

The Concept of the Independent Learning Curriculum (*Merdeka Belajar*) in Elementary Schools in View Progressivism Educational Philosophy

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of independent learning from the perspective of progressivism educational philosophy. The method used in this research is library research. The researcher reviewed various works of literature and then analyzed related to the Concept of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Elementary Schools from the Viewpoint of Educational Philosophy. Data collection techniques are conducted by including eligibility, screening, identification, and analysis from various sources such as books, articles, and relevant research results. The search for research data resulted in 5 electronic books and 36 articles from scholars. The texts studied included educational philosophy books and independent curriculum guides specific to elementary schools. In contrast, there are several selected articles. Articles found in the Sholer and Mendeley databases, using the search terms "Independent Curriculum in elementary schools, Educational Philosophy, Progressivism" in the title and keywords only selected articles which are continued in the discussion and the papers used are the last five years published in national journals (Sinta 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and several in international journals. Library materials from various sources, both in print and electronic form, go through the stages of eligibility, screening, identification, and analysis as needed to obtain proportions and ideas. The results of this study indicate the concept of independent learning with the flow of progressivism believes that education must be progressive, innovative, flexible, open, rational, and scientific according to the times. The concept of an independent learning curriculum in elementary schools from the point of view of the philosophy of progressivism education has similarities to progress and independence in educational practice. The relationship between the concept of independent learning in elementary schools from a progressivism point of view can be seen from the impact of its implementation: 1) for educators, the administrative burden will be reduced because the RPP tools are simplified; teachers have free time to improve competence through various platforms; Educators have the freedom to innovate and be creative. 2) Students can experience knowledge in their environment as character strengthening, learning themes, or critical issues related to sustainable lifestyles, culture, entrepreneurship, and technology. So that students can take real action in answering these issues according to the stages of learning and their needs.

Keywords: Educational Philosophy, Free Learning (*Merdeka Belajar*), Progressivism.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep merdeka belajar dari perspektif filsafat pendidikan progresivisme. Penelitian dilakukan melalui metode kualitatif studi Pustaka. Pengumpulan data melalui berbagai sumber dan dikonstruksi seperti buku, jurnal, serta riset-riset yang relevan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan konsep merdeka belajar dengan aliran progresivisme meyakini bahwa Pendidikan harus progresif, inovatif, fleksibel, terbuka, rasional dan ilmiah sesuai perkembangan zaman. Konsep kurikulum merdeka belajar di sekolah dasar ditinjau dari sudut pandangan aliran filsafat Pendidikan progresivisme memiliki kesamaan pada kemajuan dan kemerdekaan terhadap praktik Pendidikan. Hubungan antar konsep merdeka belajar di sekolah dasar dengan sudut pandang progresivisme dapat dilihat dari dampak implementasinya: 1) bagi pendidik, beban administrative akan berkurang karena perangkat RPP lebih disederhanakan; guru memiliki waktu luang untuk meningkatkan kompetensi melalui berbagai platform; pendidik memiliki kemerdekaan dalam berinovasi dan berkreasi. 2) bagi peserta didik, memperoleh kesempatan untuk mengalami proses pengetahuan di lingkungannya sebagai penguatan karakter, mempelajari tema atau isu-isu penting terkait gaya hidup berkelanjutan, budaya, wirausaha dan teknologi. Sehingga peserta didik dapat melakukan aksi nyata dalam menjawab isu-isu tersebut sesuai dengan tahapan belajar dan kebutuhannya.

Kata Kunci: *Filsafat Pendidikan, Merdeka Belajar, Progresivisme.*

INTRODUCTION

Formal education is one of the modifiers of social status in society. Through education, Indonesia can produce human resources to become the next generation of nations with superior potential. However, it is undeniable that in formal education, there are various backgrounds and differences in the ability of students to receive the knowledge provided by educators. Moreover, there was a learning loss during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI, 2022). However, it is related to more than just the problem of learning backwardness. Indonesia has also experienced a learning crisis for a long time. The learning crisis has a severe impact on the competence of students. When students experience difficulties understanding simple reading (Purnama Sari & Dwi, 2022), the highest aspects are reading the beginning of words and fluency in reading aloud. In addition, elementary school students experience difficulties understanding basic mathematics concepts (Yuniarti & Radia, 2020). In practice, learning problems are not only experienced by students; educators also experience complex issues, including (Syafi'i, 2021): lack of teacher ability to apply technology in learning, lack of time for teachers to control knowledge, lack of ability to convey material, lack of literacy in supporting education. Because of these problems, the Government seeks to realize the learning process so that students actively develop their potential, free themselves from ignorance, and achieve wisdom.

