

## Ki Hadjar Dewantara's View on Freedom to Learn in His Relationship with Character Improvement

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### Abstract

The development of an intellectually curious and morally upright next generation is one of Indonesia's stated educational objectives. The principle of "freedom of learning" empowers both educators and their pupils to shape the educational system as they see fit. Due to the current emphasis on information rather than competence in Indonesian education, the goal of independent learning is to provide an enjoyable educational experience for both students and instructors. Personal growth in accordance with Indonesian national principles is another focus of Merdeka Belajar. Does education aim to bring about change and improve the environment, as Ki Hadjar Dewantara believes it does, or is it primarily focused on fostering student growth? Starting with bettering the learning system and learning processes, promoting freedom of learning is one way to put the ideals of the nation's personality creators into practice. We think that by allowing people more freedom to study, we can all contribute to making the world a better place.

**Keywords:** *Freedom to Learn; Character Education; Ki Hadjar Dewantara*

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## Introduction

Indonesia was first introduced to Western education by the Dutch in the early 19th century. At the end of the 18th century after 1848, education was given individually. Outside Java, there were already special schools for Christian children (Horohiung, 2016; Sultani & Kristanti, 2020). However, schools with an orderly structure in the education system were only implemented after 1850 (Adi Putra et al., 2022). However, the purpose of its establishment was not to meet the indigenous need for education but to train some people for the benefit of the Dutch government (Syharuddin & Susanto, 2019). In the early 20th century, the Dutch government began to provide concern about learning to Indonesian children. However, this education is intended for the upper class and only in Dutch lower schools, which continue at the Java Jan Doctor and civil service schools (Sunarso, 2020). The purpose of education and teaching aims to produce intelligent humans but does not increase the spirit of nationhood. Indigenous children are given education to be used as employees with the influence of Western culture so that the mindset of the educated Indonesian nation also becomes like children in Western countries so that indigenous people need a great sense of nationality (Samho & yasunari, 2013).

Being well-versed in the subject matter is essential for instructors, since they play a pivotal role in imparting knowledge to pupils (Alfiyanto, 2022; Alfiyanto et al., 2021; Alfiyanto & Hidayati, 2022; Sopian, 2016). The "Free Learning" Movement, which promotes intellectual liberty, was recently introduced by Nadiem Makarim, the Minister of Culture and Education. An enjoyable environment for educators, students, and parents is fostered via independent learning (Khoirul, 2020). Teachers and students should be able to think freely as a result of learning freedom, which should lead to innovative ways of presenting course materials to pupils. Because they are

encouraged to think outside the box and be creative while studying, children are also encouraged to work independently (Iqbal et al., 2023). In keeping with the principle of self-directed learning advocated by Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture, the country also boasts a legendary figure in the realm of education: Ki Hadjar Dewantara, sometimes referred to as "the father of education" for the way in which his ideas helped to organize and solidify Indonesia's educational system (Widyastuti, 2021).

The development of an intellectually curious and morally upright next generation is one of Indonesia's stated educational objectives. Still, many issues remain, such as the emergence of bullying and violence inside the educational system, and cheating is also a problem. This is all because the proper learning system has not been put in place. Everyone must pitch in since this is a group effort, and everyone must recognize the importance of education (Firmansyah et al., 2021).

According to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the foundation of education is the notion of independence. This implies that people are granted the freedom to pursue their life according to the rules set by society, as bestowed upon them by God Almighty. It is essential that students have an open mind, boundless energy, and a carefree demeanor. To ensure that foreign nations do not control the Indonesian country, a strong sense of independence is always necessary. Since punishment and compulsion stifle pupils' freedom of thought and expression, Ki Hadjar Dewantara is known as the among system (Amaliyah, 2021). After setting this instance aside, the author makes an effort to examine it from Ki Hadjar Dewantara's perspective. First, the study defines independent learning; second, it discusses Ki Hadjar Dewantara's views on learning; and third, it analyzes Ki Hadjar Dewantara's views on learning freedom and how it relates to the evolution of character education. All of these explanations are very helpful. The purpose of this study is to analyze Ki Hadjar Dewantara's ideas on autonomous learning and how they pertain to the advancement of character education in Indonesia (Putri & Akhwani, 2023).

