

THE RELEVANCE OF JOHN DEWEY'S THOUGHTS IN SHAPING INDIVIDUALS WITH CHARACTER THROUGH THE APPROACH OF PROGRESSIVISM EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Philosophy of Education with personal character has a powerful relationship with values because these values can help build individual behavior and attitudes in society. In the philosophy of education, this paper aims at character building, based on John Dewey's ideas, requiring a realistic, democratic, positive, and social approach to education. This helps to realize that individuals are not only intellectually intelligent but also have a strong personality and the ability to positively contribute to society. The method used is *library research*. Analyzing successful cases of character education by applying the principles of the philosophy of education. Interviews with education experts to find out their views on the relationship between philosophy and education. The results of this article show that in building individual personalities through the formation of values, ethics, and morality, the philosophy of education plays an important role. It identifies principles of the philosophy of education that can be applied in the context of effective character education. It is a practical guide to help educators integrate the philosophy of education into character education programs.

Keywords: Philosophy, Education, Character

Abstrak

Filsafat Pendidikan dengan karakter pribadi mempunyai hubungan nilai-nilai yang sangat kuat, karena nilai-nilai tersebut bisa membantu membangun perilaku dan sikap individu dalam Masyarakat. Dalam filsafat pendidikan

tulisan ini bertujuan untuk pembentukan karakter, berdasarkan gagasan John Dewey, memerlukan pendekatan Pendidikan yang realistis, demokratis, positif dan sosial. Hal ini membantu mewujudkan individu yang tidak hanya cerdas secara intelektual melainkan juga individu yang mempunyai kepribadian yang kuat dan kemampuan memberikan kontribusi positif kepada Masyarakat. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kepustakaan (*Library Research*). Menganalisis kasus-kasus keberhasilan Pendidikan karakter dengan menerapkan prinsip-prinsip filsafat Pendidikan. Wawancara dengan para pakar Pendidikan untuk mengetahui pandangan mereka mengenai hubungan filsafat dan Pendidikan. Hasil dari artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa dalam membangun kepribadian individu melalui pembentukan nilai, etika, dan moralitas, filsafat Pendidikan berperan penting. Serta mengidentifikasi prinsip filsafat Pendidikan yang dapat diterapkan dalam konteks Pendidikan karakter yang efektif. Ini adalah panduan praktis untuk membantu pendidik mengintegrasikan filosofi Pendidikan ke dalam program Pendidikan karakter.

Kata kunci : Filsafat, Pendidikan, Karakter

A. Introduction

Education is one of the important pillars in the formation of individuals with character. To achieve this goal, contributions from various disciplines, including philosophy, have a very relevant role. In this context, the thoughts of John Dewey, a renowned philosopher and educator, emerge as a significant source of inspiration. Dewey, who lived at the beginning of the 20th century, has not only had a great influence on education but has also put forward ideas that are relevant in shaping individual character.

In this introduction, we will explore key concepts from John Dewey's philosophy of education and how his ideas relate to individual character building. Dewey views education as a process that is not only about imparting knowledge, but also about developing an individual's ability to think critically, collaborate, and cope with change in an ever-evolving

society. In other words, education according to Dewey is not just about filling the mind with facts, but also about shaping attitudes, values, and ethics that reflect a strong and responsible character.

In addition, Dewey's idea of "learning through experience" emphasizes the importance of direct experience in character building. For him, education should involve action, reflection, and experimentation that allow individuals to develop a deep understanding of the world around them and their values.

In this context, it is important to explore how Dewey's thinking can be applied in contemporary education systems. How can his philosophical ideas on education help create an educational environment that promotes positive character development? In this article, we will answer these questions and discuss the relevance of John Dewey's philosophy of education in shaping individuals of character in the modern era.

B. Discussion

1. Jon Dewey's Perspective on Education

John Dewey, an American philosopher of Pragmatism, is also known as a social critic and educational thinker.¹ He was born in Burlington, America, on October 20, 1859, and died on June 1, 1952 in New York.² After completing his studies in Baltimore, Dewey became a professor of philosophy and later of education at several universities. During his career, he produced more than 40 books and 700 articles.

