

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN “MERDEKA BELAJAR” ERA

Khanif Maksum¹

¹Educational Sciences, Doctoral Program, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received: 20-01-2021

Revised: 14-03-2021

Published: 10-05-2021

Keywords:

Education

Democracy

“Merdeka Belajar”

ABSTRACT

Educational Democracy is a view of life that prioritizes equal rights and obligations as well as equal treatment between educators and students in the learning process. Democracy in education contains elements of independence, freedom and responsibility. An independent attitude to develop self-confidence and to be aware of one's limitations is very important to foster awareness that life in the community requires collaboration with other individuals. Freedom is defined as a life purpose that rests on the awareness of social pluralism, not solely on the interests of individuals or groups. Therefore freedom itself must be accompanied by a sense of full responsibility. The word "Educational Democracy" is two terms which are interrelated, democratic values can be understood and owned by the community through educational activities, and vice versa so that education can produce output that has an independent attitude, has a critical thinking power, dynamic, democratic character and always upholds human dignity, then the implementation of education must be based on democracy so that the concept of independence in learning will grow well.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Corresponding Author:

Khanif Maksum,

Educational Sciences, Doctoral Program, Yogyakarta State University,

Jl. Colombo No. 1, Karangmalang, Kec. Depok, Kabupaten Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Email: khanifmaksum.2020@student.uny.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is the recognition of every citizen as a unique person, different from each other with their respective strengths and weaknesses. Democracy provides wide opportunities for individuals to develop their respective potentials, both physically, mentally, and spiritually. Democracy recognizes that every individual has the same rights and obligations. Therefore, democratic education is education that positions students as individuals who are uniquely different from one another and have potential that needs to be realized and developed maximally. For this reason, democratic education must provide different treatments to different target students according to their respective characteristics. Democratic education also demands the active participation of students and teachers in planning, developing, and implementing the learning process. In addition, the participation of parents and the community is very important in designing, developing, and implementing the educational process.

Democracy in the scope of education is the recognition of individual students in accordance with the dignity of the students themselves, because democracy is natural and human. In the process of education, the abilities and characteristics of students must be recognized by the parties involved in the learning process. There is no element of coercion in adjusting students not in accordance with their dignity. Therefore democratic education can be understood by the meaning of tolerance, mutual respect, and not promoting egocentricity

between educators and students. It is meant for achieving education and its benefits, as well as the occurrence of harmonious interactions in the learning environment.

Freedom to carry out responsibilities in accordance with certain limitations will create a democratic education, meaning that freedom is liberty that respects and understands the rights and obligations of each educator and student within certain limits. One example is related to the freedom of opinion for both educators and students, that in a particular problem, it is not supposed to impose one opinion only but must consider and respect other opinions or thoughts that might be more useful in solving the problem. Learning is an action and behavior of various learners in the process of transferring knowledge. In the process of implementing learning, there is an interaction between teachers / educators and students to achieve a predetermined learning goal. The purpose of implementing learning will be achieved when the implementation of learning accommodates all the diversity of students.

The learning that has been implemented, emphasizes the educator as the main source, while students tend to be more passive, so that in the learning process students are less involved. The learning process will result in students being inactive and developing themselves according to the learning experiences they get. Meanwhile, in the development and advancement of technology as it is today, human resources with excellent characteristics are needed to be able to keep up with the pace of technological development. The characteristics of human resources in the future that must be owned are humans who have the sensitivity and responsibility to respond to all the risks that will be received when making a decision. In addition, it must also be able to develop the potential that is owned to find one's own identity in the current context which is popular is "Merdeka Belajar" ("Merdeka Belajar"). Freedom to learn is freedom in thinking, especially the essence of freedom of thought, which must be owned by teachers first. Based on the background that has been described above, the author tries to conduct examinations related to the concept of democratic education in terms of the concept of "Merdeka Belajar".

