

## The Role of Parents in Improving Character Education During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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### Abstrak

*Covid-19 berdampak besar pada semua sektor kehidupan masyarakat, termasuk sektor pendidikan. Pendidikan merupakan sektor penting yang mendukung semua jenis kegiatan akademik. Covid-19 memaksa pemerintah untuk menutup semua sekolah dan mulai menerapkan pembelajaran jarak jauh. Hal ini tentunya menimbulkan beberapa permasalahan, karena tidak semua sekolah di Indonesia dapat menerapkan pembelajaran jarak jauh secara efektif. Untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut diperlukan kerja sama dengan beberapa pihak. Terutama peran orang tua yang harus lebih aktif di rumah menggantikan peran guru di sekolah. Peran orang tua diharapkan mampu memberikan suasana belajar mengajar yang baik di rumah. Fokus masalah ini adalah perkembangan karakter anak pada masa pandemi Covid-19. Orang tua harus mampu memberikan contoh dan bimbingan tentang pengembangan karakter yang dipelajari anak dari orang tua melalui panca indera. Oleh karena itu, orang tua harus bisa memberi contoh yang baik sebelum memberikan pendidikan karakter kepada anak di rumah.*

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**Kata kunci:** peran orang tua, pendidikan karakter, Covid-19

### Abstract

*Covid-19 has a major impact on all sectors of public life, including the education sector. It is an important sector that supports all types of academic activities. Covid-19 forces the government to close all schools and start implementing distance learning. This certainly raises several views, because not all schools in Indonesia can effectively implement distance learning. To overcome this problem, cooperation between several parties is required. Especially the role of parents who must be more active at home to replace the role of teachers at school. The role of parents is expected to be able to provide a good teaching and learning atmosphere at home. The focused on this problem is the character development of children during the covid-19 pandemic. Parents must be able to provide examples and guidance about character circles, which children learn from parents through sense senses. Therefore, parents must be able to set a good example before giving character education to children at home.*

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**Keywords:** role of parents, character education, Covid-19

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia first confirmed the Covid-19 case on Monday 2 March. At that time, President Joko Widodo announced that two Indonesians had tested positive for the Corona virus, namely a 31-year-old woman and a 64-year-old mother. The first case allegedly

originated from a meeting of the 31-year-old woman with a Japanese citizen who entered Indonesian territory. The meeting took place at a dance club in Jakarta on February 14.<sup>1</sup>

After the first case occurred in Indonesia, other cases began to grow quite rapidly. This is, of course, a shock therapy for the government who initially said that Indonesia would not be contaminated with Covid-19. The development of Covid-19 has reached 441,000 cases to date, with details of 372,000 patients recovering and 14,689 dead.<sup>2</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on all sectors of life, including education in Indonesia. The temporary solution is to close schools and transfer learning online. The strategy of closing schools had to be implemented in order to avoid the spread of the Corona virus. Though many countries are still attempting to open schools as usual at the beginning of the pandemic. At the end of the day, however, as a result of an increasingly violent pandemic, school closure measures must be taken to save the education sector. The education sector most affected by Covid-19 is school learning.

Before the school learning affected by Covid-19, it is one of the best education system that has implemented.<sup>3</sup> School learning is the best public policy tool to increase knowledge and skills. In addition, many students think that school is a funniest activity, they can interact with each other. Schools should develop students' social skills and knowledge of the social groups. The school as a whole is a means of interaction between students and teachers to develop their honesty, skills and affection. But now the operation called school has abruptly stopped because of the intervention of Covid-19. There is a lot of evidence, particularly for Indonesia, that schools have a significant impact on productivity and economic development.<sup>4</sup>

The challenges faced in order for education to continue are very complex. Starting from the limited mastery of technology by teachers and students, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, limited internet access, the state budget which is predicted to be insufficient, and the readiness of parents to replace teachers' role at home to guide children's learning.<sup>5</sup> Educational situations like this are a dilemma in itself for educators and students. On the one hand they are forced to carry out distance learning in order to break the chain of spreading Covid-19, but on the other hand, boredom arises because of the various obstacles they face, as well as the desire to interact directly which forces them to carry out face-to-face learning directly. Moreover, face-to-face learning even with strict health protocols still increases the risk of being exposed to Covid-19.

