

# Analysis of the Independent Curriculum from the Perspective of the School of Education Philosophy and the Philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara

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**Abstract.** This research explores the philosophical principles that form the basis of an independent curriculum by highlighting elements such as freedom to learn, diversity, equality, and student-centred learning. This research also compares the concept of an independent curriculum and other schools of educational philosophy, such as perennialist, essentialist, and progressivist, to describe their unique characteristics. This research uses a literature study. The data collected in this research came from books, research journals, news, and online articles. The data collection technique used in this research is documentation, and the data analysis technique used is content analysis. This research shows that the Merdeka Curriculum, the influence of schools of educational philosophy, such as progressivism, perennialism, essentialism, constructivism, and the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, have an essential role. The integration of academic philosophy and the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara into the Independent Curriculum creates a holistic whole. This approach not only produces an intellectually intelligent generation but also creates individuals who are competitive, creative and have strong moral values.

**Keywords:** Independent Curriculum; School of Educational Philosophy; Ki Hajar Dewantara.

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the character and thinking of the nation's next generation. In line with the spirit of change and educational reform in Indonesia, the introduction of the Independent Curriculum is a progressive step aimed at providing students with freedom of learning. The independent curriculum has several characteristics, including a focus on essential material (the material is not too dense) so that there is enough time for in-depth learning, such as literacy and numeracy; project-based learning for the development of soft skills and character to support the national education vision, namely the realisation of the Pancasila student profile (faith, purity, and noble character, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning; and creativity); as well as providing common ground for teachers to carry out differentiated learning according to student's abilities and making adjustments to local context

and content [1]. Therefore, contained in this curriculum is a vision to provide freedom of learning to every student, accompanied by the aspiration of producing a creative, independent, and highly competitive generation.

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum was developed in response to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, which showed that 70% of 15-year-old students were below the minimum competency level in understanding simple reading or applying basic mathematical concepts. This PISA score has not experienced a significant increase in the last 10–15 years. In addition, there are substantial gaps between regions and socio-economic groups regarding the quality of learning [2]. In the course of forming this curriculum, educational philosophy plays a vital role as the ideological foundation that guides the implementation of education. The schools of academic philosophy with the independent curriculum are

progressivism, perennialism, essentialism, and constructivism. These philosophies provide a conceptual framework that guides curriculum formation.

Meanwhile, Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, embodied in the "Tri-kaya Mangkurat" concept, represents the values of wisdom, enthusiasm for developing one's potential, and an ethos of service to others [3]. As the architect of national education, Ki Hajar Dewantara led the change towards an education system that embraces freedom, equality, and justice.

In this study, the author will explore how the school of educational philosophy and the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara are interrelated and influence the development of the Merdeka Curriculum. The extent to which the values and principles of these two entities can be integrated into the modern curriculum is a measure of success in producing a generation that is creative, independent, and characterised, in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum and the noble legacy of Ki Hajar Dewantara.

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a literature study. A literature study is a data collection method that consists of a series of actions, such as reading, taking notes, and processing research material [4]. The data collected in this research came from books, research journals, news, and online articles. The data collection technique used in this research is documentation, which means looking for data about things or variables such as notes, books, papers, articles, and journals [5]. The data analysis technique used is content analysis. It produces valid conclusions that can be reconsidered in light of the context [6]. Researchers use this theory to do the following: 1. Provide equipment; 2. Create a bibliography; 3. Manage time; 4. Read and make research notes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The essence of the independent curriculum.** The Independent Curriculum is a framework promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia. It was announced as an effort to update the educational approach in Indonesia and adapt the curriculum to current developments. The independent curriculum has

a variety of extracurricular learning so that students can be more optimal, have concepts, and strengthen their competencies [7].

The independent learning curriculum gives students the right to learn independently. Therefore, teachers need a strategy for implementing it. The learning strategy in this curriculum is project-based. This project is called the Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). This means that this project is integrated across subjects [8]. Students carry out this project-based learning process by observing a problem and then providing a real solution to the problem. The Merdeka Curriculum carries the concept of freedom to learn, which differs from the 2013 curriculum. It gives schools, teachers, and students the freedom to innovate, learn independently, and be creative; this freedom starts with the teacher as the driving force. The learning atmosphere is pleasant, considering many complaints from parents and students regarding learning, which requires a minimum completeness score. In the Merdeka Curriculum, there is no longer a demand for achieving a minimum completeness score; instead, it emphasises quality learning to create quality students with the character of a Pancasila student profile who have competence as Indonesian human resources.