The Indonesian Government has taken steps to overcome these problems by establishing a policy through an independent curriculum. This curriculum is one of the policies introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) to address the learning crisis in Indonesia. As a breakthrough with high value, it can be directly linked to efforts to improve the quality of education. With this breakthrough, learning in schools will focus more on literacy, numeracy, and character-strengthening skills, which are expected to answer better the growing educational needs (Nur Khasanah, 2022). Emphasis on independent learning to proactively respond to incremental and transformative changes towards developing learning and actively restoring the productivity of teaching activities. With

a project-oriented learning process, the learning process can be more flexible, proactive, and adaptive. In connection with this policy, the currently implemented independent curriculum is given additional options for Education units to recover learning until 2024.

The solutions offered in the independent curriculum are in line with the progressive school of educational philosophy (Navisa et al., 2022). The flow of progressivism appreciates a person's ability to solve problems with their experience. Education is given the freedom to determine learning that is estimated to be appropriate in meeting the educational needs of students, and it is hoped that learning will become a fun and independent activity (Dewa, 2022). This curriculum is believed to be able to realize the current educational climate, which is full of technological challenges. So that education is able to give birth to a generation that is ready and able to adapt to the times. According to Hamka (Syahrul, 2022), the word independence is freedom in thinking and expressing thoughts. Hamka's view of independence is learning to embody the freedom of opinion and all forms of fear.

The concept of independent learning promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture replaces the educational perspective through progressive philosophy. This is because progressivism is a school of academic philosophy that views humans as having a unique and extraordinary ability to overcome various conflicts. Progressivism rejects past and present authoritarian parenting styles (Fadlillah, 2017). A rigorous education is believed to prevent the achievement of reasonable goals because it does not reward good skills. The plans and directions of the independent learning concept with the flow of progressivism offer flexibility and independence in exploring students' potential by adjusting their talents and interests (Siti Mustaghfiroh, 2020). From the point of view of both, it encourages a desire to create a happy learning atmosphere without being burdened with achieving a particular score of learning outcomes or grades.

Previous research has examined the concept of independent learning according to the view of progressivism. Other research generally focuses on the idea of independent learning or focuses more on tertiary institutions. According to the view of progressivism, the concept of an independent learning curriculum in elementary schools still needs to be explored. In research (Adisel & Suryati, 2022) focusing on the idea of independent learning from a progressivist perspective, his study shows the flexibility of education in general. Research (Sopacua & Fadli, 2022) focuses on the alignment of the concept of independent learning with the flow of progressivism, where the practice of learning is generally considered to be in line with the flow of progressivism. This paper describes the concept of an independent learning curriculum in elementary schools from the point of view of progressive education philosophy. This research is essential to study as a contribution of knowledge to teachers and school principals to wish for changes in elementary school education to be more advanced and high-quality.

METHOD

The method used in this research is library research (Adlini et al., 2022). The researcher reviewed various works of literature and then analyzed related to the Concept of Independent Learning Curriculum in Elementary Schools from the Viewpoint of Educational Philosophy. Data collection techniques included eligibility, screening, identification, and analysis from various sources such as books, articles,

and relevant research results (Nugroho et al., 2022). Research data searches yielded 5 electronic books and 36 articles from scholars. The books studied to educational philosophy books and independent curriculum guides specific to elementary schools.