This dilemma often causes turmoil in the community because they want to immediately feel the situation where they can go to school as usual. Many parents demand that schools reopen even though many of them still want distance learning. But until now, the government remains in its decision to implement distance learning because the risks

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<sup>1</sup> Ihsanuddin, "Fakta Lengkap Kasus Pertama Virus Corona di Indonesia," *Kompas.com*, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Gugus Tugas Percepatan Penanganan COVID-19, "Peta Sebaran Kasus COVID-19 di Indonesia," covid19.go.id, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Katherine A. Magnuson et al., "Inequality in Preschool Education and School Readiness," *American Educational Research Journal*, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041001115>.

<sup>4</sup> Roziana Baharin et al., "Impact of Human Resource Investment on Labor Productivity in Indonesia," *Iranian Journal of Management Studies*, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Rizqon Halal Syah Aji, "Dampak Covid-19 pada Pendidikan di Indonesia:," *Jurnal Sosial & Budaya Syar-i*, 2020.

faced are not light. This decision should have the support of all members of the community who have school-age children because it is clearly proven that Covid-19 will spread even more when people interact directly and closely. Especially for elementary school and kindergarten education, it is impossible to control them to keep their distance. Therefore all of us: parents, educators, and community leaders must be the main supporters of efforts to break the Covid-19 chain through the world of education by adhering to the rules and not imposing direct learning. Covid-19 indeed forces humans to help each other and save each other by keeping distance and even apart from each other.

In a situation where the rate of increase in Covid-19 cases is still increasing, distance education remains the perfect solution to break the chain of Covid-19 spread. Parents of students are the main actors in creating a family atmosphere that supports distance learning that will determine the success of children's education during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Situation and Development of Education in Indonesia during Covid-19**

Every country in the world is now paying full attention to overcoming Covid-19. All this is due to Covid-19, which has been a pandemic for people around the world and has taken a lot of human lives. The Government also has enormous obstacles to overcome this challenge, as it relates to fiscal, social health, education, security and other issues related to overcoming Covid-19. There is therefore a need for good cooperation between the government and the members of the population in order to break the chain of spread of Covid-19 on a broad and wide scale, so that this virus is powerless to spread to other citizens of society, by enforcing a system of obedience and discipline for the citizens themselves.

This problem also affects the world of education even though there is a new regulation published by the government, with limits on activities in each educational unit. With the teaching and learning process system in education units it is compulsory to follow and obey by every citizen of education units in Indonesia in particular, but this does not mean that teachers and students are only free to learn. Teachers and students still need to learn at home using online methods, offline methods or other media that can access learning models in accordance with the protocol rules in their respective educational units. Online learning policy is a huge benefit for students in the digital age, so that they can provide students with autonomous rights so that the learning process continues, even though they are very concerned about the Covid-19 pandemic.

The education sector is fundamentally living in a dynamic network background involving socio-economic situations and the local environment. The economic class of the family has a significant influence on the length of schooling and the standard of individual education. In a study conducted by the SMERU Research Institute, the potential of the Covid-19 pandemic is to increase the poverty rate in Indonesia. SMERU has made several projections for Indonesia's economic growth and, in the worst case scenario, the poverty rate would increase by 4% from 2019 to around 12% in 2020. If we put this figure in the

family context, this increase could have a significant impact on the education sector, particularly on parents' ability to provide their children with learning facilities.<sup>6</sup>

According to data from Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), the economic status of a family has a direct effect on the average period of schooling of its children and dictates at what point of the child's education is completed. There is a major gap in the number of years of schooling (4.54 years) between the highest and the lowest. This disparity is an issue that has stuck with Indonesian education in recent years.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the deterioration in the economic status of millions of families due to the Covid-19 outbreak could further reduce the average period of schooling for children. Not to mention the rise in the number of laid-off employees, which rose by 1,722,958 workers in the formal and informal sectors due to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

Vulnerable groups that are already lagging behind in the standard of education will continue to fall due to the deteriorating economic conditions and the danger of neglecting children's education to pay for their daily lives. The government must also balance the sustainability of schools, the health of teachers and the pressure on the parents of students who are facing financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic.