The Pancasila Student Profile in this curriculum is strengthened by projects based on themes determined by the government. The Pancasila Student Profile is an output or graduate who has character and competence so that he can reinforce the noble values of Pancasila. This is a form of elaboration of national education goals, where these graduates will later become barometers who act as the primary reference that can direct educational policies, including teachers, in moulding the character and competence of students. The Pancasila Student Profile has six dimensions: 1) faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character; 2) global diversity; 3) working together; 4) independence; 5) critical reasoning; 6) creativity.

The following are some characteristics of the Independent Curriculum:

1. Providing freedom to learn. The Independent Curriculum aims to allow teachers and students to determine learning methods and adapt the curriculum to students' needs and interests. This is expected to increase student creativity and motivation.

2. Emphasis on character development and soft skills. This curriculum prioritises character development, life skills, and other skills in addition to academic aspects. Character education, such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation, is integral to the educational process.

3. Strengthening literacy and numeracy. The Merdeka Curriculum still emphasises mastery of literacy (the ability to read and write) and numeracy (the ability to count) as the main foundation of education.

4. Increasing the relevance of learning materials. The Merdeka Curriculum seeks to increase the relevance of learning material by linking it to students' daily lives and preparing them to face the demands of work and society.

5. Reducing Curriculum Load. There have been efforts to reduce the curriculum's burden, eliminating material deemed irrelevant or too heavy, thereby making more room for an emphasis on deeper learning.

6. Empowerment of Schools and Teachers. The Merdeka Curriculum gives schools and teachers more authority to adapt it according to local needs and the characteristics of their students.

7. Parental and Community Involvement. There is an emphasis on the involvement of parents and the community in supporting the educational process, recognising that education is not just the school's responsibility but involves the entire educational ecosystem.

**Schools of educational philosophy.** The schools of educational philosophy that are by the independent curriculum are as follows:

*Progressivism.* According to progressivism, humans must always progress, acting constructively, innovatively, reformatively, actively, and dynamically because humans have the instinct always to want change [9].

Progressivism was initiated by a philosopher named John Dewey. This school is a form of criticism of conventional educational patterns, which are authoritarian, by emphasising the uniformisation of the curriculum and the centralisation of a static education system [10]. What is essential in education is developing students' ability to practice thinking. The appropriate learning method is problem-solving. Education is child-centred, and student differences are highly considered [11]. Speeding

up the student development process is done by instilling the principles of self-discipline, socialisation, and democratisation. This philosophy is a progressive educational movement that aims to develop educational theories, including [11]: 1) children must be free to develop naturally; 2) direct experience is the best way to stimulate interest in learning; 3) the teacher must be a researcher and guide for learning activities; 4) the progressive school must be a laboratory for carrying out pedagogical and experimental reforms.

In Indonesia's education context, the concept of "freedom of learning" launched by the new Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is considered a significant policy to improve and advance education in Indonesia. Apart from that, "freedom to learn" has the same direction and goals as progressivism in educational philosophy [12].

The progressivism approach is reflected in several aspects, namely as follows:

1. Active Student Experience. Progressivism emphasises learning through direct experience. The Independent Curriculum allows students to be actively involved in learning, not just passive recipients of information. Project-based learning, exploration, and active discussion encourage direct student involvement.

2. Flexibility in Learning. The Independent Curriculum gives teachers and schools more freedom in designing learning according to local needs and context. This aligns with the principle of progressivism, which encourages diversity of learning methods and adaptation to student needs.

3. 21st Century Skills. Progressivism emphasises developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. The Merdeka Curriculum specialises in developing these skills to prepare students for future challenges.

4. Individual Progress. The principle of progressivism emphasises that every individual has unique potential. The Merdeka Curriculum tries to provide space for developing students' talents and interests, allowing progress that suits their rhythms and needs.

5. Contextual learning. Progressivism emphasises the importance of context in learning. The Merdeka Curriculum tries to incorporate local

context and wisdom so that students can relate learning to the surrounding reality.