In comparison, there are several selected articles. Articles found in the Sholer and Mendeley databases, using the search terms "Independent Curriculum in elementary schools, Educational Philosophy, Progressivism" in the title and keywords only selected articles which are continued in the discussion and the papers used are the last five years published in national journals (Sinta 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and several in international journals. Library materials that have been obtained from various sources, both in print and electronic form, then go through the stages of eligibility, screening, identification, and analysis as needed to get proportions and ideas related to the concept of an independent curriculum in elementary schools from the point of view of progressivism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Progressivism Philosophy

Progressivism stems from a general reform movement by American society in political life in the late 19th century. Progressivism education designs strategies to reform education and free students from authoritative schools (Juhrodin, 2021), where students learn under pressure and are considered learning objects. Progressivism emerged from social renewal in the American political movement, which was still within the scope of pragmatic philosophical figures, including Charles S. Peirce, Willam James, and John Dewey, as well as Bacon's experimentalism (Anggraini & Desyandri, 2022). Progressivism requires developments in the field of education; of course, such things in the learning process require adjustments to developments in information and communication technology that leads to students' skills and creativity.

The principles of progressivism education can be formulated as follows (Ikhsanudin, 2019): 1) students have the freedom to develop naturally or naturally; 2) the best stimulus in learning is direct experience, which means that students must be directly involved in educational activities; 3) teacher as facilitator; 4) Educational Institutions become educational laboratories; 5) coordinating activities at school and home.

The paradigm in this flow, education must be progressive, where education must progress. The direction of education in the flow of progressivism assumes that students have academic assets to solve various personal problems (John L. Pecore, 2017). Of course, progress in students' learning practices is the leading actor of learning. This not only determines the characteristics of quality education policies that adapt to developments but also provides a strong foundation for efforts to prioritize the realization of students' rights. The flow of progressivism views humans as able to develop and improve the environment by using their intelligence through the scientific method to solve problems arising from personal and social causes (Nalandaru, 2022). In addition, this school strongly rejects thoughts that damage human morals because, within humans, there is potential to be better. In its implementation, the flow of progressivism creates democratic learning, placing students into a central role.

Progressivism emerged as a reaction against the conventional education system (essential,

perennial, and formal teaching) (Ruslan, 2018). Education is seen as not just transferring knowledge but honing abilities and skills through the proper stimulation. According to progressivism, the educational process has two parts (Utomo & Ifadah, 2020): first is the psychological part, educators must know the potential that exists in students; secondly, the sociological piece, educators must understand how the prospect of students will be directed.

The view of progressivism requires that the curriculum be considered good if it is based on three principles, namely (Bahartiar & Sahrul Syawal, 2019): improving the quality of life of children at every level of education; directing the child's life to be more developed; develop creative aspects in life so that children can create actually, actively for new things that can be practiced. This is in line with historical facts which show the development and changes in the curriculum in Indonesia, which began with the 1947 Lesson Plan, the 1975 Curriculum, the 1984 Curriculum, the 1994 Curriculum, the 2004 Curriculum (KBK) and the 2006 Curriculum (KTSP), the 2013 curriculum and the independent curriculum which have not been fully implemented (Musyarapah, 2017). One of the principles of curriculum development is developed based on the awareness that science, technology, and art can create dynamically. The story of a progressivism education curriculum emphasizes how to think, how to do, not what to believe and what to do, meaning that it emphasizes and prioritizes method over the material. (Amka, 2019). The goal is to provide individuals with abilities that allow them to interact with their ever-changing surroundings. By emphasizing aspects of the curriculum methodology, which is based on the philosophy of progressivism, it will be able to adjust to situations and conditions.

The position of students in the perspective of progressivism is progress, prioritizing attention to the future, and showing anxiety from the past. Learning should be applied student-centered to see further the various potentials they have. In the view of progressivism, several things should be considered in learning, namely (Supriatna, 2021): providing opportunities for students to learn independently; learning through experience; learning by giving motivation instead of emphasizing orders; involving students in every aspect of learning activities; reinforce students.

Merdeka Belajar Curriculum (Independent Learning Curriculum)

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum is designed to apply a new learning paradigm. Its application focuses on essential material that aims to develop student competence in its phase (Nuraini et al., 2022). In this curriculum, it is emphasized that education has independence in determining and managing the learning process in developing the character and competency profile of Pancasila students (Sumarsih et al., 2022). The curriculum has a significant influence on what is taught by educators. Therefore, the curriculum facilitates and encourages educators to prepare better.

