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The Construction of a Free Human Being from an Educational Perspective: Integrating Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Concept with Learning Innovation

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the concept of a free human being from an educational perspective, specifically based on the thoughts of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, and to formulate educational innovations that can create a free human being. The method used is a literature study with a qualitative-descriptive approach, analyzing various literature on education, the philosophy of a free human being, and pedagogical innovation. The results of the study indicate that a free human being according to Ki Hadjar is a human being whose life is not dependent on others, relying on one's own strength, which is achieved through the integration of teaching (liberating the outer) and education (liberating the inner). Relevant innovations for building a free human being include joyful learning and character education. Joyful education emphasizes a learning atmosphere that is pleasant, dialogical, and based on the context of students' lives. Character education focuses on teacher role models, habituation, and internalization of moral values. The conclusion of this article confirms that Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of a free human being is still very relevant and can be integrated with contemporary learning innovations to produce an independent, visionary, and character-based generation.

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INTRODUCTION

Da'wah Every era has its challenges. Every challenge requires a way and wisdom to overcome it. In this digital era, the challenges that must be faced in human life are not few. Digitalization has brought a new order to human life. Some people are confined to this new pattern of life, but others also experience greater freedom, resulting in the emergence of new patterns of life in work, interactions, views on life's values, and even the meaning of life.

These various changes serve as a crucial benchmark for continuously enhancing the nation's capabilities. Development plans that are increasingly prioritizing the quality of human resources are a crucial point that must be translated into concrete programs. These human resource development programs are crucial for cultivating positive character traits in every Indonesian.

Improving the capacity of every individual Indonesian is crucial. With good capacity, Indonesian human resources will be able to compete and collaborate in advancing the nation. Competition and collaboration are key words that color many aspects of life in this era.

Education and training are upstream processes that have a strong influence on improving the capacity of the Indonesian people. From an early age, every Indonesian has the right to receive education and training relevant to the demands of the times (Masruroh et al. 2021).

Both physical and digital infrastructure are clearly crucial for supporting the smooth progress of the nation. Good infrastructure makes it easier for people to access the education they need. Technological advancements also facilitate the acquisition of various knowledge and skills that can keep pace with the progress of other nations.

Above all, the cultivation of character and morals must not be forgotten. Civilizational progress never occurs without abandoning good character traits. Indonesia is a nation rich in good character traits. Our ancestors have taught them from generation to generation.

The wheels of national progress, rapidly developing educational innovation, and deeply ingrained good character are essential assets for a free people. Namely, a

people who can freely determine the direction of their nation's progress. Furthermore, a people free from the pressures of poverty, free from the shackles of ignorance, and free from the onslaught of the negative influences of other nations (Fakturmen et al. 2021).

Based on the descriptions above, the author here raises the title "Construction of Independent Humans from an Educational Perspective: Integration of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Concept with Learning Innovation." Education is very important in building and realizing independent humans, especially in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study type (library research). This method was chosen because the object of study is conceptual and philosophical, namely examining the thoughts of educational figures (Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Paulo Freire, Thomas Kuhn, Fazlur Rahman) as well as the concept of educational innovation. The main data sources are books, laws, and relevant scientific articles, including: *Towards a Free Human Being* (Ki Hadjar Dewantara, 2010), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Paulo Freire, 1970/2019) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Thomas S. Kuhn, 1962), as well as literature on character education and happy education.

The data collection procedure is carried out by tracing written documents related to the topic, then analyzing them using content analysis techniques (content analysis). The analysis was conducted descriptively and interpretively, namely by identifying the main categories (education, free human beings, innovation), comparing them between figures, and compiling a synthesis in the form of innovation recommendations. The validity of the research results was maintained through source triangulation (comparing the opinions of several figures) and diligent observation of conceptual consistency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Education

This Education comes from the word "*didik*", with the addition of the prefix "pe" and the suffix "an", which means "the process of changing the attitudes and behavior of a person or group in an effort to mature humans through teaching and training" (KBBI V). Meanwhile, the meaning of educating is to maintain and provide training (teachings, guidance, leadership) regarding morals and intellectual intelligence (KBBI V).

The term education is a translation from Greek Pedagogy which means "Education" and pedagogy which means "association with children." Meanwhile, a person whose job is to guide or educate their growth so that they can stand alone is called teachers. Term teachers comes from the word children(child) and agoge (I guide, lead) (Arief, 2005).

The term education in the Islamic context generally refers to the term education, *al-ta'lim*, and *al-ta'dib* (Ramayulis, 2015, p. 112). Words education Arabic comes from three root words. First, *Rabbi-Yarbu* which means to increase, to develop. Second, *rabbia-yorba* which means growing and developing. Third, *Rabbi-Yoruba* which means improving, taking care of interests, regulating, guarding and paying attention (An Nahlawi, 2004).