In 1879, after earning a candidate's examination diploma, Dewey became a teacher for 2 years, but then resumed college and completed a doctorate in philosophy in 1884. After earning his doctorate, he taught philosophy at the University of Michigan (1884-1889) before moving to

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey/ Accessed November 29, 2023

²John Dewey, *On Freedom and Culture*, translated by E.M. Aritonang, (Jakarta: Saksana, 1955), 5.

the University of Minnesota in 1889. However, he returned to the University of Michigan in late 1889 and was appointed Head of Philosophy.

In 1894, Dewey transferred to the University of Chicago, where he became Head of the Department of Philosophy and headed the field of Pedagogics for 10 years (1894-1904). During this time, he developed his views on education and established the Dewey School, a laboratory school that became a testing ground for applying his theories. Dewey emphasized the importance of abandoning traditional educational models that relied solely on listening and memorization and replacing them with approaches that encouraged creativity and student engagement in discussion and problem-solving.³

John Dewey has contributed great attention to the field of education, and the foundation of his thinking is based on his analysis of humans. For him, humans gain experience and knowledge through activity or work. This knowledge forms an understanding of objects, beings, phenomena, and theoretical principles that are useful for achieving goals. Dewey believes that human activity provides experiences that guide his thinking, enable him to act wisely and correctly, and influence his ethics. Therefore, experience is considered the source of knowledge and values.⁴

In his work "*How We Think*" Dewey states that the basis of thinking is a situation that raises doubts, which then raises the desire to overcome these doubts.⁵ Dewey views humans as rational beings who can renew,

³Nur Arifin, "John Dewey's Educational Thought", *As-Syar'i: Journal of Islamic Guidance and Counseling*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2020), 207.

⁴Imam Barnadib, *Philosophy of Education, Systems and Methods*, (Yogyakarta: Yasbit, FIP IKIP), 66-68.

⁵John Dewey, *How We Think*, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co. 1933), pp. 4.

reconstruct, and organize through their intellect. He opposed the view that human character is static and cannot develop, considering it a limiting and pessimistic theory.⁶

Dewey sees human nature as a creature with strength, pattern, character, thought, taste, spirit, desire, and instinct. Human freedom, according to Dewey, is reflected in his own self, and humans can become individuals who are able to apply the values that become their life goals. For Dewey, education is growth, development, and life. The process of education is continuous, involving the reorganization, reconstruction, and change of life experience.⁷

Education, for Dewey, is life itself, not just preparation for life. The good life is an intelligent life that involves the interpretation and reconstruction of experience. Education is therefore the organization, reshaping, and changing of life experience. The sociological goal of education is to create democratic citizens by the culture of the nation or state, while the psychological goal is to produce learners with skills and expertise by the needs of society and prepare for their future.

Dewey's progressivism and pragmatism approach to curriculum is based on the view that students are individuals with reason and intelligence. They are considered active and creative, capable of confronting and solving problems. Dewey advocates progressive teaching methods, such as the learning-by-doing method, problem-solving methods, and disciplinary teaching methods, which are adapted

⁶John, *The Question of Independence*, 238-239.

⁷Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Curriculum Development, Theory and Practice*, (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2002), p. 40.

to the development, potential, interests, talents, character, and capacity of the learners.⁸

John Dewey's educational thinking is still relevant today, especially in facing educational challenges in the modern era. Here are some reasons why Dewey's thoughts are still relevant:

- a. *Child-centered education.* Dewey argues that education should be tailored to the needs and development of children. This is in line with the development of educational psychology which emphasizes the importance of understanding children's characteristics in the learning process.
- b. *Active and creative education.* Dewey argues that education should encourage children to think, learn, and develop themselves actively and creatively. This is in line with the demands of the times that require creative and innovative individuals.
- c. *Life-related education.* Dewey argues that education should prepare children to face the challenges and problems encountered in everyday life. This is in line with the rapid development of technology and information, so children need to be equipped with relevant skills and knowledge to face these challenges.

Here are some examples of the application of Dewey's thoughts in modern education:

- a. *Child-centered curriculum.* The curriculum is designed with the interests and needs of the child in mind. For example, the curriculum in primary schools is designed to include a variety of subjects related to children's daily lives, such as science, math, language, and art subjects.

⁸T. Saiful Akbar, "Man and Education According to the Thought of Ibn Khaldun and John Dewey", *DIDAKTIKA Scientific Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2015), 23.

