable or analogy to the conversation's content, revealing learning about both good and bad that can be understood by children (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

The exemplary method can be done through teachers' and parents' roles, both from behaving and practicing daily life activities. For example, willingness to help, sharing toys, giving

thanks, praying before doing activities, performing sunnah prayers, reciting the Qur'an, and so on (An-Nahlawi, 1995). Also, this method deals with methods of practice and experience. In its implementation, continuous training is needed, so that good habits are formed in children. This can also be done by listening to and reading each material repeatedly (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

Furthermore, the wisdom and advice method can be implemented by bringing children from concrete knowledge to abstract knowledge. Giving advice and warnings can be good or bad in a way that can touch the hearts of children to practice it (An-Nahlawi, 1995). Meanwhile, the *targhib* and *tarhib* methods, or what is commonly referred to as the reward and punishment method, are a form of reward and consequences that can be given to children. This method also takes into account the age and development of the child. Rewards are not only interpreted as giving of goods but can also be in the form of praise and verbal and non-verbal support. As for punishment, it does not mean only in the form of sanctions given to children. However, it can also take the form of giving consequences for an action that has been done by the child (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

Also, An-Nahlawi considered religious knowledge to be necessary as a manifestation of Islamic education, including through the provision of several materials such as Qur'an, hadith, tauhid, fiqh, and Islamic culture. (An-Nahlawi, 1995). These can be implemented in learning in early childhood education, developing children's religious and moral values. The materials of the Qur'an and Hadith include the introduction of hijaiyah letters, memorizing short surahs, arguments, and hadiths about the stories of the Prophet and Rasul, as well as daily activities that have been adapted to the child's age. On the aspect of monotheism, this includes material of morals which includes aspects of children's beliefs. The examples are getting to know Islam's pillars and the pillars of faith, reading *Asmaul Husna* and *Thayyibah* sentences. Besides, the examples also include habituation and inculcating praiseworthy qualities for children, such as honesty, patient, help, respect, etc. In the aspect of fiqh, this includes teaching the practice of worship and how to perform it, such as ablution, prayer, and reciting surahs. As for Islamic culture, it includes Islamic stories and history as a form of learning for children. The examples are the Prophet and Rasul's story, *khulafaur rashidin*, and the companions (Pedoman Implementasi Kurikulum Raudhatul Athfal, 2018).

The Concept of Early Childhood Education according to Maria Montessori

The Montessori education paradigm is based on the constructivism approach, where some of its principles are taken from the progressivism school of education. It seems that Montessori positions children as educational subjects. Besides, education for Montessori is a way of preparing children to achieve the highest educational goals known as "spontaneous development" both mentally, spiritually, and personally (Montessori, 1992). Children also naturally impulse themselves towards forming their soul (self-construction) (Suyadi & Ulfah, 2013).

Another aspect that becomes Montessori's consideration is the child's freedom to choose an activity autonomously through the environment and activities that have been designed with due regard to the child's ongoing development period. For Montessori, this strategy is considered capable of supporting the innate potential children have since birth and in line with the occurring environmental conditions (Montessori, 1992). The freedom echoed by Montessori is a form of freedom in carrying out activities that are not focused on cognitive aspects only, but also pay attention to life skills to prepare children for their future (Wulandari et al., 2018).

According to Montessori, early childhood has a unique ability to assimilate the surrounding environment and simultaneously develop their innate mental strength. This enables early childhood to absorb every experience strongly and directly (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2011). Montessori expresses this with the term absorbent mind (Montessori, 2013). Furthermore, in their article, Ahmadpour & Mujembari (2015) call this period the mental web (mental web), which describes the child's thought process like a spider web interconnected. It is none other than very much determined by the available environment for the child.

On the other hand, children also have sensitive periods that support their progress (Montessori, 2013). As for educators' role, Montessori has also revealed that educators have

three leading roles, i.e., as administrators, facilitators, and observers. These three roles are more often termed the environmental director (Montessori, 2008). Therefore, educators tend to be more passive and play a more role as guides, as mentioned. Much of this prepared environment's success will depend on the teacher's ability to assist children in the learning process (Montessori, 2008).

According to Robert, Montessori also has a concept in learning activities called circle time. This is a time of transition from one activity to another. This can also be interpreted to help children move from outdoor to indoor activities. This is where children have the opportunity to express themselves freely, following the child's intuition. Children also have the freedom to do activities they like at school (Biswas-Diener, 2011).

