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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THIRD-GRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT CHARACTER IDENTIFICATION

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### Abstract

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Learning models that do not follow students' needs are one factor that causes low-quality education. Therefore, a teacher in the learning planning process must understand students' characteristics and initial abilities to adjust to their needs. The method used in this study is qualitative, using a descriptive approach. The sampling technique used is total sampling (all students), which is 15 students. The data collection techniques were observation, interviews, and documentation for four weeks in third grade at Gombang State Elementary School. The characteristics of third-grade students of Gombang State Elementary School include learning from concrete things, 2) hierarchical, 3) liking to group in doing activities, 4) doing/demonstrating something directly, 5) having mastered more than 3,500 words and in the semantic phase, 6) highly curious about something. The importance of identifying the characteristics of students is to optimize student needs so that learning programs in elementary schools will be effective because they are based on the characteristics and needs of students.

**Keywords:** Characteristic; Differential Teaching; Elementary School; Students

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## INTRODUCTION

Facing the globalization era, improving the quality of human resources is crucial (Hikmat, 2021). It is improving the quality of Indonesian human resources, starting from the education sector, namely by improving the quality of education from the elementary school level (Amelia & Marini, 2022). Quality education involves many components to realize the vision and mission of education to create a superior generation (Kurniawati et al., 2019). Educators, students, and strategies for implementing learning are essential components to realizing a globally competitive generation (Purwanti et al., 2022).

Teachers are essential in determining learning strategies (Efendi et al., 2020). Learning strategies include learning methods and models used to deliver learning material (Kurniawan et al., 2020). Determination of the right learning strategy tailored to the needs of students (Putri et al., 2021). Optimization of the needs of learners is based on their characteristics (Herwina, 2021). Student characteristics are defined as students' qualities, including academic ability, age and maturity level (Utaminingsih, Ramadhani, et al., 2024), motivation for subjects, skills, psychomotor, cooperation abilities, and social abilities (Janawi, 2019).

Through educational processes in schools, learning becomes the spearhead for creating quality education (Djalal, 2017). Through quality learning, an educational institution can produce quality graduates (Utaminingsih, Sumartiningsih, et al., 2024). Learning models that do not follow students' needs are one factor that causes low-quality education (Darkun, 2019). Therefore, a teacher in the learning planning process must understand students' characteristics and initial abilities to adjust to their needs (Septianti & Afiani, 2020). Referring to these findings, teachers, as one of the crucial components of the learning process, are required to understand, mastered (Utaminingsih, Intania, et al., 2024), and implement the characteristics of students in determining learning designs (Meriyati, 2015). Given that the character of Generation Z today is different from Generation X and Y, teachers need to get to know their characteristics more closely (Sriani et al., 2022).

Each individual has unique characteristics that are different (Janawi, 2019). Teachers are required to pay more attention to the characteristics of students to help facilitate the teaching of students with various characteristics they have (Zulvira et al., 2021). Determination of learning strategies that follow the characteristics of students is expected to help students achieve learning objectives (Kurniawan et al., 2020).

According to Septianti & Afiani (2020), factors causing low quality of education, including learning activities, are less responsive to individual diversity. Vygotsky said that for learning to be meaningful, it is necessary to design learning strategies that rely on the conditions (characteristics) of students as teaching subjects (Hyun et al., 2020). Student characteristics are among the most influential variables in developing learning management strategies (Santrock, 2019). Raza (2018) put the step of analyzing student characteristics in an essential position before selecting and developing learning strategies. This suggests that whatever strategy is chosen and will be developed to design learning requirements must be based on the individual (Utaminingsih, 2023), or group characteristics of the learning subject (Ertmer & Newby, 1993). In developing an optimal learning strategy, teachers need to make student characteristics a crucial underlying element (ten Dam & Volman, 2004).

A third-grade teacher at Gombang State Elementary School said sometimes she was still confused in determining learning strategies. This is also because some methods and models that have been applied so far sometimes have not been used by students. Students have diverse characteristics but have never conducted a more detailed study of their characteristics. Based on the problems that arise, the characteristics of students have an essential role in achieving quality learning. Referring to this statement, teachers need to further explore the characteristics of students before designing learning models. The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of third-grade elementary school students and highlight the importance of identifying these characteristics for effective learning design.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to explore and analyze the characteristics of third-grade elementary school students and the importance of student character identification. Unlike quantitative research, this study aimed to process and analyze data non-numerically to understand the phenomena being studied deeply. The study focused on analyzing the behaviors and characteristics of students in their natural environment without attempting to prove or reject any hypotheses (Gerring, 2017).