- b. Active and creative learning methods. The learning methods used encourage children to think, learn, and develop themselves actively and creatively. For example, project-based learning methods, problem-based learning methods, and cooperative learning methods.
- c. Education that is relevant to real life. Education is geared towards preparing children to face the challenges and problems encountered in everyday life. For example, education in senior high school is geared towards preparing children to continue their education to college or enter the workforce.

Dewey's thoughts on education can be an inspiration for us to develop better education for our children. Education that is child-centered, active creative, and relevant to real life can help children to grow and develop into smart, creative, and democratic individuals.

2. Direct experience and active student involvement

To apply the concept of hands-on experience in learning in one way is to use a project-based approach. In this approach, students work together to complete a challenging and meaningful project. The project can cover a range of topics, such as science, history, or art.

Another way to implement the concept of hands-on experience is by using a problem-based approach. In this approach, students are faced with a problem that they must solve. This problem can be a real problem or a made-up problem. To solve the problem, students must use critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Dewey believed that hands-on experience is essential for learning at all age levels. He believed that hands-on experience can help students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and cooperation skills.

Here are some examples of how the concept of hands-on experience can be applied to learning:

- a. In science class, students can conduct experiments to learn about concepts such as gravity or magnetism.
- b. In history class, students can visit museums or historical sites to learn about past events.
- c. In art class, students can create artwork to express themselves and explore new ideas.

Dewey argues that hands-on experience is the best way to help students learn and develop.

The active involvement of students in the learning process can shape the adaptation of characters and abilities in several ways:

- a. Builds critical thinking and problem-solving skills

When students are actively involved in the learning process, they are encouraged to think critically and creatively to solve problems. For example, in a science class, students can conduct experiments to learn about the concept of gravity or magnetism. In history class, students can visit museums or historical sites to learn about past events. In art class, students can create artwork to express themselves and explore new ideas.⁹

- b. Boosts confidence and motivation

When students feel involved in the learning process, they are more likely to feel confident and motivated to learn. This is because

⁹<https://www.scribd.com/document/573128014/Hasil-karya-dan-prestasi-siswa-yang-menunjukkan-keterampilan-berpikir-kritis-dan-pemecahan-masalah-secara-lisan-maupun-tulisan>. Accessed November 29, 2023.

they feel that they have control over their learning and that they can achieve their goals.¹⁰

c. Develop social and emotional skills.

When students work together with others to complete a task, they learn to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems cooperatively. example, in a science class, students can conduct experiments to learn about the concept of gravity or magnetism. In history class, students can visit museums or historical sites to learn about past events. In art class, students can create artwork to express themselves and explore new ideas.¹¹

d. Boosts confidence and motivation

When students feel involved in the learning process, they are more likely to feel confident and motivated to learn. This is because they feel that they have control over their learning and that they can achieve their goals.¹²

e. Develop social and emotional skills.

- a. When students work together with others to complete a task, they learn to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems cooperatively. Ultimately, active student engagement is the key to effective learning. When students are actively involved in the learning process, they are more likely to learn, develop, and succeed.

¹⁰<https://guruinovatif.id/artikel/meningkatkan-kepercayaan-diri-siswa-melalui-cara-sederhana-dan-model-pembelajaran-kooperatif-tipe-think-pair-share?username=alventinafebriola1>. Accessed November 23, 2023

¹¹<https://www.scribd.com/document/573128014/Hasil-karya-dan-prestasi-siswa-yang-menunjukkan-keterampilan-berpikir-kritis-dan-pemecahan-masalah-secara-lisan-maupun-tulisan>. Accessed November 29, 2023.

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C. Relevance of learning materials to daily life

Dewey's approach to learning emphasizes the importance of linking learning materials with students' daily lives. This aims to build a character that is relevant to people's lives and increase student motivation in learning.¹³

Here are some ways to stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning based on Dewey's approach:

1. Connecting learning materials with students' daily lives. Teachers can connect the subject matter to students' real lives, such as in Indonesian lessons. By making connections between the material they learn and their lives, students can take the essence of the material and use it as a new perspective in living life.
2. Learning contextual understanding. Contextual learning of learning materials with the real world of students, allows them to understand how to apply the knowledge they learn to their daily lives. This can increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process.¹⁴
3. Using active methods. Dewey's approach encourages the incorporation of various active learning methods, such as discussing, participating in learning and doing projects. These methods help students actualize their knowledge in their own minds and develop critical thinking skills.¹⁵

¹³<https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2021/10/23/pembelajaran-bahasa-dan-relevansinya-bagi-kehidupan-siswa> Accessed December 07, 2023

¹⁴Ririn Eka Kartika, "Implementation of John Dewey's Education Concept in Islamic Religious Subjects (Contextual Approach)", *Thesis - Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Keguruan UIN Syarif Hidayatullah* (2015), 7.