In terms of curriculum, Montessori emphasizes integrated learning patterns. The material provided is a medium suitable for children's daily lives based on usable, realistic concepts and is the same size as the child. There are six main subjects in the Montessori curriculum: practical life, sensory, linguistics, mathematics, arts, and culture. (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2011). The existence of material related to the cultural context is one way of fostering children's awareness and knowledge about different cultures (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2011). For example, about practical life material, in addition to gaining knowledge, children can also practice necessary life skills both for themselves and for others, the rules that apply to society and manners.

Discussion

Early Childhood Education's Philosophical Approach according to Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi

An-Nahlawi's direction of thought in education that is more focused on the concept of Islamic education is inseparable from its background of perennialist normative educational approach. When viewed from its roots, the perennial normative approach comes from the perennial philosophy. This philosophical school considers that religious metaphysics cannot be separated from traditional transmissions, including spiritual realization metaphysics, which are the benchmarks of a religion (Nata, 1997). Meanwhile, according to Abidin, perennials' flow has the principle of a regressive road to culture or a return to the cultural path as a form of solving the problems being faced (Abidin, 2014). In other equivalent words, as expressed by Mu'ammam, perennial philosophy is influenced by teachings based on Islamic dogmatics. This shows that this approach is closely tied to religious guidelines as a foundation in determining the direction of education to be implemented (Mu'ammam, 2014).

Departing from this context, the Islamic education system will not be easily influenced by formal and pragmatic things. On the other hand, education is seen not in terms of reality but ideals (Nata, 1997). Therefore, education is driven by outstanding values inherent in the religious order, so that the standard of success is also determined by the extent to which these values can be realized in the education system.

According to Nata, the perennial philosophical viewpoint considers modern philosophy to rest on science and art and clean up its perennial aspects. Modern philosophy is also synonymous with Western philosophy and rests on empirical science, and is far from traditional wisdom, thus leaving out more critical matters (Nata, 1997). This is also seen as the fulcrum of An-Nahlawi's critical thinking and attitude towards 20th-century education, which has been oriented towards the West and has begun to erode the human nature in children from an early age (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

Therefore, in the context of early childhood education, it should be directed towards a concept that can bridge children to the central vision in Islamic education, i.e., as a servant and a caliph in line with Allah's law. Borrowing a term from Mohammad Noor Syam, the primary basis for An-Nahlawi's education direction is "education as preparation." This means that education is a form of preparation for children to live their future lives. Therefore, the education pattern that is considered the most ideal is an education in line with the Islamic religion and can guide children as complete human beings (Syam, 1986). On the other hand, children's freedom to explore all of their existing potentials must align with Islam's nature and demands. This is

because education is related to reasoning power development and emphasizes affection (Ramayulis, 1994).

The perennial normative approach also interprets the nature of education broadly and deeply, reaches out to all aspects of human life, and directs all available means and abilities (Syam, 1986). This is also in line with the highest goal of education in An-Nahlawi's view. Therefore, in its realization, the education system runs in integrity and is not segregated. As for its implementation in the early childhood education curriculum, the principles of learning are carried out thematically and contextually and are based on the values contained in the Qur'an and hadith. An-Nahlawi education also discusses self-actualization through various developmental directions and children's conditions. This shows that children's ability and development level is considered according to the stages in implementing the curriculum in early childhood education.

Furthermore, the perennial normative approach acknowledges the vital role of the environment and innate in molding a child's personality. This approach also views the existence of guidance as a determinant in cultivating kindness in children. This selectively implies that the environment involved in educational activities is reasonable and responsible, both morally, theologically, and socially and culturally (Nata, 1997). This is in line with An-Nahlawi's thinking, which has four primary environments as a means of education, especially the family's role. One example is family functions for early childhood, such as protective, religious, and educational functions.

The protective function means that the family plays a role in protecting children both physically and mentally. This influences the subsequent development of the child. On the other hand, children can build their personality better. In the religious function, the family functions to instill religious values in the child's life and maintain its nature. Meanwhile, the educational function means that the family can educate their children by paying attention to every developmental stage the child faces (Purnomo, 2007).

Based on what As'aril Muhajir has stated, An-Nahlawi's view of educators is based on the assumption that there are three necessary competencies an educator must possess, i.e., personal, social, and religious professionals. This means that every educator, in terms of personality, social, and professionalism, must be based on inherent religious values and be implemented in their competence as a teacher (A. Muhajir, 2011). Another thing of concern is the need for affection in educating children. Affection is one of the fundamental needs that play a role in child development, especially from the child's psychological aspects, which must be filled with affective values that impress them (Musmualim & Miftah, 2016).