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This type of research uses a descriptive analytic method which the researcher analyzes the themes discussed in the explanation process. This research is finding and digging up data that has deep meaning, then analyzing the problem (Sugiyono, 2013). The research method used in this research is the literature study method, namely the research method by collecting data, conducting studies and interpreting various literature sources in the form of books, journals, notes, or reports related to the theme of the research being carried out (Galvan, 2015). Data collection was carried out by selecting sources of reference sources and scientific literature that were still related to the theory or concept of democratic education and learning, as well as descriptions of the concepts of freedom of learning. Furthermore, the data that has been collected is then carried out recitation and analyzed then presented in a systematic series of writings.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Paradigm of Democracy

Every citizen of the world has a desire for democratic governance because the principles of democratic governance will grow citizens to have a sense of respect for each individual to take part in participating in the life of the state to the fullest. So every citizen needs to grow a sense of respect for the implementation of a democratic life. Democracy is currently believed by people around the world as the best political system in achieving the goals of statehood. The results of research conducted by UNESCO in 1949 show that democracy is called the term or name that is most suitable, good, and reasonable for all political organizations and social organizations that have been championed by influential supporters (Budiardjo, 2008). Democracy has been able to replace some non-democratic political systems which were considered failed at that time, for example: authoritarian, totalitarian, military regime, dictatorship and absolute monarchy. In implementing democracy, each country has its own uniqueness. It depends on the history, views on life, culture and goals to be achieved by the country. Therefore, the characteristics of each country in implementing democracy can be reflected in beliefs and feelings, as well as patterns of attitudes that underlie and direct and give meaning to the process and behavior in democracy.

3.2. Concept and Nature of Democracy

Literally the word "democracy" comes from the word or Greek, namely "demos" which means (society), then the word "kratia" means (rule or power) when combined, the word democracy is defined as power in the hands of the people. Therefore democracy can be interpreted as a system of government not only in the hands of a person (monarchy or tyranny) or not in a government led by a handful of people (aristocracy or oligarchy) but a government system in the hands of the people (Fachrudin, 2006). Democracy is not only meant to be interpreted as a type of government system (Ersson & Lane, 2003); Democracy is interpreted as a political system in which the spearhead of the concept of sovereignty is in the hands of the people. The authorities are accountable periodically to what they lead; the rights of minorities are protected; and political competition between individuals and between ideas is very open (Fachrudin, 2006). However, democracy can be defined as a way of life, a desire to tolerate, compromise, awareness of listening to and accepting the opinions of others (Print, Ellickson-Brown, & Baginda, 1999); a system of a country that opens the widest possible space for the emergence of differences in ideas, differences in aspirations, and / or differences in ideology (to the extent that these differences blunt criminalization) (Ranadireksa, n.d.).

It is stated in the book "The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (Hornby, 1973) that what is called "democracy" is:

1. Country with principles of government in which all adult citizens share through their elected representatives;
2. Country with government which encourages and allows rights of citizenship such as freedom of speech, religion, opinion, and association, the assertion of rule of law, majority rule, accompanied by respect for the rights of minorities.
3. Society in which there is treatment of each other by citizens as equals.

The definition of democracy above is defined as a concept of state life in which citizens have a share and participation in the implementation of government through the representatives they have elected. The government guarantees the freedom of its citizens in expressing opinion, speech, having religion, and association to uphold the "rule of law" as well as the emergence of a government that respects the rights of minorities, and the equal treatment of all members of society.