6. **Formative Assessment.** Progressivism principles support the continued use of formative assessment. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages evaluation focusing on academic achievement and student development, including character and social skills.

7. **Democracy in Learning.** Progressivism emphasises democratic learning, where students actively participate in decision-making and shaping the learning environment. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages student participation in determining the direction and focus of learning.

Through applying the principles of progressivism, the Merdeka Curriculum seeks to create an educational environment that is responsive, inclusive, and capable of holistically developing each student's potential. The student-based approach and emphasis on 21st-century skills reflect elements of progressivism. However, criticism can arise if insufficient guidelines ensure the learning meets academic standards. Apart from that, this approach can help students become individuals who are critical, creative, and ready to face future challenges.

*Perennialism.* Perennialism comes from the word perennial, which can be interpreted as lasting for a very long time, which means eternal, eternal, or continuous without end [13]. The philosophy of perennialism is contrary to the view of progressivism, which prioritises change over something new. Perennialism views resolving and restoring the current crisis by returning to the past culture, namely returning to values or general principles considered ideal, robust, and whose resilience was tested in the past [14]. The philosophy of perennials is an educational philosophy that aims to develop thinking abilities through intellectual training. So, the role of teachers in this school of philosophy focuses on their function as subject matter experts who have the authority to master knowledge in their field. So, the student's position becomes more passive during the learning process. The characteristics of an independent curriculum are the philosophical basis of perennialism [15]. This curriculum places more emphasis on students' mastery of predetermined material. This is because, in this curriculum, students are required to memorise various lesson theories without being required to apply them. Thus, this

curriculum only emphasises the cognitive domain of students. This school can be integrated with the Independent Curriculum concept in Indonesia's education context. However, it should be noted that the concrete implementation of this school in the context of the Independent Curriculum will depend on interpretation and further development by the parties involved in preparing the curriculum. Several aspects of perennials that are by the spirit of the Independent Curriculum include:

1. **The Importance of Basic Education.** Perennialism emphasises the importance of a solid primary education, especially informing an intellectual foundation. The Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises freedom of learning, aligns with this idea because it allows students to explore their interests while ensuring mastery of basic knowledge.

2. **Focus on classical knowledge.** Perennialism values cultural heritage and classical knowledge, which are believed to have eternal value. This can be combined with the Merdeka Curriculum's efforts to strengthen mastery of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy while still introducing students to great ideas from the past.

3. **Character and Ethics Formation.** Perennialism emphasises the formation of character and moral ethics through education. The Merdeka Curriculum can align itself with this aspect by integrating learning about moral and ethical values into each subject, helping students develop a balanced personality.

4. **Parental and community involvement.** The Merdeka Curriculum emphasises the participation of parents and the community in children's education. Perennialism also supports this idea by considering education a shared responsibility between schools, parents, and society.

Although perennialism and the independent curriculum share similarities, it is essential to remember that any curriculum implementation must consider local needs and context. The Merdeka Curriculum allows for greater flexibility in learning approaches. However, criticism may arise due to concerns that too much freedom can lead to a lack of focus on core knowledge. Therefore, teachers, school administrators, and other related parties are vital in designing and implementing an effective curriculum guided by national education's vision and mission.

*Essentialism.* The philosophy of essentialism began to grow and develop since the Renaissance, with all its life activities referring to old culture [16]. Etymologically, essentialism comes from the English essential, which means the core or essence of something, and it means school, school of thought, or understanding. Essentialism is a school of educational philosophy that wants to return to old cultures as historical heritage that has proven its superiority in goodness in human life [17]. Essentialism is based on realism and idealism, which consider that a change in education is not the main thing, but the essence and value of education are what are most important. In simple terms, it can move from basic skills to more complex skills [18]. Essentialism in the educational context is a philosophical school that emphasises essential or core learning, namely basic knowledge and skills considered necessary for every individual. Several essential principles and elements of essentialism can be integrated to implement the flow of essentialism in the independent curriculum. Here are some suitable aspects, as follows:

1. **Focus on the Core Curriculum.** Essentialism emphasises core or essential learning, which includes basic knowledge such as mathematics, science, languages, and the humanities. The Merdeka Curriculum can maintain a focus on mastering literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy as the core of the curriculum.

