

Analysis of Existentialist Philosophy in The Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Existentialism philosophy relates to the concept of Merdeka learning contained in the Merdeka curriculum. Understanding in this philosophical school emphasizes the freedom of individual humans in making choices and being responsible for their choices. This understanding aligns with the concept of Merdeka learning, which emphasizes the freedom of students to develop their potential and talents. This study aims to describe the analysis of existentialism philosophy in the Merdeka curriculum. The method used is a literature review with a qualitative approach. The data sources used come from books and research journal articles relevant to the topics raised in this study, namely existentialism, curriculum, learning, and education. The study results show that the concept of Merdeka learning initiated by Ki Hadjar Dewantara strongly connects with the philosophy of existentialism. Freedom to learn and existentialism aim to form an individual with complete freedom. In terms of the planning, implementation, and assessment aspects of the Merdeka curriculum, it can be seen that the concept of Merdeka learning encourages an understanding of the ability and speed of each student to find the truth and learn something while remaining responsible for what they have chosen.

Keywords: philosophy; existentialism; curriculum

ABSTRAK

Filsafat eksistensialisme memiliki keterkaitan dengan konsep Merdeka Belajar yang termuat dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. Paham dalam aliran filsafat ini menekankan pada kebebasan individu manusia dalam menentukan pilihan dan bertanggung jawab atas pilihannya. Paham tersebut sejalan dengan konsep merdeka belajar yang menekankan pada kebebasan peserta didik dalam mengembangkan potensi dan bakat dalam dirinya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan bagaimana infusi filsafat eksistensialisme dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. Metode yang digunakan adalah telaah kajian pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Sumber data yang digunakan berasal dari buku dan artikel jurnal penelitian yang memiliki relevansi dengan topik yang diangkat dalam penelitian ini, yaitu eksistensialisme, kurikulum, pembelajaran, dan pendidikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep merdeka belajar yang digagas oleh Ki Hadjar Dewantara memiliki keterkaitan yang kuat dengan filsafat eksistensialisme. Merdeka belajar dan eksistensialisme sama-sama bertujuan membentuk suatu individu yang memiliki kebebasan penuh atas dirinya sendiri. Ditinjau dari aspek perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan penilaian Kurikulum Merdeka, dapat diketahui bahwa konsep Merdeka Belajar mendorong pemahaman atas kemampuan dan kecepatan setiap peserta didik dalam menemukan kebenaran dan mempelajari sesuatu dengan tetap bertanggung jawab atas apa yang mereka pilih.

Kata kunci: kurikulum; pendidikan; filsafat post modernisme

INTRODUCTION

Education is a series of systems or processes that aim to make human beings rational and moral in all aspects of life (Sujana, 2019). As a series of systems, several main components make education a unified whole, including curriculum, teachers, educational goals, learning methods, and others. The curriculum is a component that has an essential role in implementing education so that it can run smoothly in line with the goals set (Fajri, 2019). The curriculum is one of the components in aspects of educational planning that functions as a support for educational goals (Santika, 2020). The curriculum is also a guide in implementing learning and teaching at all types and levels of education (Setiyadi, Revyta, & Fadhilah, 2020).

Curriculum development as a means of achieving educational goals is equipped with a philosophy related to the outlook on life of a nation. The philosophical foundation in curriculum development is intended to help solve educational problems based on philosophical thoughts (Mubarok et al., 2021). The philosophical foundation is also helpful to help determining where and how education is structured to achieve national education goals (Almuzani & Tasman, 2020). In general, four primary schools of philosophy are used in developing a curriculum: perennial, essentialism, progressive, and reconstructionism.

The main philosophical stream used in curriculum development in Indonesia is the philosophy of Pancasila. This flow is a philosophical school formed from the shared aspirations of the Indonesian nation. It contains noble values that have been adhered to by the Indonesian people for a long time (Samadi, 2019). The existence of the Pancasila philosophy in the curriculum in Indonesia has been maintained since the first time Indonesia developed its educational curriculum. However, one observes the development of the curriculum in Indonesia. In that case, it also adopts other philosophical schools besides Pancasila philosophy, one of which is the Merdeka curriculum initiated in 2020. When observed, an existentialist philosophy also appears in the Merdeka curriculum.