The government has to find solutions to the issues of education during a pandemic. The temporary solution that needs to be placed in place is to close schools and replace the learning system with online distance learning. The distance learning policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture has received numerous responses from the public. While not optimal, distance learning is perceived to be the only policy that allows the learning process to take place in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, there are two key problems that impede the efficacy of the distance learning process, namely limited access to the internet and limited ability of the teaching staff.

First, restricted access to a secure internet connection. Many areas in Indonesia have not been reached via the Internet, nor have connectivity and electricity signals reached a number of disadvantaged, border and outermost regions. Adequate and reliable internet speed is one of the building blocks of efficient distance learning. Without a stable connection, students may not have access to complete learning materials and the process of understanding is limited and limited by the Internet. This disparity in access to the Internet can be seen clearly when contrasting data between urban and rural areas.

Based on data from Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), the percentage of households with Internet access in Indonesia continues to rise annually to 78% in 2018. Even so, there is a fairly high disparity between rural and urban Internet access, 27 per cent in 2018. The disparity of access can be seen when comparing several provinces in Indonesia. Yogyakarta and Jakarta have a 50 percent penetration of the Internet. Meanwhile, internet penetration in the eastern provinces is still below 30%.<sup>9</sup> This reinforces the assumption of

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<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Adi Rahman et al., "Mengantisipasi Potensi Dampak Krisis Akibat Pandemi COVID-19," *Smeru Research Institute*, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> BPS, "Hasil Survei Sosial Demografi Dampak COVID-19," *Hasil Survei Sosial Demografi Dampak COVID-19*, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Saifan Zaking, "Kemenaker: 2 Jutaan Pekerja Kena PHK dan Dirumahkan Akibat Covid-19," *Jawa Pos*, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> BPS, *Indeks Pembangunan Teknologi, Informasi, dan Komunikasi (ICT Development Index) 2018*, *Subdirektorat Statistik Komunikasi dan Teknologi Informasi*, 2019.

disparity in education for a number of regions when implementing the online distance learning.

The Innovation Institute for School Children in Indonesia (INOVASI) conducted a survey in the provinces of East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara, North Kalimantan and East Java to determine the implementation of the learning from home policy. Of the four provinces, the Provinces of West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara recorded the lowest online learning rates, namely 7% and the remaining 4% using student books and worksheets.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in addition to the geographical inequalities in Internet access, its use is also fragmented in some groups and regions. Students who do not have regional privileges to access the Internet are forced to rely on books without clear guidance from the teaching staff.

Second, the issue of the skills of the teaching staff who have trouble adapting to distance learning methods. In general, distance learning adds a challenge on teachers because most of them are doing remote learning for the first time. With the Covid-19 pandemic, schools understand that the learning process cannot be carried out as in normal situations for a long time to come. As a result, teachers are forced to compress a lot of learning materials in just a few hours.<sup>11</sup> For students in urban areas, the key issue typically stems from the pattern of assignment assignments without any input from the teacher. This is because, in general, primary and secondary schools in Indonesia do not have an online learning system, so teachers only exchange assignments through WhatsApp.

In addition, several students complained that the teacher had no clarification of the materials they were working on. In reality, teachers will film videos illustrating the material before assigning assignments to students. The problem is that they are not equipped with digital literacy and technological skills to take advantage of existing basic facilities. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture has not provided specific and detailed guidance for the implementation of distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, so that teachers and schools are required to innovate and develop their respective policies. The challenge for schools and teachers in remote areas is also how to resolve fundamental limitations such as non-existent or unreliable internet connectivity, financial limitations on student families, and restricted digital school facilities.