2. **High Quality of Learning.** Essentialism emphasises the importance of high-quality learning. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, this can be interpreted as an emphasis on effective teaching methods, accurate evaluation, and providing feedback that enables continuous improvement.

3. **Results Orientation.** Essentialism tends to prioritise academic results or achievements. In the Independent Curriculum, providing freedom to learn can be directed toward achieving higher results by allowing students to focus on their interests and skills within the boundaries of the core curriculum that has been determined.

4. **Order and discipline.** Essentialism values order and discipline in the learning process. Even though the independent curriculum provides freedom of learning, this does not mean eliminating structure and order. Applying clear rules and an orderly learning environment is necessary to achieve practical learning goals.

5. **The Central Role of the Teacher.** In essentialism, teachers are critical as leaders in the learning process. Teachers can play a similar role in the Merdeka Curriculum by guiding students in understanding core material, providing guidance, and providing direction.

Integrating essentialism in the independent curriculum requires attention to local context, student needs, and current world developments. The Merdeka Curriculum's focus on developing competencies and skills aligns with the principles of essentialism. However, criticism may arise if there needs to be more clarity in determining the essential core of knowledge. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that the focus on the core curriculum recognises the need for diversification and development of students' potential by the spirit of the curriculum, which provides freedom of learning.

*Constructivism Flow.* Constructivist philosophy is a flow of philosophy that has been quite popular in recent decades. Constructivism comes from two words, namely constructivist and ism. Constructive can be interpreted as fostering, repairing, and building. Meanwhile, ism means understanding or flow [19]. The philosophy of constructivism has a basic principle, namely that all knowledge is structured not to be perceived directly by the five senses but rather by how that knowledge is interpreted in the human brain. Knowledge itself is only obtained from experiences that have already occurred [20]. According to constructivists, learning is an active process of students constructing the meaning of texts, dialogues, physical experiences, etc. Learning is also the process of assimilating and connecting experiences or material studied with the understanding that a person already has so that their knowledge is developed [21]. Constructivism is a school of educational philosophy that emphasises that students construct their knowledge through interaction with the learning environment. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, the concept of constructivism can be well integrated because it emphasises freedom of learning and developing students' potential. The following are ways in which constructivism can be by the spirit of the Independent Curriculum:

1. **Experience-Based Learning.** Constructivism emphasises learning through direct experience and active interaction with materials. In the Merdeka Curriculum, students can be given the

freedom to explore and experience concepts through learning projects, independent research, or field activities that allow them to build knowledge through real-life experiences.

2. **Active Student Participation.** Constructivism encourages students' active participation in the learning process. The Merdeka Curriculum can provide space for students to contribute to decision-making related to learning, choose topics of interest, and organise projects or assignments that suit their interests.

3. **Collaborative Learning.** Constructivism emphasises collaborative learning. The Merdeka Curriculum can facilitate learning in groups or collaborative projects, allowing students to share ideas, build understanding, and learn from each other.

4. **Formative Assessment.** Constructivism supports assessments that focus on students' understanding and development of their concepts. Merdeka Curriculum can implement formative assessments, provide constructive feedback to students, and help them understand their progress in building knowledge.

5. **The Teacher's Role as a Facilitator.** In the constructivist approach, the teacher is a facilitator or guide, helping students explore their ideas. In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers can support students on their learning journey without directing them strictly or providing guidance when needed.

Integrating constructivism in the independent curriculum can provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills, creativity, and lifelong learning skills in line with the goals of 21st-century education. This vital study is essential to ensure that the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented by the principles of constructivism, creating a learning environment that is stimulating and relevant for student development in facing the ever-changing demands of society and the world of work.

**Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy.** Ki Hajar Dewantara, known as the Father of Indonesian Education, had an educational philosophy that greatly influenced the development of the education system in Indonesia. Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy can be well integrated into the Independent Curriculum concept. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education is guidance in the life and growth of children. Ki Hajar Dewantara stated that the education

process includes three environments: family, school, and youth organisations. These three environments are called the Three Education Centers [22]. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education aims to liberate the lives of children, both physically and mentally. The free spirit theory holds that the goal of education is essentially to liberate life and the lives of children, both physically and mentally [3]. Ki Hajar Dewantara's idea related to the independent curriculum is about a learning paradigm that supports students. There is a compatibility between the independent curriculum and Ki Hajar Dewantara's conception of education. The suitability of this concept is viewed from philosophical and pedagogical aspects [23].