### 1. Subjects and Sampling

The subjects of this research were third-grade teachers and third-grade students at Gombang State Elementary School. The sampling technique used was total sampling, where all 15 students from the third grade were involved in the study. This allowed the researchers to capture comprehensive data and insights from the studied population, ensuring that the findings represented the entire third-grade cohort.

### 2. Data Collection Techniques

#### a. Observation

The first data collection method used was in-depth observation. Observations were conducted over four weeks, focusing on the learning activities and behaviors of the students within the classroom setting. The researchers observed the classroom environment, student interactions, and specific behaviors to understand the characteristics of the students. The goal of this observation was to carefully record student actions and gather data that could later be analyzed to identify trends and patterns in student behavior. The researcher also noted the perceptions and opinions of teachers regarding student characteristics and how students responded to classroom dynamics.

#### b. Interview

The second method of data collection was the interview technique. Interviews were conducted with students and teachers to gather detailed and accurate information about the student's interests, social interactions, and behaviors. Teachers provided insights into the students' character, school behavior, and interactions with peers. Meanwhile, students were interviewed to collect information about their self-perceived interests and behaviors. A pre-designed question sheet ensured systematic and coherent interviews, enabling the researcher to collect consistent data from all respondents.

#### c. Documentation

The third technique was documentation. This method involved recording and documenting the results of the observations and interviews. Documentation also included analysis of existing records, documents, and other related materials provided by the teachers. The researchers also used video recordings to capture student behavior during classroom activities. This documentation process was essential for corroborating the findings obtained from observations and interviews, ensuring that the data collected were robust and comprehensive.

### 3. Data Analysis

The data analysis involved reviewing the data gathered from observations, interviews, and documentation.

- a. Observation data were analysed by identifying recurring themes related to student characteristics, such as behaviours, classroom dynamics, and interaction patterns.
- b. Interview data were analysed by categorizing responses from teachers and students, looking for common themes regarding student interests, social interactions, and behavioural traits.
- c. Documentation and video recordings were reviewed to validate the other data sources' findings and provide additional evidence supporting the study's conclusions.

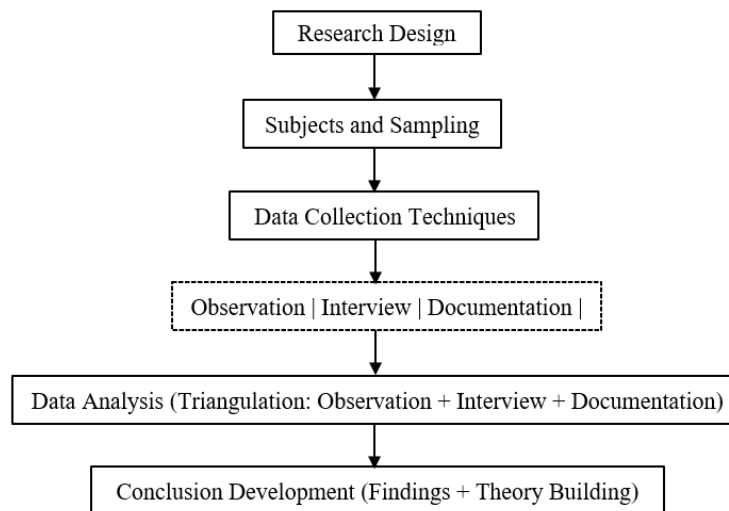
- d. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was used by cross-referencing the data from observations, interviews, and documentation. This process ensured that the findings were grounded in multiple sources of evidence.

#### 4. Conclusion

After compiling and analyzing all the collected data, the researchers formulated conclusions regarding the characteristics of third-grade elementary school students. The study's findings were then synthesized into a cohesive theory, providing insights into the importance of character identification in students and how these characteristics influence their classroom behavior and interactions.

#### 5. Research Methodology Flowchart

Here's a flowchart representing the study's methodology in a visual form, are presented in Figure 1.