The pandemic situation of Covid-19 shows that there is a vacuum in infrastructure, as well as in Indonesian educational institutions, which are not equipped to face unforeseen situations as they are now. More than that, distance learning policy reveals Indonesia's unpreparedness to transfer education to digital technologies. The gap between developed areas with internet facilities and remote areas without a signal is so large that different types of intervention must also be carried out by the government according to the needs of each region.

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<sup>10</sup> Senza Arsendy, George Adam Sukoco, and Rasita Ekawati Purba, "Riset Dampak COVID-19: Potret Gap Akses Online 'Belajar dari Rumah' dari 4 Provinsi," *https://theconversation.com*, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Abd Rahim Mansyur, "Dampak COVID-19 terhadap Dinamika Pembelajaran di Indonesia," *Education and Learning Journal*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.33096/eljour.v1i2.55>.

### **The Role of Parents in Improving Character Education for Children**

Character education is a nationwide initiative to build an ethical generation, responsible and compassionate, modeling and teaching good character, with a focus on common values that are universally agreed upon.<sup>12</sup> These steps are very good, particularly for instilling good character in the children of the family. If children have been accustomed to ethical values since childhood, respect for themselves and others, accountability, honesty and self-discipline, this will continue in adulthood. It is not easy and quick to do all of this. The results of character education will have a long-term impact on children's morals and ethics.

The findings show that family character education can be interpreted as a step by parents towards children, so that early childhood can grow and live up to moral values in order to prepare their lives for the formation of a person of noble character. Character education in the family taught by parents to children is carried out by: 1) being taught through habituation in daily life, parents acting as role models, carried out in an informal setting; 2) mainly from the family, the environment and the school; 3) being more easily transmitted through habituation than taught in the form of lessons; parents teaching character to children based on culture.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the character values intended for children by parents in the family environment tends to involve: 1) self-discipline. This character seems to be of great concern to parents when interviewed by researchers. Self-discipline is a priority for most informants because, according to them, this discipline will affect hard work, commitment to goals, train themselves to be independent and avoid bad behavior. 2) Persistence. Persistence here, amid many challenges, is studying diligently. Given the principles of resilience, it will implicitly train children's patience and dare to try new stuff. (3) Accountability. Children are granted independence in the performance of their roles and duties, are trustworthy, consistent in words and acts, and can be trusted in the performance of parental duties. 4) Modesty. In social contact, children should hold themselves, not pride themselves. It's self-defeating to be too proud. Humans who are excessive and excelling themselves typically behave to belittle (underestimate) others. In reality, they all have their own weaknesses and strengths. 5) Manners. Character instilled from an early age is 'unggah-unggah' and good and correct manners. Children are trained to be able to sort and select which ones are good and which are bad. These manners are an important part of social relations. 6) Honesty. Kids are used to living honestly from childhood. For example, if they encounter anything that is not theirs, the child develops not to take it. 7). Love of Allah. Parents teach children religious values by bringing children to recitation activities, encouraging children to learn to worship after their parents, and instilling virtuous values.<sup>14</sup>

The biggest challenge facing Indonesia is the Covid-19 pandemic, this challenge is a threat that is being faced by all Indonesians. The pandemic that has been facing for almost a year has resulted in losses in several sectors, including the education sector. The

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<sup>12</sup> Larry Nucci, Darcia Narvaez, and Tobias Krettenauer, *Handbook of Moral and Character Education, Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114896>.

<sup>13</sup> Edi Widiyanto, "Peran Orang Tua dalam Meningkatkan Pendidikan Karakter Anak Usia Dini dalam Keluarga," *PG-PAUD Trunojoyo*, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Edi Widiyanto.

government was forced to close all schools in Indonesia to avoid increasing the number of Covid-19 patients. Teachers are starting to feel the impact very badly, because distance learning is the only solution that can be done. Meanwhile, there are still many shortcomings in terms of internet access, facilities and infrastructure, as well as the readiness of teachers and employees. In this case, parents must be able to replace the role of teachers such as in school. Parents must be able to make the learning atmosphere fun while at home.

