

Implementation of Freedom to Learn Policy Through Democratic Teaching Practices

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ABSTRACT

This article examines philosophical and theoretical views in realizing the concept of freedom to learn which is the main issue in curriculum changes in universities. The freedom to learn policy has reaped various responses from the community, both in terms of terminology, interpretation, and implementation. The concept of freedom to learn will be studied in terms of democratic philosophy, which emphasizes equality in education. It is an acknowledged fact that there is a close relationship between democracy and education. In a democracy, education is given priority, because it is a prerequisite for survival and success in the first place. Likewise, education fosters a democratic temperament in the minds of every citizen. Democratic values such as freedom, equality, brotherly justice, individual dignity, cooperation, sharing of responsibilities etc are applied to education to make it more effective, meaningful, relevant and useful. There is an inseparable relationship between democracy and education. Democracy cannot be separated from the education spectrum. It is recognized on all sides that the muscle of democracy depends on the character and intelligence of all its citizens. Therefore, the practice of democratic teaching should be a point of emphasis in the free learning curriculum. Because democracy can function properly only if all its citizens are well educated. Democracy should provide goals for education and as such, democratic principles should be reflected in goals, curriculum, teaching methods, administration and organization, disciplines, schools, teachers, etc.

Keywords: *Democracy, Policy, Learning, Freedom Independent*

1. INTRODUCTION

The function of education in national goals is to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in the context of the intellectual life of the nation. This is reflected in the goals of national education, namely to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens. Various efforts have been made by the government in order to achieve this goal. For the level of Higher Education, it is stipulated in Law no. 12 of 2012 concerning the Implementation and Management of Higher Education. Further regulated through Presidential Regulation no. 8 of 2012 concerning the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI). Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards for Higher Education, and is technically

implemented in the 2020 Guidebook on Independent Learning-Independent Campuses.

Referring to the description above, MBKM is a reflection in developing democratic education. The aim of democratic education is to produce democratic citizens who can not only objectively understand various social, political, economic and cultural problems, but also form their own independent judgments on these complex issues. The educational process must instil in citizens a spirit of tolerance and ignite courage in belief. It should aim to create in them a passion for social justice and social service. He must equip them with the power of judgment, scientific thinking and weighing right and wrong. Education aims to enable students to become socially minded human beings who are able to manage their own affairs and live adequately with others.

The concept of democratic education, put forward by Dewey [1], in *Democracy and Education* about democratic education in educational theory and scholarship. A work originally entitled *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education* that inspires theory and

research not only in educational philosophy but also in educational scholarship more generally [2]. For a long time, “democratic education” has served as a node [3] [4] in educational theory and research, serving as a meeting place for various educational disciplines, democratic discourses and education. Democracy is interpreted as a reality and a way of life that must be introduced from the beginning of education and its values need to be practiced in educational institutions.

Education must be oriented towards developing the basic qualities of character that are essential for the continuation of democratic life [5]. Democratic education really supports maximum individual development, the curriculum in a democracy must be flexible so that it can meet diverse tastes and temperaments, talents and abilities, needs and interests of students. It seeks to stimulate his thinking and creative abilities.

Furthermore, it is important that the democratic curriculum should take into account local conditions and environmental demands [6]. The social element is highly emphasized in it. In other words, the curriculum must be adapted to social views and temperaments. There should be provisions for including skills in democratic curricula. Above all, the curriculum must be built on the principle of integration. It should not be separated into fragmented parts. These must be differentiated at a later stage to suit the diverse interests, attitudes, talents and abilities of students. In addition, it must be flexible and dynamic to suit changing times.

The main problem in the complex life of most lecture halls is teaching practice. The most popular approach that is used most often is simple behaviourism — punishment and reward. This approach never questions the knowledge claims, cultural elitism, of the material being taught. Democratic teaching focuses on teaching practices based on community building, not only on the means but on changing the direction, and purpose of, education [7]. Conducting exploratory actions to implement the so-called democratic education through six themes: fostering relationships, empowering students, teaching and using democratic skills, democratic educational structures, democratic teacher praxis, and managing barriers.

This article seeks to examine the implementation of the free learning policy within the framework of democratic education in terms of philosophical and practical teaching practices.