3.3. Concept and Nature of Democratic Education

According to Winataputra and Budimansyah's view (2007), Democratic education is an effort made by a state and society which is carried out systematically to facilitate every citizen to be able to live, understand, develop and practice the principles, concepts and values of democracy based on role and status in a society. The objective of focused democracy education is to foster a sense and awareness of democracy, understanding and knowledge of democratic procedures such as responsibility, democratic, peaceful, transparency, and so on. Research conducted by Gandal and Finn (1992) is related to democracy education both in developing countries as well as in developed countries is often taken for granted or often taken lightly and sometimes even forgotten. Therefore, it is then emphasized that "Democracy does not teach itself. If the strengths, benefits, and responsibilities of democracy are not made clear to citizens, they will be ill-equipped to defend it". What this means is that democracy cannot just be understood by itself. If the benefits, strengths and responsibilities of democracy are not well understood and lived up to by every citizen, the hope to fight for it will be very difficult. Therefore, democratic education must be taken seriously and consciously. This view has implications for good education in which education allows every citizen to appreciate and understand that a good education is needed which enables citizens to understand, respect, and be responsible as democratic citizens.

3.4. Vision and Mission of Democratic Education

Democratic education has a vision as a tool that is substantive, pedagogical, and socio-cultural in order to foster the ideals of democratic principles, values, attitudes and skills of every citizen through the experience of democratic life in various contexts. Based on this experience, every citizen will be able to make a meaningful contribution both individually and collectively to the quality of the implementation of democracy in society, nation and state. This is what is known as "learning democracy, through democracy, and for democracy" (Winataputra, 2001).

From the vision described above, then the mission of democratic education can be formulated according to Winataputra (2007), which are as follows:

1. Facilitating every citizen to be able to get various accesses and various sources of information (printed, recorded, broadcast, electronic, life and environment) about democracy in terms of democratic theory and practice in various life contexts so that he / she can have broad and adequate insights (well-informed).
2. Facilitating citizens to be able to carry out conceptual and operational studies that are carried out carefully and responsibly towards various ideals, instrumentation and praxis of democracy in order to gain confidence in making individual and or group decisions in their daily life and can argue for these decisions.
3. Facilitating citizens to be able to obtain and take advantage of opportunities to participate intelligently and responsibly in the practice of democratic life in their environment, including in issuing opinions, voting, gathering and association, as well as being able to monitor and influence the prevailing public policies.

Based on the vision and mission of Democratic Education described above, Winataputra (2001) argues that the basic strategies for democratic education that are developed include strategies by utilizing various kinds of media and learning resources (multimedia and resources), interdisciplinary studies (interdisciplinary), problem solving related to social (problem solving), social research (social inquiry), social action (social involvement), and portfolio-based learning (portfolio-based learning).

3.5. School-Based Democracy Education

Responsibility as citizens who have a democratic attitude, all levels of society must be provided with good and complete education. Said by Gandal and Finn (1992) "... *good democracy education is a part of good education in general*". Therefore it is necessary to develop the following:

1. Developing a school-based democracy education model.
2. Democracy education can be carried out in the implementation of classroom learning namely by creating a learning situation that allows students to learn in groups; teaching practices to their own friends (teach other children); making a group presentation; and class discussion. In this case the teacher plays a role in encouraging student democratic behavior by involving students in asking questions. If students feel afraid and do not want to have an opinion or do not want to ask questions, then in that position the teacher must provide motivation and encouragement to students so that students can play an active role in class discussions. This is one of the most difficult things for students - and teachers - in newly free societies to get used to, but it is an essential element of democracy education (Gandal & Finn, 1992).
3. The practice of democratic education in schools can be carried out through the implementation of extra-curricular activities outside the classroom, including: theater, sports, dance activities, etc. The implementation of these activities can give students the opportunity to practice working together towards goals in the group of activities. In addition, students also well trained to choose leaders and make decisions. In all these activities, democratic values and norms can be applied and practiced in these activities, not just theories written in textbooks delivered by the teacher in class.

3.6. "Merdeka Belajar" According to The Ministry of Education and Culture

The term "Merdeka Belajar" has emerged and has become a hot topic of discussion and debate when it was first put forward by the Ministry of Education and Culture in commemoration of national teachers' day. Speech done by Minister of Education and culture about "Freedom to Learn" is as follows.