Existentialism philosophy is a philosophical school born from Jean-Paul Sartre's thoughts. The flow developed in France and Germany in the 20th century. According to Sartre, humans are free beings, meaning that humans have the right to determine what to do and can be responsible for their actions (Rende, 2021). Existentialism philosophy is a school contrary to the flow of materialism or idealism. This school views humans as a totality and emphasizes concrete and existential experiences. Metaphysically, existentialism views humans as imperfect and can be improved through self-awareness by applying principles and standards of personality development. Axiologically, existentialism views that principles and standards that vary between individuals are free to choose and take (Rusdi, 2019).

Existentialist philosophy has its view of the education curriculum. Existentialism assesses curriculum based on assessing whether the curriculum can contribute to individual search for meaning and give rise to a level of personal sensitivity called "widespread awakening." The curriculum, in the view of existentialist philosophy, emphasizes individuals as a source of knowledge who must

be able to understand the lives of themselves and others. The existence of the school of existentialism philosophy also encourages the emergence of personal education theories that focus on the development of students according to their respective abilities and speed in learning something (Dadoklaei & Golpayegani, 2021).

The school of existentialism philosophy has relevance to the idea of Merdeka learning in the Merdeka curriculum, where the Merdeka curriculum is structured to give students the freedom to explore their potential and talents (Hakim & Fauziati, 2022). Ki Hadjar Dewantara first initiated the concept of Merdeka learning. This concept was first used in a school founded by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the Taman Siswa School. The concept of independence also encourages students to become individuals who can survive and be responsible for themselves (Marisyah, Firman, & Rusdinal, 2019). Three main points are held in applying Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of independence, namely being independent, not dependent on other people, and being able to manage himself (Wardhana, Leo, & Veronika, 2020).

Referring to the explanation above, the study of the existence of existentialist philosophy in the Merdeka curriculum is essential to study. This study aims to describe the analysis of existentialism philosophy in the Merdeka curriculum. Therefore, the question that is the core of the problem in this research is how the existence of existentialism philosophy is in the Merdeka curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existentialism is one of the understandings, teachings, or philosophical schools that see everything in existence. Existence refers to a view of the way humans exist in the world. Humans in existentialism are seen as subjects and objects and are different from other materials in the world, such as plants and animals. The school of existentialism philosophy is adopted in educational philosophy by outlining the implications of education in existentialist schools. Several figures who initiated the school of existentialism in education include Harold Soderquist, George Kneller, and Van Cleve Morris. Existentialism is also a way of seeing and thinking about life in the world as a priority given to an individual. Existentialism in education focuses on the view that education encourages people to make and be responsible for their choices.

Existentialism Education

Existentialism education provides criticism of learning activities that focus more on group learning. That is because some individuals still feel anxious or lonely. Learning situations that focus on groups can cause individuals to sacrifice their identity because they are required to think the same as group agreements. Suppose a person has freedom in choosing where to join and participate in a group, and there are no rules on how the learning situation should be formed. In that case, the identity or authenticity of an individual's personality can be maintained (Sherman, 2020).

In addition, existentialism education also adheres to the notion that education should be able to foster the intensity of awareness of students. Education should raise awareness of existentialist learners as a single subjectivity. That is, education must

recognize that students are individuals who are free to make their choices. In addition, existentialism education also emphasizes that students must be able to take responsibility in determining the life they live and create a definition of themselves. Existentialism education emphasizes individual reflection or deep personal reflection on student commitment. Therefore, existentialism education also understands that the speed of learning should be adjusted to the speed of each student, and students can be directed in learning to prioritize the interests they want to achieve (Brady, 2019).