As for the word *al-ta'lim* comes from the word five which means knowing or having knowledge. While the word *al-ta'dib* comes from the word *habit* which means teaching manners or culture (Ramayulis, 2015).

Besides that, there is also the word *al-riyadhah* from the origine which is interpreted as teaching and training (Mujib & Mudzakkir, 2017). *Al-tadris* from the origin of the word *darrasa yudarrisu tadrisan* which means teaching (Nata, 2016). And *Al-Irshad* which means to show. In the context of education, the word *Al-Irshad* contains the meaning of guidance, direction, providing information, notification, advice and spiritual guidance (Nata, 2016).

Meanwhile, in English education is known by the term education which means education itself, teaching which means teaching, training which means training, And

upgrading which means coaching. In addition, there is also tutorial which means independent teaching, coaching which means short training, and guidance which means guidance (Nata, 2016).

In the constitutional context, education in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System is defined as "A conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and the skills needed by themselves, society, the nation and the state" (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003).

In addition to the various definitions of education from an etymological and legal perspective, various education experts have defined education terminologically. Armai Arief, for example, defines education as "a form of guidance intentionally provided by adults to children in their physical and spiritual (mental) growth, so that it is useful for themselves, others, and the surrounding community" (Arief, 2005).

Furthermore, Abudin Nata in the Methodology of Islamic Studies explains that education is "An effort or process aimed at developing the quality of human resources as a whole so that they can carry out their role in life functionally and optimally" (Nata, 2014).

Based on the various terms above, it can be concluded that education can be defined as a conscious and planned effort undertaken by adults in their interactions with children to guide or guide their physical and spiritual (mental) development toward maturity. This effort is also intended to foster the quality of human resources as a whole so that they can fulfill their roles in society functionally and optimally.

The Paradigm of Free Humanity

The essence of education is liberating the heart and soul. Education ensures human freedom from worry and fear. If education is the foundation, then learning is the building block. Learning enables humans to access everything available to achieve freedom from fear and worry.

The question is, what exactly is the paradigm of a free human being?

Indonesian educational thinker Ki Hadjar Dewantara (May 2, 1889-April 26, 1959) defined the format of a free human being in the sentence: "A free human being is a human being whose life does not depend on others, but relies on his own strength." For Ki Hadjar, there is a difference between education and teaching when viewed from the concept of human freedom.

Teaching in general is to "liberate humans from their physical life, while the freedom of inner life comes from education." In other words, teaching is related to human external freedom, while achieving inner freedom is the domain of education.

From this perspective, teaching and education are mutually supportive. They can be distinguished, but they cannot be separated. Both processes aim to liberate humans completely, both physically and spiritually, both as citizens of the nation and as global citizens.

Based on Ki Hadjar's theory, the author will try to discuss briefly the relationship between education and freedom as a human being.

The main difference between humans and nature for Fazlur Rahman is that natural commands (natural command) does not allow for disobedience; commands to humans require a choice and free will on their part (humans). This means that nature has no right to disobey; it must obey. Meanwhile, humans have the right to disobey, because morally, humans have the free choice to obey or disobey.

However, in the life of a nation and state, even though each citizen is granted a certain amount of personal freedom, that freedom is never absolute. It is limited by the Constitution, laws, regulations, religious systems, moral sanctions, and customary systems. This relativism of freedom is necessary for the continuity of collective human life, as absolute individual freedom can trigger anarchy, which would lead to the destruction of the social fabric of society (Afiah et al. 2024).

Anarchism in Indonesia, for example, while not yet a major wave, is already quite disturbing. It needs to be nipped in the bud to prevent it from spreading like wildfire and incinerating the pillars of our Indonesian identity, embodied in the second and third principles: "Just and Civilized Humanity and the Unity of Indonesia."

However, if one also desires absolute freedom in accordance with human dignity, then the realm is more philosophical and theological. Philosophically and

theologically, humans are given the right to free choice and the free will to believe or not believe, an issue that will not be discussed in a forum focused on liberating education within the boundaries set by Ki Hadjar Dewantara.

The emphasis in educational efforts on "relying on one's own strength" is crucial. And this is precisely what is known as the process of human maturation. In this long and dynamic process, human potential, through teaching and education, is stimulated to grow and develop to its full potential, based on one's own strengths, to the extent that one's human construction allows.

There are three basic human potentials that can be realized through teaching and education: intellectual (cognitive) potential, spiritual (inner) potential, and physical (outward) potential. It is hoped that through appropriate and effective teaching and education processes at the highest level, a human being will be born who is intellectually superior, morally graceful, and physically Spartan.

It seems that efforts to build a new Indonesia should be developed, starting with its people. Education is believed to be the right tool for developing a free, progressive, and civilized Indonesian people.