“Dear Indonesian teachers, your job is both the noblest and the most difficult. You are tasked with establishing the future of the nation, but more often given rules than help. You want to help a student who is lagging behind in class, but you are running out of time on administrative assignments with no apparent benefit. You know very well that the potential of a child cannot be measured by the results of the test, but you are forced to chase numbers because of pressure from various stakeholders. You want to take your students out of the classroom to learn from the world around them, but the curriculum is so dense that it closes the door to adventure.

You are frustrated because you know that in the real world, the ability to work and collaborate will determine a child’s success, not the ability to memorize. You know that every child has different needs, but uniformity has trumped diversity as a basic principle of bureaucracy. You want every student to be inspired, but you are not given the confidence to innovate.

I won’t make empty promises to you. Change is difficult and full of inconveniences. One thing is for sure, I will fight for freedom to study in Indonesia. However, change cannot be started from above. Everything starts and ends with the teacher. Don’t wait on cue, don’t wait for orders. Take the first step ”.

This speech is very short, if understood carefully, that the speech gives impression and message that is quite factual. With the choice of words and language that are easily digested and understood by the teacher, especially in relation to administrative burdens that can currently shackle and hinder teacher creativity in improving learning. There are at least four points for discussion of recommendations presented by the Minister of Education and Culture regarding “Free Learning”. They are (1) The National Standard School Examination (USBN), (2) The National Examination (UN), (3) The Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), and (4) The Zoning New Student Admissions Regulation (PPDB).

3.7. Realizing Students’ Learning Freedom

In the implementation of “Merdeka Belajar” or what is often referred to as “Merdeka Belajar”, it does not have to and does not need infrastructure or a large budget. At least there are several steps or ways that can be taken to implement “Merdeka Belajar” or build learning independence for students, including:

1. On a national scale, which in this case is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture, can conduct a survey of children’s aspirations and involvement in learning activities at school and also learning activities at home. At least, listen to what the child wants and wants to learn, and / or what conditions of the learning environment can be more effective in implementing learning. Furthermore, the results of the survey can be used as feedback and recommendations to educational institutions or educators in carrying out learning.
2. Reviewing all policies at the national and regional level policies that directly or indirectly limit children’s freedom in carrying out learning activities. At the local level, governments prepare indicators of student learning outcomes as indicators to assess the performance of schools and local education offices. In addition, it is also necessary to foster a level of independence and responsibility for schools and teachers as autonomous educational units.
3. Organizing activities and multiply non-competitive activities at the community level for children including: in the form of a children’s activity forum that can be used as an arena to display their work. With these activities, it is hoped that children will be more independent in expressing and exploring their potential without fear of being wrong, losing or being humiliated.
4. Teachers and parents can provide stimulation in the form of quality readings, give children the opportunity to explore the environment around them, then provide opportunities for children to analyze reading and explore the environment.

3.8. Democracy Education in Merdeka Belajar

The old model of education often views students as being united physically and spiritually, but it should be seen from all their talents and interests. Student intelligence needs to be actively raised in taking

to be able to adapt and socialize with the surrounding environment. Therefore, educational institutions should be open in carrying out their functions, open to the surrounding community. Because educational institutions are a picture or miniature of society itself. Thus, students or learners are expected to be able to live and carry out educational and innovative learning activities at school without being overshadowed by fear. Educational learning is an independent learning activity, in which learning activities can be carried out inside and outside the classroom (Barnadib, 1997).

John Dewey said that the implementation of education should be democratic. The point is that education is more functional in giving freedom to students in innovating and exploring their potentials, so that this potential can develop better. Based on this, educators should see students as a group of children who have their own unique way of developing themselves, so that educators are expected to be able to explore all abilities, tendencies, intelligence, interests, and talents of students who are very varied and diverse. One of the benchmarks in assessing the success of the implementation of education is seen from the extent to which education is able to explore all the intelligence, interests and talents of students, as well as develop the potential of students properly and maximally. At least five things are needed in the education process as follows:

1. Educators or teachers are not allowed to be authoritarian. The role of educators or teachers in education is as a facilitator. The role of educators is to help students to learn with the Active Student Learning Method (CBSA) system. Educators provide emotional insight and motivation in the mentoring process in learning so that students can develop independently.
2. Use learning methods that are not exclusive, meaning that the learning method must adapt to the conditions and situations of students.
3. It is not recommended to use the memorization method, because with this memorization method students will develop a passive or inactive tendency.
4. The implementation of education must be flexible, meaning that it is open to existing social realities.
5. It is not allowed to apply physical punishment. Because physical punishment will only cause fear and trauma for students which have an effect on the students not developing in learning. (Ornstein & Levine, 1985).

3.9. Democracy Curriculum to Create Merdeka Belajar

A democratic class is the characteristic that the school implements a democratic system. The democratic class reflects a commitment to the goal, that is, each individual feels accepted and motivated to develop his / her potential. Democratic class gives an award to every student in terms of understanding goals and achieving goals, control, and cooperation between students in the learning process. The teacher's role is to foster a spirit of cooperation, mutually agreed values, and a learning community life that is based on authentic learning. Democratic curriculum provides open opportunities for information and respect for differences of opinion. Educators must cling to the principle that knowledge is built based on a social context, that is, it is produced and disseminated by individuals who personally have their own values, interests, and biases (constructivism). The democratic curriculum not only contains important thoughts from experts, but also things that concern and questions students about themselves and the world around them (Apple & Beane, 1995).

Democratic curriculum requires the active role of students as making meaning. In the implementation of learning, it is more aimed at developing intelligence abilities and reflective abilities to problems, events and issues that arise in life, such as justice, conflict, and others. This process makes students understand and trained in various ways or approaches (Apple & Beane, 1995). Democratic curriculum empowers students to understand and make changes. In other words, a democratic curriculum supports academic freedom; fosters dialogue, criticism, opposition, and justice; develop policies regarding cross-science, multiculturalism, and issues related to it, such as justice, mutual respect. The learning approach used to equip students to think, learn, reflect and work together. Students are taken to struggle with problems to understand and seek solutions (authentic learning) through the application of critical and creative thinking skills as well as appreciating from the ideas of their peers (Gatlin et al., 2007).

3.10. Democracy Education as a form of Merdeka Belajar

Law No. 20 of 2003 on the national education system has the function of building a democratic personality. In the process of building a democratic state and a clean and authoritative government, there are

many challenges faced, such as politicians who play an arrogant, and opportunistic role. These politicians ignore the existence of democratic principles that develop the values of honesty, brotherhood, equality, and justice. In fact, from the perspective of education, they are highly educated. This phenomenon is interesting to observe, because there is a tendency to believe that the low level of education does not affect the healthy climate of democracy.

Therefore it is necessary to make efforts that must be made so that the world of education is able to sow the seeds of democracy to students and so that it will give birth to democrats who are accomplished, intelligent, and reliable. The curriculum load is very heavy and must be completed in the implementation of learning, this also has an impact on the loss of space for discussion and dialogue in the implementation of the learning process, and the only source is the teacher. This results the students becoming strangers after graduating among the people. If the students' brains and emotions are kept away from dialogue, they will not be able to internalize democratic values. They will not be able to appreciate that an opinion is one of the essence of democracy. It is necessary to provide sufficient space to build a democratic culture for students in today's world of education, so that later they can become true democrats who are humble, tolerant, big-spirited, have a moral and spiritual ethical foundation. Especially in the third millennium era which is now believed to bring about many global changes along with the acceleration of the entry and exit of various new cultures and civilizations from various nations in the world, the realm of democracy will certainly determine the image, credibility and acceptability of our nation as one of the world community. That means, the world of education in producing quality and professional human resources must prepare a democratic generation, so that it has a strong resistance in the midst of civilizational conflicts.