Freedom to learn Ki Hajar Dewantara is a learning concept given to indigenous children with techniques to provide independence or expertise so that they can freely develop creation, taste, and charisma in the learning process that is by the culture found in Indonesia so that learning outcomes can increase the sense of nationality of indigenous children. The goal is that pribumi children do not neglect their obligations and obligations to God, their country, society, or themselves (Berkamsyah, 2020). Looking at the statement above, the author is interested in transporting this case because it fits the current learning situation in which Nadiem Makariem recommends launching the learning system "Merdeka Belajar," which is freedom of thought. With the concept of Freedom of Learning, students are given the freedom to carry out education of interest by the talents possessed by students. In its application, the teacher has a very meaningful position where the teacher accompanies students in the educational process so that the development of these talents can be more planned. This concept has similarities with Merdeka Belajar by Ki Hajar Dewantara until researchers are interested in raising the View of Ki Hadjar Dewantara on Freedom of Learning in Linkages to Character Improvement.

## **Method**

This study relies on literature reviews backed by appropriate references. This study delves into primary and secondary materials that pertain to Ki Hadjar Dewantara's ideas on autonomous learning and how they might be used to the advancement of character education. In an effort to communicate the ideas behind Ki Hadjar Dewantara's autonomous learning department, the findings of the literature review are subsequently condensed into a number of key elements and offered as a descriptive analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Explanation of Freedom to Learn**

In his remarks honoring National Teachers' Day, the Minister of Culture and Education elaborated on the idea of "Free Learning," which he defined as the liberty to think and create one's own teaching methods. The role of the educator is central to the concept of free thinking. Students will not be affected unless it occurs among teachers. The classroom is the site of student learning during this period. The next generation of students will have more opportunities to study outside of the traditional classroom setting, where they may engage in meaningful discussions with their teachers on topics such as public speaking, social graces, creativity, and innovation, as well as how to better listen to and understand classroom lectures. The freedom to study autonomously and imaginatively is the main point of freedom to learn. There is an expectation that instructors would put their students' needs above their own professional interests and that they will serve as mobilizers to ensure that their pupils have access to the greatest resources (Sherly et al., 2021).

Teachers still have to stand in front of their classes and lecture, which may become old fast. On top of that, ranking is still an integral part of Indonesia's educational system. The goal of this issue is to differentiate between very bright and average kids. And that's not all: when kids don't rank, parents may feel pressured. Students in Indonesia should not be weighed down by a rigid value system or rankings, according to the idea behind the autonomous learning movement, which seeks to make school more engaging. We think that by encouraging students to study on their own, we can produce graduates who are morally upright, professionally equipped, and prepared to make a difference in the world. Additionally, the Minister of Culture and Education has just announced a policy shift on the right to free education, which is as follows (Khoirul, 2020; Sopacua & Fadli, 2022):

- a. The United States Standardized Test for Basic Skills (USBN) will be replaced by an evaluation administered by the school. It may be done in a variety of ways, including standardised assessments, portfolios, and assignments (individual or group projects, essays, etc.). To allow for more autonomy in the calculation of learning outcomes by both schools and instructors.
- b. A character survey and basic competency evaluation including literacy components—specifically, the ability to think about and use language—will replace the National Examination (UN). One definition of numeracy is the ability to think mathematically. Learners, mutual aid, variety, and bullying are all aspects of personality. Students in the intermediate school years (e.g., grades 4, 8, and 11) are subjected to this challenge in an effort to motivate educators and educational institutions to raise the bar for student achievement. Worldwide initiatives like PISA and TIMSS are part of the system.
- c. The RPP for the Simplification of Learning. According to Nadiem Makarim, RPP consists of a single park. Teachers should be able to devote more time to lesson planning and assessment if administrative tasks are reduced.
- d. The zoning system is enlarged (excluding the 3T region) for the admission of additional pupils (PPDB). Additional chances are provided by the PPDB system to students who choose the affirmation and accomplishment route. The exact sizes and zoning areas are to be decided by the local governments. Local governments should also take additional measures, such as redistributing instructors to schools that are short-staffed, to ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality education.