This representation provides a step-by-step breakdown of the research methodology, illustrating the flow from data collection to conclusion development. Triangulation ensures a robust and reliable study, as multiple data sources are cross-validated to strengthen the findings.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Based on the observation at Gombang State Elementary School, Blora, in third-grade students, each student has various characteristics. This is because each individual is a unique creature with different characteristics. Further explanation of the findings about the characteristics of third-grade students of Gombang State Elementary School as follows:

### 1. Concrete

For third-grade students of Gombang State Elementary School, one of the characteristics is learning from concrete things, meaning learning from actual items. Actual can be interpreted as something that can be seen, heard, smelled, or touched even in the brain because they cannot describe or imagine something based on the explanation or theory presented. This finding is in line with what Piaget said that the age of 6-12

years is the age at which children are in a concrete operational period (Hyun et al., 2020). Concrete contains the meaning of the learning process moving from tangible things, namely those that can be seen, heard, smelled, touched, and brained, emphasizing the use of the environment as a learning resource. This was also revealed by Santrock (2019) that using the environment would produce more meaningful and valuable learning processes and outcomes because students are faced with actual events and circumstances, natural circumstances, so they are more accurate, factual, meaningful, and verifiable truth (Putri et al., 2021).

In every lesson, teachers should try to use media or teaching aids to the objectives and topics of learning (Utaminingsih, Raharjo, et al., 2023). Teachers can utilize the surrounding environment in the teaching and learning process so that students will better understand the subject matter conveyed (Arianto, 2015). For example, to prove to students that sunlight is a source of heat energy, teachers ask students to leave the classroom and be in the sun for about 1 minute; another example is drying wet clothes at home. In addition, they can also learn about local culture and wisdom. For example, learning about the Samin tribe in Blora, there is an agenda to directly visit the Samin tribe in Klopoduwur Village, Banjarejo Blora District. They can learn about the culture of the Samin tribe, as well as about Samin batik products typical of Blora Regency.

## 2. Hierarchical

The results showed that third-grade learners gradually developed from simple to more complex. Therefore, the learning material or science taught must be logical so that students easily understand it. Example: Students learn to construct words and then construct sentences from words that have been composed. Examples of words: bicycle, sentence: Brevian riding a bike. In the following sentence, Brevian rides a bicycle every Sunday morning to stay healthy. Learners learn gradually.

According to Juwantara (2019), these hierarchical characteristics are implications of concrete stages of development, where they understand the concept of conversation, place objects in an orderly order, and then organize objects hierarchically. How children learn develops gradually, from simple things to more complex ones (Zulvira et al., 2021). In connection with this, it is necessary to pay attention to the logical sequence, the relationship between materials, the scope of breadth and depth of the material delivered, and the learning model used (Janawi, 2019).

## 3. Prefer in Group

The results showed that learners liked to group, especially when the learning process was in progress, even though the teacher did not instruct them to form a group. Students also look excited when a quiz is held because it is like playing, where they make teams (in groups). They like fun things and new things in class. This finding is supported by Meriyati (2015), who said elementary school students like to play. They like to group in doing activities, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Likes to do activities full of movement (the child can sit quietly for about 30 minutes at most). Children enjoy socializing with their friends, so they enjoy working in groups.

From their association with peer groups, children learn about important aspects of the socialization process, such as learning to fulfill group rules, learning to be loyal to friends, learning not to depend on acceptance in the environment, learning to accept responsibility, learning to compete with others in a healthy manner (sportsmanship), and learning sports. Cognitive development experts (Solso et al., 2014) revealed that children can adapt and interpret things in their environment at this age. In addition, the environment affects the formation of students' mindsets and behaviors. This has

implications for learning, that teachers must create a comfortable, exciting, and joyful learning atmosphere that arouses the enthusiasm of students (Utaminingsih, Sulasih, et al., 2023) by designing media, teaching materials, and learning models that are serious but relaxed, and remain following the learning objectives still conveyed (Septianti & Afiani, 2020).

#### 4. Demonstrate in Person

Third-grade students like to feel or do/demonstrate something directly. At this stage, the child's cognitive development will directly imitate what the teacher does. For example, when a new teacher teaches material about arithmetic, students reflexively try to do it immediately after seeing how the teacher solves the problem. Whether what students do is correct or not proper, they automatically imitate what the teacher does.

Students can also be heard often saying the word "sorry" even though after saying the word, they return to their friends. Based on observations and interviews, this is because teachers, when late for class or accidentally drop student items (nudged) and other accidents, teachers often say the word "sorry." In addition, when the teacher is not precise in explaining the learning topic and wants to revise the explanation, the teacher immediately apologizes. The teacher's habits exemplify positive behavior, which students imitate and become habits.

Another example is when the teacher says "thank you" to students who are willing to come to the front of the class to do the problem, ready to show their hands (active in class) without being asked, "thankful" when students submit assignments on time, "thankful" when helped bring books or other learning devices to class. This positively influences students to follow the habit of "thanking."