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum is a form of evaluation of the previous curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum (Sumarsih et al., 2022). The meaning of independence is where various extracurricular learning is developed so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen many. The policy taken by the government in designing an independent curriculum was based on the assessment of Indonesian students who are still in a low position in the fields of mathematics and literacy (Kemendikbud, 2020). This reason became one of the factors that led the Ministry of Education and Culture to make a breakthrough regarding assessment on a minimum scale, including literacy, numeracy,

and character development.

The assessment of literacy skills emphasizes the ability to read and analyze reading content and understand the concept. The review of numeracy skills is related to learning mathematics and students' ability to learn numerical concepts in everyday life. In contrast, the assessment of character development is determined from the values of Pancasila that have been practiced (Afandi et al., 2021). The concepts specified in the curriculum are free to adapt to the conditions of the learning process that take place in terms of local wisdom, culture, infrastructure, and socio-economics. Thus, educators will continue to improve the quality of teaching so that it is more progressive and avoids the learning system in Indonesia, which only relies on the lecture method in the learning process (Hamid, 2019). Such learning impacts the saturation of students participating in the learning process.

The Ministry of Education and Culture stipulates four components in policies related to independent learning, namely (Winda Anjelina et al., 2021): 1) minimum competency assessment and character survey as a substitute for the national exam. The assessment emphasizes literacy and numeracy skills which are carried out specifically for grades 4 (four), 8 (eight), and 11 (eleven). The assessment results become evaluation material for educational institutions in determining the following learning process. 2) the school is given the authority to determine the form of the final school assessment, such as assignments, papers, or portfolios. As educators, they will better understand the appropriate form of assessment to use because it is educators who better understand the characteristics and potential of students. 3) Learning Implementation Plans (RPP) are simplified to one page so that educators have more time to focus on the teaching and learning process. 4) the government gives authority to educational institutions to determine the acceptance zone system for new students. Students who go through the achievement and affirmation pathways have the opportunity to take part in the acceptance of new students at educational institutions of interest.

The Merdeka curriculum at the elementary school level is stipulated in Permendikbudristek no. 7 of 2022 concerning early childhood education, elementary school, and secondary education content standards. In its implementation, there have been changes including (Azmi & Iswanto, 2021): 1) Science and Social Studies subjects were combined into Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) subjects, in addition to implementing an independent curriculum at the elementary school level, students were given the freedom to choose one from four cultural arts subjects; 2) integration of computational thinking in Indonesian, Mathematics and Natural Sciences subjects, interpreted as a way to observe a problem and find a solution through computer technology; 3) project-based learning to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students is carried out at least twice in the school year. The project is divided into 3 phases, namely (Theory et al., 2023): phase A is equivalent to grade 1 (one) and grade 2 (two) elementary school, phase B is equivalent to grade 3 (three) and 4 (four) elementary school, phase C, equivalent to grade 5 (five) and grade 6 (six); 4) Allocation of study hours is arranged flexibly to achieve predetermined study hours; 5) the division of intra-curricular and co-curricular learning activities, in its implementation, strengthens differentiated learning according to the stages of student achievement. The performance is carried out 70-80% of lesson hours, while the implementation of co-curricular learning through projects to strengthen Pancasila student profiles is around 20-30% of lesson hours (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

The Concept of the Merdeka Belajar (Independent Learning) Curriculum in Elementary Schools from the View of Progressivism Education Philosophy

The Merdeka curriculum gives freedom and is student-centered; schools and educators can determine learning designs that suit the needs of the education unit. Schools and educators are more flexible in innovating and include active, creative, and independent learning, where freedom begins with the teacher as the driving force to create a fun learning atmosphere. In the independent curriculum, there is no requirement for a minimum completeness criteria score (KKM). Education is directed at quality learning, characterized by Pancasila student profiles and human resources who have superior competence in facing global challenges.