In addition, the role of parents in developing children's character is needed. Because parents already know the basic characteristics of children while at home. And of course it is a very good opportunity to spend time and study with the children. Parents can also manage and arrange children's character learning methods according to their needs.

Character education is not easy to teach children strong character values, but if they do not start at an early age, parents can face difficulties later in life. The role of parents in the spread of character values to children is carried out in the following ways: 1) Instill the value of kindness in children. Instilling self-concept in children naturally to children without having to prepare ahead. Parents, for example, instill in their children a self-concept of persistence, so parents just need to integrate the concept into actions without giving a lot of theoretical meaning. The outcomes of character values that occur are not in the form of comprehension, but in the form of persistence. So that an attitude is developed in the child that is persistent, motivated, never gives up, and likes to work hard. 2) Use strategies that make children want to do well. The role of parents is played by giving children a variety of examples of the character that is being created. Parents, for example, tell stories or tell stories about characters that the child can easily understand. The choice of characters in the story, of course, must be contrasted between a good character and a poor character, so that children's minds can see which attitudes and actions can be imitated and which are not suitable to emulate. This will make it easier for children to do something because there are good reasons to do it. In addition, children are also told of the advantages or motives for taking action. What children do, therefore, has a positive meaning. 3) Develop an attitude of love towards good deeds. In order for children to build a positive character, gratitude needs to be given to children who get used to doing best. The same applies to children who commit offences, so that they receive educational punishment. 4) Do good deeds. The characters that have started to be developed via the definition are included in the informal learning phase of the family. In addition, parents are also continuing to track the growth of children's character building activities at home. Parents will be considered as models for the infant. All parental conduct shall be followed by the infant. What is done by parents, children should be deemed right. For this reason, parents need to be able to set a good example.<sup>15</sup>

As long as the process of character education is carried out by parents at home, parents are also obligated to track the child's progress on an ongoing basis. Continuous monitoring is a method of implementation of character building. Some of the things that need to be monitored include: discipline from waking up in the morning, habituation of school hours, habituation of prayer before eating, habituation of speaking, and ethics of

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<sup>15</sup> Edi Widiyanto.

meeting other people. If the child has a habit of doing well, it is important to give a lot of incentives, such as encouragement, to make promises to the children, to give gratitude and appreciation to the children. But for children who have not been able to do good habits or are too often involved in behaviors beyond the law, persuasive measures are required to make a healthy habituation possible.

Parents have a very important role to play in developing children's character. Children spend more time at home than in school. Moreover, school is a controlled environment. Children can only be afraid of the laws that are in place. At the same time, the house is the real world that children face. Home is the first place for children to interact and socialize with their surroundings.

Apart from at home, environmental factors also influence the dominant aspect of shaping children's character development. The ease with which children now have access to entertainment, which should be adult entertainment, is of great concern to certain circles. The findings in the field show that parents feel helpless when the influence of a destructive environment has entered the minds of children. Children today like to see and imitate dance songs, especially at home who often watch obscene dance videos, fights by adults, dirty talk exemplified by adults. This is what makes it easy for children today to imitate and practice with their other friends and eventually spread to school friends and even to playmates. Without understanding it, behavior like this may also have a negative effect on other children.

The development of today's media is very rapid. There are, however, positive and negative effects, of course. Television, newspapers, the internet, entertainment in the environment that is easily accessible and without a filter capable of filtering out these broadcasts also contribute to the development of the child's character. From the experience of parents, it is explained that the existence of television shows today is more intensive than the protection from parents.