From some of the explanations above, Islamic education for early childhood, as initiated by An-Nahlawi, has an advantage, both ideologically and in strategic content that includes Islamic values in every aspect. Quoting a term put forward by Mansur, the Islamic concept for early childhood education is a way that seeks to develop a religious character in the child's soul. Islam's involvement as a fundamental aspect of education plays a significant role in restoring children's existence as the next generation (Mansur, 2011). Therefore, as described by An-Nahlawi in the curriculum and educational methods he initiated, it is necessary to educate children.

The seven types of educational methods offered by An-Nahlawi based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah play a role in building personality and providing motivation for children. This is in line with the view of "perennials," which made the Prophet's time the most ideal in the field of education. This view considers the most appropriate methods used in education as the Prophet Muhammad's methods in his day (Mu'ammam, 2014). Besides, the An-Nahlawi method in early childhood education can be made both when learning activities are in progress and as a form of developing Islamic character in everyday life. Therefore, it is vital to have direction from parents, teachers, and the community to absorb any material given through the various methods given. Islamic materials' implementation in early childhood education can go through habituation and giving examples that are carried out repeatedly. The example is prayer, ablution, getting to know the pillars of Islam, the Prophet's names, etc. Another thing that also

needs to be considered is delivering material that must be adjusted to the child's needs and abilities.

Quoting from Mansur's expression, there are three main things in educating children as a manifestation of achieving a goal (financial intermediary) in education, i.e., monotheism, science, and learning strategies. These three things can be described in the An-Nahlawi education paradigm for early childhood (Mansur, 2011).

Early Childhood Education Philosophical Approach according to Maria Montessori

Montessori's thought is based on the flow of progressivism education, which comes from pragmatism, a child-centered school of education in its implementation. This view is the answer to an old understanding of the teacher-centered education system (Mudyahardja, 2001). This is because teacher-centered education is considered only limited to the process of transfer of knowledge (transfer of knowledge), which will position the child to be passive and receptive (Saidah, 2016). On the other hand, children do not have the freedom and broad opportunities in the ongoing learning process. This is clearly in contrast to the flow of progressivism, which upholds children's existence as the primary education subject.

According to George R. Knight, a constructivist approach is an approach that assumes that children can build their knowledge. Meanwhile, according to Suparno (Sunanik, 2014), learning in the constructivism approach means cognitive construction through individuals' activities. Another term that defines learning with this concept is called active learning, which is specifically more concerned with involving the child's personality in learning (Shawket, 2016).

Therefore, learning activities should provide opportunities for children to learn by adjusting to their interests and needs. Direct learning will be child-centered by optimizing innate abilities in acquiring knowledge and skills of interest (Knight, 2007). This condition has been tried to build by Montessori had made an effort to build this for a long time through the various concepts it offers for early childhood education.

The principal elements in the view of Montessori are illustrations of the constructivism approach that enrich the concept of Montessori education. According to Prayitno, the constructivism approach considers the need for a prepared environment, a conducive atmosphere, and more open educators so that children can develop themselves confidently through the various learning activities they do (Prayitno, 2009). This can be termed as a model of human development in the concept of Montessori education (Firdaus, 2017). Meanwhile, Scarpini called it two fundamental rights for children, i.e., the right to think and have space (Scarpini, 2020). Whitman used another expression, interested empiricism, in expressing the concept in which the empirical process becomes the basis for learning the offered process (Frierson, 2014).

Therefore, Montessori pays essential attention to the child's environment as a means for children to achieve freedom and independence in an activity. The often-used term is the prepared environment by paying attention to the child's innate natural potential from birth. Based on this, Montessori must modify various equipment so that children can explore themselves well. The Montessori education process's substance is on the child's goals as a unique individual. This concept is then referred to as the essence of the Montessori education concept for early childhood learning (Elytasari, 2017).

On the other hand, according to Montessori, educators' concept as directors is in line with the constructivist approach that views educators as being able to appreciate and provide opportunities for children's innate abilities to experience progress, not limits it being authoritarian (Saidah, 2016). As George R. Knight stated, the educator's role is as an advisor, mentor, and guide rather than an authoritarian reference (Knight, 2007). Educators on the Montessori concept also intensively and continuously play a role in providing education and teaching based on a sense of love and trust in children (Carter & Roe, 2013; Christensen, 2019). This can also be referred to as following the child (Scott, 2017).

Furthermore, according to Dewey, as cited in George R. Knight, the constructivism approach's curriculum is not separated. The curriculum is designed based on nature and departs from gradual learning from easy to complex things (Knight, 2007). Abuddin Nata added that the

ideal school has an integrated education system with its surrounding environment in this approach. This is because schools are part of society. It is also reflected in the Montessori curriculum, which is based on integrated and holistic education and prepares children as part of a broader social community (Nata, 1997).