2. METHODS

This study takes the starting point of an interpretive understanding that the reality of freedom to learn is built through discourses, understood in terms of the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe [8]. Discourse is a system of meaning and value including the linguistic exchanges and actions in which these

exchanges are embedded. This definition recognizes that the existence of material reality is independent of any system of social relations and that humans give meaning to these through "certain discursive configurations" [3]. Thus, it is assumed that democratic education can be built on political and/or educational data. For this reason, the meaning of data related to freedom to learn is idiosyncratically constructed in relation to ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions of democratic education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational innovation and reform are an ongoing process that will never truly be completed. This has led to intensive discussion, not only about the effectiveness of the current higher education system but also about reforming almost all elements of education. The success of higher education depends on the "literacy" of students. In particular, teaching and learning methods have been - and still are - questioned, and the articulated demands for creating a higher education climate and distinct learning environment are still poorly reflected. Therefore, the term literacy needs to be expanded to include aspects such as "political literacy" or "democratic literacy", which means the qualifications of students for their future role as citizens. In this context, the role of universities in the qualification of future citizens who are responsible and participatory in a democratic society is increasingly felt.

In general, critical and independent thinking is a prerequisite for participation in democratic processes and educational institutions. Likewise, it is likely to see a growing recognition, on the part of political and social forces, and of public opinion in general, of the importance of the school system in creating responsible and conscious citizens, and in building democratic societies open to change. Educating young people in the spirit of democracy and preparing them for their future roles as active citizens has become the mandate of a democratic education system.

The policy of independent learning can be interpreted as a reflection of efforts to develop democratic learning. In fact, this is a mandate of the National Education System Law which has not been reflected in actual teaching practice, so that the spirit of responsible and aware citizens has not been realized authentically. Therefore, the discourse related to freedom of learning is an arena in actualizing democratic practices.

A. Understanding Freedom to Learn in the Perspective of Democratic Education

Approaches in democratic education can be viewed into three distinct groups with different conceptions of the relationship between education and politics. The first approach is education for democracy [9] [12]. This perspective interprets democracy as a universal normative imperative and education as an “instrument”

to achieve this goal. The logic is that education can contribute to the future improvement of society. Citizen education is a curricular goal (and sometimes a curricular subject) embedded in the education system. Educational policy is directed at the conditions and requirements for students to master elements of democratic character (that is, knowledgeable and rational citizens). Curriculum policies are deliberative and/or participatory oriented which emphasize the need for more deliberation and active citizenship. An example of this convergence is the curriculum for civics studies in British Columbia in which students “individually and with others discuss citizenship issues — local to global — for the purpose of becoming empowered decision makers in civic action” [10]. Education is also expected to be an essential “tool” for social mobility.

The second approach is education in democracy [11]. This approach, defined by Levinson as a situation in which “adults” democratically legitimize control over education in a democracy [12]. Both democracy and education are instrumental rather than normative. The logic built is that democracy is not a normative imperative but a political system that effectively secures elite rule (elitism) or individual freedom. Education must be free from moral aspirations and the need to respond to the individual demands of citizens [13]. Choice, standardization, and accountability policies, such as Sweden’s “Choices in Schools,” the US “General Core State Standards,” or the International Program for International Student Assessment, can be found across many countries and levels of education. However, democratic educators are critical of this approach. The individualist and rationalist epistemology underlying this policy is challenged by intersubjective knowledge constructions such as those encountered in Dewey’s thinking [1] [9]. It is also argued that, under the appearance of normative neutrality, it does indeed create an alternative normative framework based on individualism and competition. Furthermore, while these policies may function in aggregate or elitist democratic systems, there is a clear academic consensus that, on the whole, they do not attempt to address democratic principles or goals.

The third approach is what Biesta and Lawy [9] define as education through democracy. This approach appears to be the preferred framework for most democratic educators. Intellectuals are involved in participatory, deliberative, multicultural, critical agonistic activities and share the same view of the benefits of democracy. This approach differs in conceptualizing the relationship between education and democracy. As already mentioned, the education approach to democracy conceptualizes education as a tool for future democracy, and education in a democratic approach understands education and democracy to be mutually independent. On the other hand, in education through a democratic approach, education and

democracy are imagined to accommodate both of them together [14]. Here education policy-making is conceptualized through a democratic ethos that involves community members in the decision-making process.