In the Merdeka curriculum at the elementary school level, teachers are given the flexibility to participate in independent mentoring and training as well as work groups and communities that act as a driving force in gaining new experiences in the world of education. This will provide positive input for teachers in optimizing potential that is not only obtained in the classroom. Teachers can share learning content through national or international discussion groups, applications, research articles, etc. Government support in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in elementary schools by providing digital or printed learning resources, facilities, training activities, and guarantees of teaching hours and allowances for teachers.

The Pancasila student profile reflects lifelong learning, global potential, has character. The concept of independent learning liberates education implementers in facilitating project activities based on students' phases and environmental conditions (regional potential) in developing the character and competency profile of Pancasila students (Sibuea, 2017). With the harmony between the philosophy of progressivism and independence, learning provides a new perspective for elementary school education, which should give a simple learning space. So that elementary school students are able to develop their potential based on their interests and talents to produce graduates characterized by the values of Pancasila. Students have superior potential than future generations. The concept of independence is not only the main goal in the teaching and learning process but as a child's right to grow, which is ongoing in the national education system (Faiz & Kurniawaty, 2020). Students' competence will be more substantial if it is built with motivation to learn and learn independently.

The profile of Pancasila students in elementary schools in the independent learning curriculum adopts the perspective of progressivism that humans have potential that continues to grow. Humans experience significant social, psychological, and biological changes due to evolution (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Then education will continue throughout life, so the tools and goals of education must be flexible, rational, open, and scientific. Freedom of learning is parallel to the view of progressivism with the development and growth of humans themselves (Ermawan et al., 2017). In independent learning, students become active objects in their development. Educators become facilitators of sharing knowledge and receiving knowledge without coercion.

The relationship between the concept of Merdeka Belajar in elementary schools with a progressivism perspective can be seen from the impact of its implementation (Triyatno, 2022). where the burden on teachers or educators from an administrative perspective will be reduced, the learning implementation

plan (RPP) is simplified, so teachers have time to improve competence with technological advances to enhance the quality of teaching; educators have the freedom to innovate and be creative; students are more appreciated with different characters (Simatupang & Yuhertiana, 2021). Providing independent learning opportunities for students means they will provide something more meaningful, where students can be directly involved in the learning process and give them the power to reason.

Thus, the concept of independent learning in elementary schools parallels the point of view of progressivism; this is shown because both emphasize independence in implementing education. In its implementation, students have the opportunity to experience knowledge as a process of strengthening character as well as learning to recognize their environment (Nanang Faisol Hadi & Khojir, 2021). In addition, students can study essential themes or issues related to sustainable lifestyles, culture, entrepreneurship, and technology. So that students can take real action in answering these issues according to the stages of learning and their needs. This strengthening project can also inspire students to contribute to the impact on their environment (Shodik, 2021). Integrating the reality of the Pancasila student profile in elementary schools will undoubtedly promote the philosophy of progressivism into education, becoming a form of updating answers to various needs and problems of modern times.

CONCLUSION

The concept of independent learning with the flow of progressivism believes that education must be progressive, innovative, flexible, open, rational and scientific according to the times. The Ministry of Education and Culture seeks to develop an education system with an independent curriculum to raise awareness of education actors in preparing a curriculum system to anticipate future problems. Starting from the right education system will produce a superior and character generation.

The concept of an independent learning curriculum in elementary schools from the point of view of the educational philosophy of progressivism has something in common. The emphasis on progressive education and the independence of educational practice shows this. The relationship between the concept of independent learning in elementary schools from a progressivism point of view can be seen from the impact of its implementation: 1) for educators, the administrative burden will be reduced because the RPP tools are simplified; teachers have free time to improve competence through various platforms; Educators have the freedom to innovate and be creative. 2) Students can experience knowledge in their environment as character strengthening, learning themes or important issues related to sustainable lifestyles, culture, entrepreneurship and technology. So that students can take real action in answering these issues according to the stages of learning and their needs.

This research still has many shortcomings and limitations in the sources and literature which focus on discussing the concept of independent learning in elementary schools. Sources of data obtained are still many in the national scope. The data obtained may not be able to meet research needs because they do not come from primary sources. The limitations in this study can be input and improvement for future researchers.

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