Ki Hajar Dewantara always emphasised that education will run well if students are free in heart, birth, mind, and energy. This is in line with the aim of education, namely to develop human beings physically and spiritually and with the nobility of their mind and body to become valuable members of society and be responsible for the welfare of the nation, homeland, and humans in general. The principle of Tamansiswa Ki Hajar Dewantara states that "the education given should be able to make humans independent." Independence here does not mean being free to do as you please; freedom here must be based on order and respect for other people's rights [3].

In the philosophical aspect, the alignment of the independent curriculum concept with Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational concept includes

1) the independent curriculum concept prioritises character development in line with the idea of education, according to Ki Hajar Dewantara, as a process of character formation;

2) The independent curriculum has a philosophical foundation based on local culture in line with one of Ki Hajar Dewantara's ideas, namely the Trikon principle, where in the aspect of continuity, it is hoped that students' attitudes will have elements of culture or cultural preservation;

3) The concept of an independent curriculum also emerged based on the desire to create happiness and character in children. This is in line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's thoughts regarding education with the Tri Rahayu

principle, which emphasises the concept of happy education (happiness in children);

4) The concept of an independent curriculum also has distinctive characteristics. These aspects of independence, freedom, and equal rights are based on Ki Hadjar Dewantara's conception of his idea known as the among system, namely educating children to become independent individuals.

Several aspects of Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy that can be adapted to the Merdeka Curriculum include:

1. Education for All. Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy emphasises that education must be available and accessible to all levels of society. With its spirit of freedom of learning, the Merdeka Curriculum can describe an inclusive approach that provides opportunities for all students to access education without barriers.

2. Active learning. Ki Hajar Dewantara prioritises an active and creative learning approach. This principle is based on the independent curriculum, which allows students to determine the learning course. Students are expected to be active participants in their learning process.

3. Character education. Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy emphasises the formation of character and morality. The Independent Curriculum can integrate character values into every aspect of learning, helping students develop balanced and responsible personalities.

4. Education as Liberation. Ki Hajar Dewantara stated that education is a tool of liberation. The Merdeka Curriculum can reflect this idea by allowing students to explore their interests, develop their potential, and become agents of change in society.

5. Parental and community involvement. Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasised the participation of parents and the community in education. The Merdeka Curriculum can create opportunities for their active involvement in student learning, creating a holistic educational environment.

Integrating Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy in the Independent Curriculum can help create an inclusive, character-oriented education that allows students to develop according to their potential and interests. This alignment can be the basis for building an education system more responsive to society's needs and dynamics.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the influence of educational philosophy schools, such as progressivism, perennialism, essentialism, constructivism, and the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, has a vital role in compiling the independent curriculum. All of these elements work together to create an education that is more inclusive, relevant, and meaningful for every individual.

The school of educational philosophy provides a theoretical foundation that accommodates the academic needs of the 21st century. It emphasises meaningful learning experiences, building knowledge through active interaction, and developing full human potential. This third stream creates the foundation for a responsive and contextual learning approach inspired by the Independent Curriculum, which gives students the freedom to learn.

On the other hand, Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, with the concept of "Tri-kaya Mangkurat," provides a profound moral and pedagogical dimension. This philosophy's ethos of service, spirit of self-development, and wisdom values are essential pillars in shaping students' character and broader educational goals.

In conclusion, the integration of educational philosophy and the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara into the Independent Curriculum creates a holistic whole. This approach not only produces an intellectually intelligent generation but also creates individuals who are competitive, creative and have strong moral values. Apart from that, the spirit of freedom of learning promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum synergises with Ki Hajar Dewantara's values of expertise and self-development, forming an educational foundation that is exciting and relevant for the nation's future.

In designing a relevant and independent educational curriculum, it is essential to consider various philosophical perspectives, especially educational philosophical schools and the thoughts of Ki Hajar Dewantara, who fought for independent and freedom-oriented education. By integrating multiple educational philosophical perspectives and paying attention to these suggestions, an academic curriculum that is independent, relevant, and oriented towards developing individual potential and freedom can

be realised. This will help create a cultured, critical generation and able to compete in the era of globalisation and technological progress.

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