Besides the developing democratic values in the mental formation of students according to democratic values, democracy in schools also includes a learning process to improve the quality of learning outcomes. Among other things, this address issues that are of course related to democratic values in terms of science, regarding current industries which often cause environmental pollution. Many industry parties are always dealing with certain groups that are anti-pollution and environmental destruction, so that education must design future changes that are still marked by advances in science and technolog. This is can be helped with increasing international solidarity and a balance of commitment between productivity, scientific progress and technology. Then it can develop the economic sector, but still pay attention to environmental care, and humanitarian missions, so as to neutralize social tensions, and be able to preserve nature. This is not only a necessity for all mankind with the balance of its ecosystem, but will also be inherited in future generations.

4. CONCLUSION

Democracy in education is a democracy that contains elements of independence, freedom and responsibility. An independent attitude to develop self-confidence and to be aware of one's limitations is very important to foster awareness that life in the community requires collaboration with other. Freedom is defined as a life purpose that rests on the awareness of social pluralism, not solely on the interests of individuals or groups. Therefore freedom itself must be accompanied by a sense of full responsibility. The word "Educational Democracy" is two terms which are interrelated. Democratic values can be understood and owned by the community through educational activities, and vice versa. This is why education can produce output that has an independent attitude, has a critical thinking power, dynamic, democratic character and always uphold human dignity. Thus the implementation of education must be based on democracy.

Educational institutions can be said democratic if they provide freedom and independence to their students in learning "Merdeka Belajar" by considering the following matters:

1. Education management that is decentralized means that policies in the implementation of education are more determined at the regional level, at the school level and at the class level;
2. Educational material is more problem oriented, meaning that in the delivery of teacher learning departs from the real problems that are being faced by students and their environment by using a constructivist approach;
3. Students are dispositioned as the subject of learning. Meanwhile the teacher functions as a facilitator, dynamist, and motivator to put forward the tutwuri handayani attitude to direct students; give examples; and provide motivation to students to continue to explore and develop their independence, and develop their creativity and tolerance

4. Schools are able to explore intelligence and foster the abilities of students according to the potential, interests and tendencies of each student in a democratic, flexible and fun way.

REFERENCES

- Apple, M. W., & Beane, J. A. (1995). *Democratic Schools*. Alexandria: VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Barnadib, I. (1997). *Filsafat Pendidikan: Sistem & Metode*. Yogyakarta: ANDI.
- Budiardjo, M. (2008). *Dasar-dasar Ilmu Politik*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Ersson, S., & Lane, J.-E. (2003). *Democracy A Comparative Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Fachrudin, F. (2006). *Agama dan Pendidikan Demokrasi: Pengalaman Muhammadiyah dan NU*. Jakarta: PT Alvabet.
- Galvan, J. L. (2015). *Writing Literature Reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences (6th ed.)*. California: Pyrczak Publishing.
- Gandal, J., & Finn, E. (1992). Teaching Democracy. *Freedom Paper USA*, 2(1), 28.
- Gatlin, D. M., Barrows, F. T., Brown, P., Dabrowski, K., Gaylord, T. G., Hardy, R. W., . . . Wurtele, E. (2007). Expanding the utilization of sustainable plant products in aquafeeds: a review. *Aquaculture Research*, 38(6), 551–579. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2109.2007.01704.x
- Hornby, A. (1973). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ornstein, A. C., & Levine, D. U. (1985). *An Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Print, M., Ellickson-Brown, J., & Baginda, A. R. (1999). *Civic Education for Civil Society*. Warsaw: Asean Academic Press Ltd.
- Ranadireksa, H. (n.d.). *Bedah konstitusi lewat gambar: dinamika konstitusi indonesia (Cetakan Pertama)*. Bandung: Fokus Media.
- Sugiyono, S. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfa Beta.
- Winataputra, U. S. (2001). *Model-model pembelajaran Inovatif*. Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka.
- Winataputra, U. S., & Budimansyah, D. (2007). *Civic Education: konteks, landasan, bahan ajar dan kultur kelas*. Bandung: Prodi PKn SPS UPI.