The birth of character education can be said to be an effort to revive the ideal-spiritual pedagogy lost by the wave of positivism. In the history of its development, man is indeed subject to natural laws, but the freedom possessed by man enables him to live out his freedom and to grow beyond mere physical and psychological demands. Humans are not merely obedient to natural rules. Rather, freedom is lived out in the rules that transcend the individual, in the order of moral values. Value guidelines are parameters that assess the standard of human activity in the world. A individual whose character is the nature of a person to react to circumstances in a moral way - which expresses itself in real action through good conduct, fairness, duty, respect for others and other noble characters.<sup>16</sup> This understanding is similar to what Aristoteles has articulated, that character is closely related to the behaviors that are continually being carried out.<sup>17</sup>

There are ten signs of the times that must be watched, because if these signs were there, then the country was on the verge of collapse. Signs are: 1) growing violence among teenagers, 2) deterioration of the use of language and vocabulary, 3) strong peer-to - peer

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Lickona, "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education," *Journal of Moral Education*, 1996, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724960250110>.

<sup>17</sup> JV Kavanaugh, "The Artifact in American Culture: the Development of an Undergraduate Program in American Studies," in *Material Culture and the Study of American Life*, 1978.



impact on violence, 4) increasing self-destructive behavior, such as drug use, alcohol and free sex, 5) increasingly blurred good and bad moral guidelines, 6) reduced work ethic, 7) lower respect for parents and teachers, 8) lower sense of person and civic duty. In this respect, parents should be conscious of the value of character education from now on.<sup>18</sup>

Character formation is more closely related to the optimization of the right brain function. Do not let parents teach character education and religion, in fact, in reality, it emphasizes the left side of the brain, which is merely rote memorization. Whereas character building has to be done systematically and continuously, involving aspects of knowledge, feeling, loving and acting. Parents' habits of early childhood can refer to the following nine characters: 1) love of God and the universe and its contents, 2) responsibility, discipline and independence, 3) honesty, trustworthiness, diplomacy, 4) respect and courtesy, 5) compassion, generosity, care and cooperation, 6) self-confidence, creativity, hard work, and never giving up, 7) justice and leadership, 8) kind and humble, 9) tolerance, peace-loving, and unity.<sup>19</sup>

The method of habituating the nine pillars of character is carried out explicitly and systematically, namely by knowing the good, reasoning the good, feeling the good, and acting the good, which has succeeded in building children's character. With knowing the good children get used to thinking only what is okay. Reasoning the good needs to be done, too, so that children know why they should do the good. For example, why should children be truthful and what the consequences are if children are honest? So kids do not just memorize kindness, but they also know why. Parents can build children's feelings of kindness by feeling good. In acting well, children practice kindness. If children get used to understanding, reasoning, feeling, and acting well, their characters will eventually grow.

With regard to the rules and systems that apply to the family environment, the rules that exist in the family should be in line with the goals of character education. So, in character education, an environmental setting is also needed to support behavior. Parents as role models must really be able to function themselves as well as possible. With the hope that the child will get used to the patterns applied by parents.

Humans are adaptable creatures. It will feel heavy, but if it is done continuously, it will get used to it over time. In doing this pattern parents are expected not to forget to give consequences if the child violates. Of course, this consequence is educational and does not damage the child's self-esteem. For example, if a child breaks the rules that apply in a family, the parents confiscate the child's favorite toys for two days.

With character education that is implemented systematically and continuously, a child will be emotionally intelligent. This emotional intelligence is an important provision in preparing children for the future, because a person will find it easier and more successful in facing all kinds of life challenges, including challenges to succeed academically.

## CONCLUSION

The home study policy at educational institutions clearly causes major disruptions, such as student learning, disruption in assessments, cancellation of assessments,

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<sup>18</sup> Lickona, "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education."

<sup>19</sup> Ratna Megawangi, *Pendidikan {Karakter} {Solusi} {Tepat} {untuk} {Membangun}*, Jakarta: Indonesia Heritage Foundation, 2004.

opportunities to get a job after graduating from education, cancellation of public assessments for qualifications in job selection. How should the Indonesian government do its best to address this? Schools need resources to rebuild lost in learning, when they re-open learning activities.

However, the most appropriate solution is to entrust parents to become teachers at home and focus on children's character development. Character education is a never-ending process. The government may change, but character education must continue. It is not a project that has a beginning and an end. Character education is needed by each individual to become a better person and uphold human values. The importance of character education for early childhood is based on the existence of a critical period in child development.

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