Building Independent Humans Through Education

The previous sub-chapter explained the terminology of education and the paradigm of a free human being. In this sub-chapter, the author discusses efforts to build a free human being through education.

In this context, education is an effort to build a scientific memorial to continue trying, improving and producing scientific practices through trial and error. How to manage trials, discover new concepts, structure action plan and perfecting work. Education is a continuous effort to move from being ready to train to being ready to use and so on (Fakturmen et al. 2021).

Trial and error is the effort to discover new formulas, new paradigms, and new theories through a long series of experiments, the result of continuous reflection and analysis. What was once new, over time, becomes obsolete and irrelevant to current developments (anomaly science), so it needs to be reformulated to find a new paradigm that is more appropriate and able to respond to the situation (normal

science), according to Thomas S Kuhn (1922-1996) in the structure of scientific revolution called by shifting paradigm

A paradigm shift is also occurring in school education. The classroom learning process is no longer the same as it was in the past. The role of the teacher has undergone a drastic change. No longer can you imagine a teacher entering a classroom, opening a book, explaining the chapters, let alone dictating the contents. Students can easily search online; they are a generation that highly-mobile. They quickly seek out various information through social media. This generation has entered the realm of independent learning, which demands a learning process. Teachers begin by raising important issues and encouraging students to search for materials online. They will surf Google to process, analyze, and formulate formulations based on learning needs. Education is no longer limited by the classroom but occurs everywhere, anytime, anywhere, any platforms, including utilizing artificial intelligence.

In the struggle for humanity, education plays a vital role in the birth of a meaningful human civilization. Many great world figures, when wars ended and only destruction remained, asked, "Are there any teachers left?" "How many schools are left?" With this, we rebuild a free humanity, a humanity with ideology, color, and character. Building a nation begins in the classroom, school, and education. A humanistic learning process positions students as active subjects, encouraging their hearts and minds to react, reflect, and respond to every development in their surroundings. This way, each student understands their place within the school community and society.

According to the Brazilian educational theorist, Paulo Freire, pedagogy of oppressed (1970), Education is not merely viewed as instruction, but as a process of dialogue between students and teachers, both of whom require a learning process to develop their knowledge and enhance their service in their respective fields. The success of building a national civilization begins with creating a climate of independent learning, ultimately transforming its learners into independent individuals.

The concept of independent learning aims to make the educational process more influential and resonant, developing three essential skills: literacy, numeracy,

and character, as the basis for assessing student competency. Independent learning simultaneously reassesses the role of students and schools in the teaching and learning process. Key issues accompanying this concept include changing the format of the national exam, returning authority for nationally standardized school exams to schools, and streamlining lesson plans (RPPs).

Just one sheet. Upon closer inspection, this idea has the effect of granting teachers and schools independence and independence in managing education.

In fact, evaluation instruments vary depending on the subject being assessed. Evaluation instruments are nothing new; Indonesia has a long history. However, whether various learning evaluation instruments have contributed to an atmosphere of independent learning must be tested by results and the passage of time. Back then, from 1950 to 1964, Indonesian students were taught final exams (UP), which were essay-based, with state-controlled results. From 1965 to 1972, these were replaced by national exams (UN), which used similar questions to UP. From 1972 to 1979, these changed again to school exams (US), which differed slightly from the UN because schools had the authority to administer the exams independently; the central government only prepared general policies.

This school exam partly explores the spirit of independent learning with modifications that are more relevant to current developments. School exams were short-lived; from 1980 to 2000, they were replaced by the EBTA (National Examination for Independent Learning) and EBTANAS (National Examination for Independent Learning). Graduation was determined by a combination of EBTA, EBTANAS, and report card scores. From 2001 to 2004, the EBTANAS was replaced by the National Final Examination (UAN), whose questions were prepared by the Central Government. One year later, in 2005, it was replaced by the National Examination (UN). This national exam changed its graduation standards almost every year, related to the minimum average score. This exam model caused a stir not only among students but also among schools, teachers, and parents. In fact, many of them experienced stress and depression. Certainly, such an environment does not foster the character of

independent individuals who are progressive, innovative, imaginative, and able to break through the boundaries of convention.

In a society accustomed to being colonized, it's not easy to encourage independence and freedom. Those who should be focused on teaching are preoccupied with rigid administrative and technical routines, often blindsided by the fact that they stifle imagination and innovation, even creating new stutters. Freedom to learn should be free from the constraints of lengthy and inefficient regulations and administration (Afiah et al. 2024).

Therefore, developing independent human beings in the future requires serious efforts through education. In this regard, the author offers two alternative paths: happy education and character education.

Educational Innovation in Realizing Independent Humans

To realize the independent human beings mentioned above, we all need to innovate in education. Innovation is a crucial asset in realizing independent human beings. Based on the theoretical framework above, innovation can be achieved through two approaches.