There are two periods in existentialism education: the pre-existentialist period and the existentialist moment period. The pre-existentialist period is a period in childhood when children are not yet aware of the human condition, do not have an awareness of their own identity, are not aware of their destiny, are not yet in puberty, are at the basic education level, and have skills that are basic human skills, such as reading, arithmetic, writing, physical skills, communication, and social skills. While the existentialist moment period is when the child has realized the meaning of his presence in the world, realizes his responsibilities in the world, experiences existentialist moments, and begins to experience them when he is from junior high school to university level (Rohmah, 2019).

Existentialism Curriculum

The existentialist view of the curriculum emphasizes that it should broadly provide individual freedom to students and requires students to ask critical questions, search for the problems being studied, and draw conclusions based on what they find. The study of art and humanities are the two primary studies that receive significant attention in the existentialism curriculum. That is because the arts and humanities are necessary sciences so that humans can introspect and understand their existence. Students must be motivated to gain knowledge and do what they need (Sadulloh, 2018).

The existentialism curriculum places students as actors who can give meaning to appropriated subjects by incorporating them into themselves and interpreting them according to their projects. The existentialist view of the curriculum aligns with the principle that any experience gained at school should evoke one's perspective of life. As in art subjects, for example, the purpose of these subjects in the view of existentialism is not to imitate the chosen artist's style but to stimulate students' aesthetic expression. Existentialism holds that teachers should be able to stimulate the desire to learn to express aesthetics. In addition, the teacher also provides a variety of creative media so that students can create art objects that come from experiences they have had (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2020).

Existentialism Learning

Existentialism holds that teachers cannot be equated with instructors. Existentialism learning emphasizes that knowledge should not be delegated to students but offered. The recommended learning method in the understanding of

educational existentialism is the method of learning dialogue and playing roles or drama. The dialogue method is considered appropriate because it contains interpersonal conversations. At the same time, the role-playing method is considered appropriate because students can imagine playing the role they want and represent their experiences from similar situations (van Kessel, 2020).

The relationship between the teacher and students can also be formed through the dialogue method so that the knowledge imparted by the teacher to students can become part of their personal experience. This situation illustrates how existentialism views this world as ownership between one individual and another. In existentialism learning, the teacher also encourages students to find their answers to the questions asked. The teacher must stimulate the intensity of students' awareness by encouraging the search for personal truth through questions about the meaning of life. That is important because the intensity of awareness is not only a teacher's responsibility but of students as learners. Such awareness involves believing in individual existence's ethical and aesthetic dimensions (Rumianowska, 2020).

The role of the teacher in educational existentialism is also considered the same as that of parents in a family. Teachers should position themselves as parents of their students by understanding each of the various characteristics of students. The teacher must be able to guide them so that later, students can make their own decisions and take full responsibility for their choices. In addition, as a parent figure at school, teachers should not discriminate between their students based on academic ability alone. Existentialism also emphasizes that teachers must give freedom to students to express their opinions and discuss each student's perspective on a problem raised. The attention and freedom given by the teacher can encourage students' self-confidence in making their choices and shows the teacher's seriousness in guiding in preparing the future of their students (Rohmah, 2019).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is a literature review method with a qualitative approach. A literature review is a research method whose subject is literature or libraries. This study's data sources were obtained from various credible journal sources, including Emerald, SAGE Journal, Elsevier, Google Scholar, and sites with other credible journal sources. The keywords in the search for data sources are existentialist philosophy, curriculum, education, and learning. The data analysis technique used is content analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The existence of existentialism in the Merdeka curriculum can be seen from the various changes in the renewal. The review can be categorized into planning, implementation, and evaluation. An analysis of the existence of existentialism in the Merdeka curriculum will be described below.