This is where it can be seen that the orientation of inculcating the expected values in children is many values that apply in society, not those that come from God (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2011). Education is also dynamic and open and not bound by any particular doctrine (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2011). This is in line with the concept of a constructivist approach, which refers to an empirical view in determining education's direction.

For Montessori, children's education is nothing but their own life (education is life). Inequality with something the children acquire in real life in children's learning processes is not found (Knight, 2007). Therefore, school is also called a miniature of life that is deliberately prepared for children (Knight, 2007). This expression implies that school as a formal environment is the best place for children to prepare before adulthood with a broader and more complex environment. Children can also learn various life skills that are adjusted to their level of competence and environmental expectations.

Early Childhood Education Approach according to Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi and Maria Montessori: A Common Point

In the description above, a different direction has been found in the approach to early childhood education, according to An-Nahlawi and Montessori. On the other hand, these two figures have a common point in focusing on children in the education system and their views on learning holistically and contextually. These two figures' thoughts can also be studied in depth from the ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects.

According to Abd. Wahid Hasyim, the ontological aspect means that the child has several aspects that develop in a multidimensional manner. The epistemological aspect means that early childhood learning activities should refer to a concept that can optimize children's development, such as learning by playing, learning by doing, and learning by stimulating. As for the axiological aspect, the curriculum is an important part that needs to be considered by integrating every aspect of the values that want to be instilled in children (Hasyim et al., 2009). As Whitman has also stated, Montessori's thought itself can make contributions that can enrich the epistemological treasures of contemporary education today (Frierson, 2016).

The thing that underlies the existence of a holistic-integrated education on An-Nahlawi's thought departs from the assumption that the curriculum should be bound and centered. Every material in the curriculum should be related to one another. Furthermore, Islamic education's purpose becomes the primary reference in material development and in achieving aspects of child development (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

Based on the above expression, this view is in line with Ramayulis' opinion regarding Islamic education for children. There should be no educational dichotomy. Departing from this, children are expected to achieve a total way of life in understanding Islam in various scientific fields to deal with existing life conditions (Ramayulis, 1994). Therefore, following the education system put forward by An-Nahlawi, the direction of education should be a form of preparation for life or education for life for children. On the other hand, An-Nahlawi has the view that education for children must be carried out contextually. This was put forward in one of the schools' fundamental goals in implementing education, i.e., teaching and education activities are realistic and natural (An-Nahlawi, 1995).

Meanwhile, for Montessori, as stated by George S. Morrison, the education system it offers is an integrated education with some concrete materials that have been manipulated in every activity (Morrison, 2012). This was also explained by Drigas, that Montessori pays attention to various activities with manipulative objects that function in children's thinking processes and are useful when children acquire skills (Drigas & Gkeka, 2016). This shows that there is a form of integration in the concept of Montessori education, which can be seen in the designed curriculum by paying attention to various crucial aspects, one of which is the nature of the child.

Like An-Nahlawi, Montessori also has the view that education for early childhood must be done contextually. Through this prepared environment, Montessori gives children the freedom to choose and carry out several activities they are interested in. This is known as “the prepared environment” (Hainstock, 2008; Öngören & Turcan, 2009). Also, Montessori prepared some supporting materials, such as suitable life material, sensory material, and educational material (Morrison, 2012). On the other hand, Montessori also pays attention to optimizing children’s sensory (senses) in learning (Cuma, 2013). This is based on Montessori’s view of the child’s ability to imagine, based on the sensory stage and the child’s experiences in their everyday life, not based on fantasy (Crain, 2007).

In line with this, preschool education is intended to prepare children to enter the next level of education and prepare children for real-life (Musfah, 2012). Due to the existence of the two figures’ view of contextual education, here lies the significance of this paradigm in understanding life’s reality. As stated by Muhammad Takdir Ilahi, contextual-based education provides “meaningful knowledge” to children and significant achievement. This concept is based on the “need to know,” which originates from curiosity and can motivate students (Ilahi, 2012).

Therefore, the teacher does not only have a role as an agent of transfer of knowledge, but rather as an agent of transfer of value (Mustofa, 2019). According to Montessori, Bennetts also revealed that educators as one of the aspects in the prepared learning environment affect the pedagogical aspect and have an essential contribution to children’s spiritual development and holistic learning (Bennetts & Bone, 2019). Based on this, it is necessary to have a contextual approach in supporting the realization of learning activities.