### **Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Thoughts on Education**

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's given name is Soewardi Soerjaningrat, and he was born on May 2, 1889, in Yogyakarta. He was born to RM Soerjaningrat and the late Empress Sri Paku Alam III; he was their fourth son. Sunan Kalijaga's lineage included the heir palace of Kadilangu, and his mother was one of their daughters (Nur Hidayat, 2006). Raden Mas Suwardi Suryaningrat was Ki Hadjar Dewantara's name while he was a kid and young man, but he never used it after being deported

to the Netherlands. It was a symbol of solidarity with the people who had fought for it. He achieved the pinnacle of his career as a writer and politician in the late 19th century with the publication of "Als ik eens Nederlander was," a widely read pamphlet that satirized the Hidia administration of the Netherlands (Wiryopranoto et al., 2020).

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's mission is to instill a love of learning in the next generation. The key to breaking free of colonial bondage lies in educational initiatives aimed at youth (Hendratmoko et al., 2017). Avoiding ignorance is possible via learning based on national culture. Colonial education did not teach students to think critically, but rather to be docile and reliant on chance. A free, independent, hardworking earth putra circle must be prepared as a first step toward the desire to be independent. The next generation has to be ready to take the reins and become Mandiri, a country that values independence and whose citizens are well-educated and self-reliant (Marihandono, 2017).

Education, according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, fosters students' development, is a means to an end (transformation), and may serve the community. In such a situation, it is anticipated that children can contribute to the betterment of the home, the neighborhood, and the larger community. Because learning has traditionally been considered a means to enhance IQ, rather than a means to balance IQ with behavior and skill, it stands to reason that it should also boost self-confidence and the talents already present in an individual. Conversely, pupils look up to teachers, who are pivotal individuals in the educational system, and they are supposed to put their needs first. Teaching and learning, according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, should also be able to enhance processes, particularly those centered on compassion, sharpening, and nurturing. Professionalism in the classroom and great interpersonal skills are demanded of all educators. Teachers also need professional communication and behavior skills while interacting with parents.

While teaching, a teacher should be able to uphold the tenets of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, which include "ing ngarsa sung tuladha" (provide examples up front), "ing madya mangun karsa" (create ideals), and "tut wuri handayani" (explore and support it) (Oktavianto, 2020). The same is true in educating, namely the same description between teachers and educators, so educating is "humanization." This means that educating is a process of humanizing humans, with a learning system expected to raise the level of life and lead to a better transformation (Sugiarta et al., 2019). In addition, Ki Hadjar Dewantara has two ideas on education. The first is the "tri center of Education," which holds that children' education is influenced by three different contexts: their home, school, and community. The third point is that students' surroundings have a role in shaping their character via education. The second is the among system, a kind of education that emphasizes self-reliance and a strong sense of family. "Tut Wuri Handayani" is the name given to the system that ranks the methods according to their applicability (Wiryopranoto et al., 2020).

These three educational institutions aim to foster future national leaders with the qualities of ing ngarsa sang tuladha, mangun karsa, and tut wuri handayani. Ki Hadjar Dewantara aspires to produce leaders of the future who are self-disciplined, resilient, and beneficial to society and the natural world. If these three traits are present in future leaders, they will respect their authority and not misuse it. Because so many of Indonesia's leaders have exploited their positions of power for personal gain, this is an issue that the country as a whole must address.