Planning

The principle underlying the design of the Merdeka curriculum is the principle of flexibility. The principle of curriculum design is one of the main steps that must be established as a guideline in the curriculum design process. Design principles are used to decide the design or curriculum design to be selected and work processes or curriculum design methods. As contained in Permendikbud Number 22 of 2020, the concept of Merdeka learning, the central concept in the Merdeka curriculum, is indicated to encourage changes in the curriculum and learning paradigm. The principle of flexibility contained in the Merdeka curriculum is established with the hope that the curriculum can adapt to the characteristics and competencies of each student, which is focused on developing soft skills and accommodating the world. In addition, the philosophy of Freedom to Learn Ki Hajar Dewantara coined is the most crucial foundation in formulating the principles of designing the Merdeka curriculum. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, independence is the goal of education and a principle that can underlie strategies to achieve that goal. Independence as a learning goal can be achieved through the development of character. Good character leads to the development of the ability to become lifelong learners who can self-regulate and determine the direction of learning according to the wishes of each student (Aditomo, 2021). Referring to the principles and basis for designing the Merdeka curriculum, existentialism exists in the Merdeka curriculum. The principle of flexibility, which is the main principle of designing the Merdeka curriculum, is intended to form a

Curriculum that contains tangible things but can still adapt to the different conditions of each academic unit. A flexible curriculum means a curriculum that understands the different backgrounds of each student and the different abilities of each student. The principle of flexibility provides space and gives teachers the freedom to develop the learning programs they want to carry out (Prasetyo & Hamami, 2020). This principle also provides freedom for students to be able to be responsible for the choices they make. The principle of flexibility in the Merdeka curriculum is in line with the understanding contained in the existentialist philosophy that humans are independent individuals and must be encouraged to be able to make decisions for themselves and be responsible for their choices. In addition, referring to the concept of Merdeka learning, which is the basis for designing the Merdeka curriculum, also has the same understanding of the human position in the world. The concept of Merdeka learning emphasized by Ki Hadjar Dewantara argues that education guides all-natural strengths possessed by children so that children can achieve the highest possible safety and happiness both as human beings and as a member of society. Therefore, educators can only guide the growth or life of the natural strength that exists in children so that they can improve their behavior (not basically) and grow the child's natural strength. Children are given freedom in 'guiding,' but educators act as '*pamong*' in providing guidance and direction so that children do not lose their way and endanger themselves. A '*pamong*' can provide 'guidance' so children can learn independently. In addition to the view that humans are individuals who need to be responsible for their choices and decisions,

existentialist philosophy understands that humans are authentic individuals in the world. Existentialism's implications in education are one of the efforts to revive humanism in humans, who are starting to sink due to scientism in the modern world, where scientism threatens and kills human freedom (Susiloningsih, 2020).

Implementation

Differentiated learning models are applied in implementing learning in the Merdeka curriculum. Differentiated learning is a motor learning model grafted on the importance of movement variability and rooted in the dynamic systems theory of human movement (Morris, 2019). Differentiated learning can help students achieve optimal learning results because the products produced are per students' interests (Herwina, 2021). In addition, differentiated learning can produce student performance according to instructions and without teacher instructions (Haerlmans, 2022). Differentiated learning is also a learning adjustment to the student's interests, learning preferences, and readiness to achieve increased learning outcomes. Differentiated learning is not individualized but learning that accommodates students' strengths and learning needs with Merdeka learning strategies. Teachers must understand students, continuously build awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and observe and assess their readiness, interests, and learning preferences. In addition, teachers must also use all preferences regarding how students demonstrate their learning preferences (related to the content, processes, products, and learning environment) so that when teachers continue to learn about the potential diversity of their students, professional, efficient, and effective learning will be realized (Marlina, 2019). The use of differentiation learning can provide activities that suit the needs of students (readiness, interests, and learning styles of students) so that the learning needs of students can be met, which, in the end, students will be able to learn according to their respective abilities (Andini, 2022; Wulandari, 2022). That also shows that the teacher takes sides with students and always prioritizes the interests of the development of students as the primary reference in implementing the learning they do. The teacher chooses and determines all teacher decisions based on student learning and increasing student learning motivation (Filgona et al., 2020). In addition, implementing learning, which aligns with the concept of Merdeka learning, is compatible with the concept of Merdeka learning or self-directed learning (SDL). Merdeka learning is a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, selecting and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Robinson & Persky, 2020). The difference between differentiation learning and Merdeka learning is that both target learners to learn what they need. While the difference is that Merdeka learning can still run with or without the help of educators or tutors, whereas differentiation learning requires tutors as the giver of direction. The learning model and the concept of implementing learning applied in the Merdeka curriculum are compatible with an understanding of