Students experiencing a sensitive period / very quickly imitate what they see when they get a figure from their favorite teacher (Julrissani, 2020). Therefore, teachers must set a good example in behaving and acting in front of students (Hidayati, 2017). When teaching and learning activities, teachers should insert good habits for cultivating positive character outside the material taught so that it can be an example for students (Susilo & Sarkowi, 2018). Another thing that is no less important to teach students is the habituation of the word "please" at the beginning of sentences when students want to ask for help from others. This habituation is a fundamental ethic that needs to be possessed by students in life to become humans who have good attitudes and morals.

The habituation of these three behaviors is essential considering the moral degradation by learners lately (Dewi et al., 2021), along with the negative impact of using technology (Danial & Pandie, 2022). A learner must have a positive character that shows the identity of an educated student (Harlina & Wardita, 2020). The identity symbolizes a student with integrity, good self-values, achievements, and global competitiveness, but they still have a positive character that describes an excellent Indonesian citizen (Ramdani et al., 2020). This also follows the Nawacita program of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) to strengthen students' character. In addition, it also follows the character of the state stated in the Pancasila student profile, namely the dimension of noble morals (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

#### 5. Language Development

The language used by students sometimes still uses their mother tongue because it is used in daily interactions at home. The language used is simple, not complex. Learners begin to express themselves through social interaction. The findings are supported by research results (Julrissani, 2020) that students begin to mature in interacting so they can sort out which language is good for them and which is not good.

During this period, students experience progress in their language development (Meriyati, 2015). Language development is seen in changes in vocabulary and grammar (Zulvira et al., 2021). The student already has mastered more than 3,500 words and can master up to seven different languages if he is faced with the need to communicate daily in the language (Mardison, 2016). Students are in the semantic phase, which can distinguish words as symbols and concepts contained in a word (Kuntarto, 2017). Students have improved in reading comprehension (Jailani, 2017). In language development, students can already use good words and use something they like (Julrissani, 2020). Students are happy and very active in talking to their friends, even when doing assignments given by the teacher (Janawi, 2019). Students in communicating sometimes use language that is popular today, such as "healing," "bestie," "ygy," "ga bahaya ta?", "bercandyaaa" and many others.

#### 6. High Curiosity

They also have a high curiosity about something in their environment. High curiosity, third-grade children at this age are very critical. They often ask unexpected questions. They will question what they need clarification on, whether it is related to learning or not. When language learning was in progress, a child asked his teacher, "Mrs. lying is a sin, isn't it, Mrs.? Yesterday, I was lied to by Aldi, and it meant that Aldi sinned, didn't he?" Other questions like: "Ma'am, I heard that robots will replace humans. Is that true?" Quoting Rini et al. (2021), elementary school students have high curiosity in the process of development and growth, both in terms of cognitive, emotional, language creativity, and communication, so it is the ideal time to learn good interaction skills with others.

Students are curious and want to try. It can be seen that when teachers bring new learning media to quizzes, children immediately want to try and engage in quizzes. Another enthusiasm is seen when the teacher gets a stethoscope, and the student wants to use it to hear his friend's heartbeat. These findings align with the research results (Hidayati, 2017); elementary school students like exciting and challenging games because their curiosity is substantial at this age, so everyone wants to try. Of course, teachers can use this as an opportunity to provide exciting and challenging questions so that students' curiosity always arises and their creative ideas are well stimulated. Students will respond to the challenging questions critically because they feel interested in their questions, which leads to their curiosity (Sriani et al., 2022). The existence of a sense of interest in facing challenges and the growing willingness to solve these challenges are essential components and a basis for solving problems (Irsan, 2021). High curiosity also directs students to develop their understanding (Wijaya & Supadmini, 2020).

Students' curiosity will likely lead to a love of knowledge (Mustofa, 2020). Curiosity is a character that has an essential role in the learning process, to explore their enthusiasm and the extent of the material they capture through learning activities (Fauziah et al., 2022). Thus, it is crucial to build the character of students' curiosity in learning (Keban, 2022). The importance of instilling students' curiosity is one of the demands in the era of globalization, where curiosity leads to having high literacy skills (Masfufah & Ellianawati, 2020). These findings imply that teachers must be able to package learning that can foster student curiosity in order to increase student literacy.