Humans are endowed with the liberty to govern their life according to the provisions established in society, according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara's theory of independence-based learning. The ultimate goal of education is to help people reach their full potential as individuals, meeting their material and psychological demands in harmony with the natural world. For Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the goal of education is to develop one's mind and body. According to the original intent of learning, which was to achieve inner and outward peace, contentment, or rahayu (the condition of a person experiencing happiness in their inner existence), it follows that education is a means to achieve spiritual autonomy (Sholihah, 2021). Learning, according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, is a major means by which the spiritual values possessed by cultured people can be transmitted to each new generation as a whole, serving as a kind of "maintenance" as well as an

aim toward "advancing" and "developing" culture, which ultimately leads to the fullness of human existence (Suparlan, 2016). Taman Indria is the beginning point for teaching children traditional handicrafts such as hats (makuto), puppets, ketupat wrappers, and ornamental items made from grass, branches, flowers, and other natural materials. The aim of this is to make sure that kids don't grow up apart from their community.

Following this line of thinking, Ki Hadjar Dewantara made some remarks regarding the meaning of learning. According to him, it is all about helping kids develop their ethics (their inner strength and personality), intellect (their brains), and bodies (taman siswa). The goal is to help them live in harmony with the world around them, so that they can achieve perfection in all aspects of life. In addition to acquiring new information, Ki Hadjar Dewantara argues that learning entails considering the interplay between one's own taste, generosity, and originality. So, to rephrase, the expectation is that learning can mold human traits into whole people. Aside from that, "personality" is a straightforward concept in the study of ethics; the English word "character" signifies "nature" in this context. Character education is something that Ki Hadjar Dewantara has thought about extensively. Honing one's cognitive abilities is very beneficial as it paves the way for the development of moral principles that are essential to the actualization of one's character and identity (soul grounded in spiritual law). People want to maintain control over their initial urges and behaviors, whether they be aggressive, cruel, furious, miserly, or any number of other negative traits (Mudana, 2019).

In the beginning of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's learning development strategy is the idea that the next generation must be instilled with an independent spirit. This is because the independence of the Indonesian nation can only be defended by those who have an independent spirit, and children need both national education and independent education to fight for this independence, both physically and psychologically. Naturally, independence is robust enough to withstand one's own weight. In addition, the pursuit of knowledge is an endeavor to disseminate the spirituality inherent in the lives of cultured individuals to all cultures, therefore preserving and enhancing cultures in service to the sanctity of human existence (Samho & yasunari, 2013). Third, as education is a means to rebirth, it's essential that students keep an eye on issues pertaining to the state of the environment and the periods in which we live. A pure mind, characterized by action consistent with thought, a refined palate, and the ability to control one's desires—a harmony among creativity, flavor, and altruism—are prerequisites for recognizing the inherent nature of noble instruction.

### **Freedom to Learn in the Thought of Ki Hadjar Dewantara and its Relationship with the Development of Character Education**

To help students reach their full potential as individuals and contributing members of society, education may be seen as a map for their personal development and evolution. Learning that promotes student growth, education aimed at achieving change, and community utility are all aspects of free education that Ki Hadjar Dewantara considers. Since education has mostly focused on enhancing IQ rather than fostering a well-rounded set of behaviors, attitudes, character traits, and life skills, learning may also boost self-confidence and innate ability. When students' mental foundations remain unaltered by environmental influences, they are operating from a place of inherent qualities. Infants who have just entered this world are like blank sheets of paper that no one has made a mark on. It follows that teachers are free to use the white paper as they see fit (Nuri, 2016).

The Minister of Education and Culture's proposal for educational freedom is consistent with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's vision for education in Indonesia. The core of free learning is the freedom of thinking for both students and instructors. This promotes the development of an independent character since both groups are able to learn from their surroundings. Up until now, both students and instructors have relied on modules derived from printed materials. Because they are used to studying and expanding their knowledge depending on what is in their surroundings, students with character may be formed by applying this freedom of learning to Indonesia's learning system. The

goal of this kind of unrestricted education is to foster environmentally conscious actions on the part of students, who gain self-assurance, competence, and the ability to quickly adjust to new circumstances via hands-on experience in the field. Caring, competent, and adaptable conduct is required wherever one goes, thus it's important to cultivate these attitudes so one may become an asset to their surroundings (Muhajir et al., 2021).