Another thing that affects education’s contextual direction is based on children’s view as the main subject in education. An-Nahlawi wants the realization of Islamic idealism in children’s education through the maintenance of nature and personality. Therefore, the goals of Islamic education will become a basis in the direction of the education system. Meanwhile, Montessori prioritizes innate potential as a principle thing in the achievement of children in life. This situation causes both physically and psychologically, and all existing aspects of the child become an essential reference in education. Therefore, an educational paradigm that is in line with the character of early childhood is born.

The authors show in the following table comparison of the concept of Early Childhood Education, according to Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi and Maria Montessori:

Table 1. Educational Concepts of Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi and Maria Montessori

No.	Aspect	Similarities	Differences
1.	Education Basics	Forming a person and developing the child’s potential from birth as well as a means of providing a conducive environment.	<p>Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi According to Islamic law, education as preparation is based on dogmatics to develop personality and maintain children’s fitnah.</p> <p>Maria Montessori Education is a preparation for children to face real life so that education is adapted to real-life (Education is life) by paying attention to children’s sensitive period and freedom in learning.</p>
2.	Education Objectives	The purpose of education is a real way of life by considering children’s development as an essential aspect of realizing educational goals.	<p>Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi Realizing Islamic idealism in children’s lives, both individually and socially.</p> <p>Maria Montessori Model of human development and means of developing spontaneous abilities in children’s personalities</p>

No.	Aspect	Similarities	Differences
3.	Education facility	Provide support and influence on children's potential. The family functions to meet the children's needs for love. School becomes a means of connecting education in the family through various activities carried out realistically and naturally, and according to skills.	<p>Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi The facilities, i.e., mosque, house, school, and community, play a role in realizing Islamic education for children.</p> <p>Maria Montessori The facilities consist of homes and schools prepared and conditioned according to children's development and daily lives.</p>
4.	Educator	Educators play a role in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs. Also, educators act as guides.	<p>Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi Educators have two main functions, i.e., the function of cleansing and teaching. Educators are also role models based on Rabbani's character and have competence in educating.</p> <p>Maria Montessori Educators as directors (supervisors) who guide children in learning activities. The prominent role of educators, i.e., as administrators, facilitators, and observers.</p>
5.	Learners	Children as unique individuals who have brought great potential from birth. Children also have a natural desire to learn independently, which helps determine children's personality and success rate as adults.	<p>Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi Children have nature as servants and caliphs who can carry out Allah's law in their daily life. The child's learning stage must be adjusted to the child's readiness and abilities based on Islam.</p> <p>Maria Montessori Children have productive potential that can develop according to their abilities. Children also have sensitive periods and the freedom to do the types of activities they want.</p>
6.	Curriculum	The curriculum as meaningful knowledge is designed in an integrated and contextual manner covering all educational programs.	<p>Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi The curriculum is based on the concept of Islamic education and the embodiment of religious idealism. The material is related to the fields of Qur'an, hadith, tauhid, fiqh, and Islamic culture.</p> <p>Maria Montessori The curriculum is divided into six essential areas, i.e., practical life, senses, language and mathematics, arts and culture, and circle time in its implementation.</p>
7.	Education Method	The educational method is a way that is prepared for children to achieve educational goals.	<p>Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi The method is observed from the nature and interests of educational objectives based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. It consists of: educational methods through Quranic and Nabawi dialogues, Quranic and Nabawi stories, parables, exemplary, practice and experience, 'ibrah and mau'izhah,' targhib and tarhib.</p>

No.	Aspect	Similarities	Differences
			Maria Montessori The method is observed from the natural development of children from birth. I consist of: independence and concentration, free choice, reward and punishment, gradual preparation, and literacy.

Conclusion

Philosophically, an-Nahlawi's view regarding early childhood education is based on a perennial normative approach that cannot be separated by Islamic dogmatics. Education is seen as a field in realizing Islamic goals in life. Education is one way to deliver children as servants and leaders with religious character through various self-actualizations in early childhood. The environment and educators are also determining aspects in the direction of education in the perennialist normative approach. Educators should be able to be role models by referring to the Rabbani characteristics manifested in their personality. Montessori's thought philosophically departs from a constructivist approach, which holds that children can build their knowledge. Learning should be child-oriented while still paying attention to their abilities and preparing for an optimal learning environment.

Meanwhile, educators are seen only as facilitators, not as the primary source of learning. Therefore, learning is oriented towards the values that develop in a society, not normatively. The similarity of the two figures' views is that there is a director of education holistically and contextually and pays particular attention to children as the main factor in education. The essence of these two figures' notions leads to a new modification in education's direction by integrating one another's thoughts to become a reference for innovative learning. On the other hand, adopting these two characters' ideas will lead to a not rigid mindset, but one which is still oriented to principle ideas.

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