First, education that makes you happy. This means an educational concept that fosters a joyful learning atmosphere is needed. Students should not only learn in the classroom but also engage with their lives. Learning should broaden their horizons and self-awareness (Fakturmen et al. 2021).

to the surrounding reality. Classrooms are made open to the outside world, allowing for learning while observing life's activities outside the classroom and learning through play. In this regard, we can use Paulo Freire's educational concept, namely dialogical education, which emphasizes efforts to interpret the liberating learning process. This means that education is a means to achieve human liberation, without intimidation or covert oppression that stifles students' creative thinking.

In this context, education is not simply viewed as teaching, but as a process of dialogue between students and teachers, both of which require learning to occur. Thus, through this dialogic yet enjoyable teaching and learning process, it is hoped that generations of individuals will emerge who are free to think and act.

Second, character education, which is the instilling of certain character values in students, encompassing knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to implement those values. This character development is crucial, as a free human being is born from a strong and solid character.

In this case, character building in students can be achieved through the example of teachers. Teachers not only transfer knowledge but also...life style (lifestyle), speaking style, and behavioral style, which are the gateways to character formation flowing from teacher to student, followed by the transfer of knowledge.

Character is built through habits and practices that become collective and personal norms. These then become rules or regulations, solidifying good habits. Internal elements are formed within individuals that correlate with religious values and life philosophies, reflecting the characteristics of a person with character.

Therefore, efforts to build and shape independent individuals are inseparable from the character development that has been developed during school education. A strong personality is a crucial prerequisite for becoming an independent person in all aspects.

Thus, it is clear that in order to realize a free human being, supportive innovations in education are needed. In this regard, education that promotes happiness and character education are prerequisites for realizing a free human being. Therefore, our future educational innovations should place greater emphasis on and implement the concepts of education that promotes happiness and character education.

CONCLUSION

Education is fundamentally a conscious and planned process aimed at guiding the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development of human beings toward maturity and the realization of their full potential. In this context, education serves not merely as a mechanism for the transmission of knowledge but as a transformative process that shapes individuals into responsible, ethical, and

productive members of society. The philosophy of education proposed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara remains highly relevant in addressing contemporary educational challenges, particularly in an era characterized by rapid technological change, globalization, and increasingly complex social dynamics. According to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the ultimate goal of education is to cultivate a free individual—one who possesses the ability to think independently, act responsibly, and rely upon their own capacities while contributing positively to society.

The concept of freedom in education, as articulated by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, does not imply the absence of guidance or discipline. Rather, it refers to the development of autonomy, critical thinking, self-confidence, and moral responsibility. A truly independent individual is capable of making informed decisions, solving problems creatively, and maintaining ethical principles amidst various challenges. Therefore, educational institutions must move beyond traditional approaches that emphasize rote memorization and passive learning, and instead adopt innovative educational practices that empower learners to actively participate in the learning process.

One important innovation is the implementation of joyful and dialogical education. Joyful learning creates a positive educational environment in which students feel motivated, respected, and encouraged to explore their potential. At the same time, dialogical education promotes meaningful interaction between teachers and students, fostering critical reflection, mutual understanding, and collaborative learning. Such approaches align closely with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's vision of education as a process that nurtures the natural growth of learners rather than imposing rigid forms of instruction. Through dialogue and active engagement, students are encouraged to become independent thinkers who are capable of adapting to changing social and professional environments.

In addition to pedagogical innovation, character education remains a crucial component in the formation of a free and responsible individual. Character development can be effectively cultivated through exemplary behavior and habituation, where values such as honesty, discipline, empathy, integrity, responsibility, and respect are consistently practiced in daily life. Character education

ensures that intellectual development is balanced with moral and ethical growth, preventing the emergence of individuals who are academically competent but lack social responsibility. In this regard, teachers, parents, and educational institutions play a strategic role as role models whose actions significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviors.

The integration of joyful learning, dialogical pedagogy, and character education within the philosophical framework of Ki Hadjar Dewantara offers a comprehensive model for contemporary education. This integrated approach not only enhances academic achievement but also prepares learners to face the demands of the twenty-first century, including technological advancement, social diversity, and global competition. By fostering independence, creativity, critical thinking, and strong moral values, education can produce individuals who are capable of navigating uncertainty while remaining committed to ethical principles and social welfare.

Ultimately, the relevance of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy extends beyond the Indonesian context and offers valuable insights for modern educational systems worldwide. The cultivation of freedom, independence, and character should remain central objectives of educational practice. Through continuous innovation in teaching methods and a sustained commitment to character formation, education can contribute to the development of a generation that is visionary, resilient, self-reliant, and socially responsible. Such a generation will not only possess the knowledge and skills required for future success but will also demonstrate the wisdom, integrity, and leadership necessary to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of society and humanity as a whole.

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