Early, national standardized school exams were substituted with school-based evaluations to allow instructors to evaluate pupils, one of four new policies in autonomous learning introduced by the Ministry of Culture and Education. The second modification was the adoption of a basic competency exam that includes surveys addressing reading, numeracy, and character. Third, let's streamline the RPP system to allow instructors to devote more time to each kid. The fourth step in creating educational equity is to broaden the zoning system's admissions criteria. Ki Hadjar Dewantara's mission to develop an appreciation for the harmony of form, flavor, and altruism is consistent with this strategy. In years past, the national exam was a constant source of anxiety for everyone involved: students, instructors, and parents. Not only that, but answer keys, which included question codes, would pop up for sale at different costs, threatening kids who were unable to take the test with the prospect of not graduating from high school. Schools may still use the rules to assess pupils, but the present policy does not tamper with instructors' and students' freedom of learning by allowing them to take national exams. The first assessment is a personality test that covers topics like diversity awareness and helping one another out. After that, pupils will be encouraged to take pride in their community and put Pancasila principles into action. The second kind of literacy assessment is the use of reasoning and language-based questionnaires. Students are encouraged to use appropriate and proper Indonesian while reasoning and describing in this topic. Third, students are prompted to think critically while addressing questions in numeracy surveys that include mathematical explanations. These views are pertinent to Ki Hadjar Dewantara's theories of the triangular area of education that pupils get, which consists of the home, the school, and the community. All three of these domains shape pupils' personalities for the better via education (Khoirul, 2020).

Personality tests, reading, and numeracy were the foundation of assessments until teachers had a significant impact. Personality development is a shared duty of schools and educators; one way to do this is in the classroom, where students learn to value and take initiative (Lickona T, 2009). Educators are also required to uphold the principle of Ki Hadjar Dewantara while teaching their pupils. To be more specific, whereas *mangun karsa* is used to develop principles, *tut wuri handayani* is used to explore and support them. In order for educators to better the system, they should educate their kids with a family spirit linked with nature and independence, which is the slogan of Ki Hadjar Dewantara. Simplifying the RPP system to allow instructors to devote more time to pupils is the most recent policy of the Minister of Culture and Education about freedom of learning. This is in keeping with what Ki Hadjar Dewantara has said: that classroom instruction suffers when instructors are preoccupied with bureaucratic red tape rather than their pupils. Professionalism and the ability to connect with parents are two expectations placed on teachers (Khoirul, 2020).

Initiated by the Minister of Culture and Education, the policy of autonomous learning is pertinent to the growth of personality learning. So long, education has focused on imparting facts and figures rather than developing students' character or competence. Personality learning may be enhanced by the use of measures that promote students' independence, as outlined by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, who views learning as a cultural process. Secondly, it molds pupils into people who are proud of their country but also curious about what's happening in the world. Third, encourage each kid to become a trailblazer. The fourth tenet of education is that it is a way to cultivate the inherent strengths and potential of each learner (Wiryopranoto et al., 2020). For the sake of producing an intellectually gifted and morally upright next generation, it is imperative that this conduct be inculcated throughout the educational system. The future of Indonesia rests in the

hands of today's youth; thus, it is imperative that parents, educators, and students work together in harmony to produce a better generation.

## Conclusion

From what we have seen so far, it seems that granting students more autonomy in their educational pursuits is the first and most important step toward producing a new generation that is resilient, intelligent, creative, and shaped by the principles of the Indonesian people. Second, Ki Hadjar Dewantara's ideas on developing one's capacity to think critically about the interplay between form, flavor, and karsa are relevant to the concept of autonomous study. So long, education has placed a greater emphasis on knowledge-based components; however, educational freedom allows both students and instructors more leeway to develop their abilities. Thirdly, one way to cultivate personality learning is to allow oneself the flexibility to learn. Students are encouraged to actively incorporate the principles of the Indonesian personality into their daily lives and surrounding regions when given the chance to study. Achieving an ideal education in accordance with Indonesian national ideals requires mutual understanding and commitment.

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