Philosophically, the freedom to learn Policy can be realized through the three approaches. However, as a political and educational conception, there needs to be an understanding formulated in the space of freedom by adhering to social responsibility. This comprehensive approach enables innovation and experimentation in educational policy. This can be interpreted in the Freedom of Learning policy.

B. Teaching Practices of Freedom to learn Through Democratic Education

Recommendations for the practice of democratic education are also included in the two approaches mentioned above. It should be noted here that, because education in a democratic approach, understands education and democracy independently, there are few or no recommendations for practice associated with this approach. In contrast, the educational approach to democracy can be found in six pro-democracy educational discourses and has been very successful in influencing educational practice around the world. From this perspective, practical proposals define the qualities of a democratic citizen and examine pedagogies that might better contribute to the learning of these qualities. Students here are citizens in the process, getting prepared with the knowledge and skills needed to emerge as democratic citizens. Specific pedagogies and curriculum areas are recommended here as long as they are considered effective in promoting this democratic learning. In this case, results from empirical research are often used to identify relevant pedagogies.

The curriculum is structured with the aim of promoting political knowledge and critical thinking [15]. Deliberative democratic educators recommend the teaching and learning of deliberation [16], problem solving, and communication skills through controversial issues [10]. Participatory democracy recommends that students need to learn participatory skills Opportunities to participate in classroom and school governance structures, in community service activities, as well as simulations and games have been shown to contribute to this goal. Multicultural democratic educators argue that students have the opportunity to engage with their own culture and other cultures [2]. Critical democratic educators aim to study social problems so that students can gain knowledge to uncover structures of domination [10], and work with communities to reduce inequality [4]. Agonistic democratic educators recommend educating political emotions [2], and to help students understand the difference between political and moral claim in the approach to education through democracy, “Students have the opportunity to learn as part of a

community where they have a voice and can participate in making decisions with one another". Students act as de facto citizens, and democratic learning is carried out through democratic participation with education and politics understood as interrelated [9]. In this perspective, democratic participation is educative and education is expected to give birth to new possibilities for democracy. What is important is not the curricular goals that are left open, but the pedagogical experience that is also considered political.

Only three of the discourses identified made explicit proposals for education through democracy. Child-centred or student-centred pedagogy, while once recognized by consensus as a clear example of democratic education, is now taking on a contested role in defining the meaning of democratic education [9]. In addition, other proposals for education through democracy have been put forward. Postcolonial multiculturalists maintain the need to create opportunities so that students can engage with epistemology in the process of reconstructing the relationship between knowing and being. Participatory democratic educators advocate action-centred pedagogies that offer real opportunities for democratic participation. Examples can be curriculum code development [9] and community learning [6]. Agonistic democracy educators recommend creating channels for the expression of political dissent [2], for the singularization of subjectivity and for the political articulation of students and teachers. The logic here is that educational institutions are also political spaces and therefore places where political discourses and alliances can emerge [14].

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this review indicate an opportunity for further academic discussion on education policy. With few exceptions, there is a clear consensus about the democratic deficit in education in the Free Learning policy and about the democratic value of education through the democratic process. Education policies can aim to generate opportunities for participatory decision-making processes and explore their potential impact on existing education policies. The lack of policy discussion in this area may be due to the commitment of agonistic democracy educators to dissent, and to view democracy as a way out of institutionalization.

Theoretical maps are useful for pedagogical and curriculum studies. This review shows that there are a number of pedagogies based on trans figurative and antagonistic multicultural discourse that have not been investigated empirically. Discussion of controversies, conflicts, or problems, student participation in decision-making processes, and strengthening of relations between educational institutions and society, appear to be key features for democratic educational practice. However, this review also shows how various pedagogies

that are dominantly recognized as democratic education (e.g., activities that encourage critical thinking, deliberative pedagogy, participatory simulation) are based on controversial ontological, epistemological, and ethical claims and are, therefore, vulnerable to critics.

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