#### 7. The Importance of Identifying Student Characteristics

The initial analysis of student characteristics is an activity to identify students' needs and determine the learning strategy to use (Septianti & Afiani, 2020). In addition,

learning development is carried out by paying attention to students' demands, talents, interests, needs, characteristics, and interests (Jailani & Hamid, 2016). Theoretically, each student's nature has different characteristics, which are also influenced by family, social, cultural, economic, and environmental differences. Quoting Meriyati (2015), knowing the characteristics of students, of course, will provide benefits for teachers, including teachers can: 1) be able to map the condition of students according to their respective characters; 2) give tasks according to their needs, and abilities of their students; 3) develop their potential in the form of interests, talents, and hobbies and try to suppress the negative potential that may arise from the character of students who are not good he owns.

Each unit class has different characteristics. Each student has a different character and learning style (Putri et al., 2021). Some of the students can absorb information well, directly. Conversely, others can only absorb and process information after repetition (Asrori, 2016). This is a heterogeneity that teachers must face. As facilitators, teachers must recognize each student's character and learning style (Herdyansah et al., 2021). As learning designers, teachers must make student characteristics one of the benchmarks for planning and managing the teaching and learning process (Darkun, 2019).

Given the importance of a teacher recognizing the characteristics of his students, teachers must take a personal approach and pay attention to students in guiding them to achieve educational goals (Septianti & Afiani, 2020). This approach also has a positive impact. In addition to getting to know the character of each student, teacher attention in teaching and learning activities can provide positive energy for students to be more enthusiastic in learning activities (Janawi, 2019). Furthermore, teachers will know them personally and see the character of students in more detail, such as (Meriyati, 2015): 1) knowing the strengths they have; 2) detecting shortcomings; 3) knowing the potentials that can be optimized; 4) co-learning from topics that have not been mastered; 5) helping them exercise self-control.

The benefits of introducing each individual in the classroom are that teachers will find it easier to determine the suitable learning model and media in delivering learning materials as needed for each individual (Putri et al., 2021). Talking about optimizing the needs of each individual is relevant to differentiation learning, which is currently being echoed to be applied in educational institutions. Differentiated learning is an effort to adjust the learning process in the classroom to meet the learning needs of each individual. The adjustments in question relate to interests, learning profiles, and student readiness to achieve improved learning outcomes (Gusteti & Neviyarni, 2022). Differentiated learning is adjusting student interests, learning preferences, and enthusiasm. The principle of differentiation learning is to accommodate students' learning needs with independent learning strategies (Faiz et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Faiz explained that in differentiated learning, teachers must understand students and continuously build awareness about students' strengths and weaknesses. Next, make in-depth observations to assess their learning readiness, interests, and preferences (Herwina, 2021). Teachers will get to know more details about the diversity of each potential of their students (Wahyuni, 2022). Therefore, it will be easy to optimize the needs of students so that learning programs in elementary schools will be effective because they are following the characteristics and needs of students (Jailani & Hamid, 2016).

Referring to the findings above, the need for research on student characteristics related to learning effectiveness becomes increasingly clear to use it as a basis for learning scientists, technologists, and teachers in designing learning programs (Septianti & Afiani, 2020). If, in delivering the material, the teacher recognizes student



characteristics as a guide in determining learning strategies, new feelings will arise, such as some students have yet to achieve learning outcomes (Putri et al., 2021). Another problem that may occur is that students will feel bored, even with the material taught (Aprilentina et al., 2020). This condition is the cause of the low quality and quantity of the process and learning outcomes that have been programmed (Heriwan & Taufina, 2020). It can be concluded that efforts to improve the quality of education must rest on the characteristics of each student as a subject (Meriyati, 2015). Student characteristics can be identified as influencing factors on learning outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the characteristics of students to determine media, models, learning strategies, and learning evaluation (Herdyansah et al., 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Initial analysis of student characteristics is an activity to identify students needing to determine the learning strategy to be used. The characteristics of third-grade students of Gombang State Elementary School include: 1) learning from concrete things means learning from things that can be seen, heard, smelled, and touched even in the brain; 2) hierarchical, which is developing gradually from simple things to more complex things; 3) students like to group in doing activities, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Likes to do activities that are full of movement (children can sit quietly for at most about 30 minutes); 4) do/demonstrate something directly (children's cognitive development will directly imitate what the teacher does); 5) vocabulary and grammar. Students have mastered more than 3,500 words and are in the semantic phase, namely distinguishing words as symbols and concepts contained in a word. They have improved reading comprehension; 6) they are highly curious about something in their environment and want to try it. The importance of identifying the characteristics of students is to optimize student needs so that learning programs in elementary schools will be effective because they are based on the characteristics and needs of students. Efforts to improve the quality of education must rely on the characteristics of each student as a subject because it is one of the factors that influence learning outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the characteristics of students to determine media, models, learning strategies, and learning evaluation.

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