the philosophy of existentialism. The suitability of this understanding can be seen from the similarity of goals between the philosophy of existentialism and differentiated learning or Merdeka learning. Both of these things encourage an understanding of the ability and speed of each student to find the truth and learn something while remaining responsible for what they have chosen. A teacher's existence in existentialism is to be a facilitator for students in making their choices. Existentialist teachers are more likely to assist students in developing possible questions and guide students in understanding themselves (Mutmainnah, 2020).

Evaluation

Learning assessment contained in the Merdeka curriculum is categorized into three forms of assessment, namely diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment. A diagnostic assessment is an assessment that aims to see the weaknesses of students and the factors that cause these weaknesses. A formative assessment is an assessment that aims to determine the rate of student learning progress. Therefore, in formative assessment, a question's difficulty level must receive special attention. At the same time, a summative assessment is carried out at the end of the teaching and learning process to see the level of success of the teaching and learning process (Widiyanto, Sujarwanto, & Prihaningtiyas, 2018). The three learning assessment categories are intended to conduct an overall assessment of implementing the Merdeka curriculum learning. The learning assessment is one of the strategies contained in the Merdeka curriculum to recognize student learning achievements according to the stages of each student. Formative assessment is one of the most emphasized assessments in the Merdeka curriculum learning assessment. Formative assessment is intended to monitor the development of each student and can be considered by educators in determining the level of readiness of students toward more complex learning materials. Formative assessment makes it easy for teachers to understand their students' development (Lukitawanti, Parno, & Kusairi, 2020). Existentialism understands that the speed of learning should be adjusted to the speed of each student, and students can be directed in learning to prioritize the interests they want to achieve. Referring to this understanding, there is a compatibility between the existing understandings in the assessment of the Merdeka curriculum learning with an understanding of the philosophy of existentialism. Through the three categories of assessment forms applied in the Merdeka curriculum, there is also a common understanding with the philosophy of existentialism which views students not only from theoretical values but based on the development of each student (Sadulloh, 2018).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The curriculum, in the view of existentialist philosophy, emphasizes individuals as a source of knowledge who must be able to understand the lives of themselves and others. Existentialism in education aims to shape humans into individuals who can make and are responsible for their choices. The existentialism

curriculum places students as actors who can give meaning to appropriated subjects by incorporating them into themselves and interpreting them according to their projects. At the same time, the teacher becomes a facilitator for students in finding their identity and questions related to life. Referring to the research findings, existentialism in the Merdeka curriculum can be viewed from three main aspects: planning, implementation, and assessment. Viewed from the planning aspect, existentialism in the Merdeka curriculum is found in the principles and basis of the development of the Merdeka curriculum. In the implementation aspect, existentialism is found in the concept of Merdeka learning and differentiated learning models that encourage an understanding of the abilities and speed of each student in finding the truth and learning something. Meanwhile, in the assessment aspect, all learning assessments applied in the Merdeka curriculum are oriented towards measuring student development and the learning process. Overall, in generalization, the research results reveal that freedom to learn and existentialism aim to form an individual with complete freedom over himself. Each subject in the Merdeka curriculum encourages an understanding of the abilities and speed of each student in finding the truth and learning something while remaining responsible for what they have chosen. In addition, this research can become a reference for analyzing existentialism philosophy in curriculum development, both micro and macro.

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