¹⁵Eka Susanti, "The Relevance of the Application of Methods with Teaching Materials in Islamic Religious Education Learning at State Elementary School 72 Seluma", *Thesis - Faculty of Tarbiyah and Tadris, Bengkulu State Islamic Institute* (2019), 2.

4. Creating an inclusive and creative learning environment. Teachers should design a learning environment that includes various disciplines and supports the principle of differentiation so that students can generate perspectives on real life and develop critical thinking skills.
5. Student self-regulation. The principle of self-regulation finds ways to encourage each student to develop their skills. By playing an active role in the learning process, students can develop critical thinking skills and self-regulate to achieve their goals in learning.

By applying Dewey's approach to learning, students can connect the learning material with their daily lives, increase motivation, and develop characters that are relevant to people's lives.

Here is an example of Dewey's approach to learning:

1. In Indonesian lessons, teachers can ask students to think and develop critical thinking skills.¹⁶
2. Creating an inclusive and creative learning environment. Teachers should design a learning environment that includes various disciplines and supports the principle of differentiation so that students can generate perspectives on real life and develop critical thinking skills.
3. Student self-regulation. The principle of self-regulation finds ways to encourage each student to develop their skills. By playing an active role in the learning process, students can develop critical thinking skills and self-regulate to achieve their goals in learning.

¹⁶Eka Susanti, "The Relevance of the Application of Methods with Teaching Materials in Islamic Religious Education Learning at State Elementary School 72 Seluma", *Thesis* - Faculty of Tarbiyah and Tadris, Bengkulu State Islamic Institute (2019), 2.

By applying Dewey's approach to learning, students can connect the learning material with their daily lives, increase motivation, and develop characters that are relevant to people's lives.

Here is an example of Dewey's approach to learning:

In Indonesian lessons, teachers can ask students to integrity. Some of the criteria for moral judgment put forward by Dewey include:

- a. Justice: Students are expected to understand and apply fairness, avoiding discrimination against others. According to Dewey, an action is considered good if it can achieve the desired goal, which is contextual, pluralistic, and always related to the available means.¹⁷
- b. Respect: Students are taught to respect other individuals regardless of their background. Dewey highlights the importance of self-understanding as a doer as well as awareness of human evolution in the context of transactions with the environment.¹⁸
- c. Freedom: Students are encouraged to respect the freedom and rights of other individuals. In Dewey's pragmatic ethical perspective, actions are considered moral if they support the process of personal change.¹⁹

Accountability: Students are encouraged to take integrity. Some of the criteria for moral judgment put forward by Dewey include:

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¹⁷J. Sudarminta, "The Benchmark of Moral Judgment in John Dewey's Pragmatic Ethics", *DISKURSUS - JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY STF DRIYARKARA*, Vol.13, No. 2, (2014), 183.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

action is considered good if it can achieve the desired goal, which is contextual, pluralistic, and always related to the available means.²⁰

- e. Respect: Students are taught to respect other individuals regardless of their background. Dewey highlights the importance of self-understanding as a doer as well as awareness of human evolution in the context of transactions with the environment.²¹
- f. Freedom: Students are encouraged to respect the freedom and rights of other individuals. In Dewey's pragmatic ethical perspective, actions are considered moral if they support the process of personal change.²²

Accountability: Students are encouraged to take information, and pay attention to aspects of desirability and fairness.²³

Dewey also believed that education should enhance students' academic capacity. Education should teach students to think critically and solve problems. In addition, education should also develop students' social skills, such as communication and cooperation. Dewey argues that education can improve students' academic and moral capacities through an active and meaningful learning process. Students should be encouraged to be actively involved in learning and discover their own knowledge and understanding.

²⁰J. Sudarminta, "The Benchmark of Moral Judgment in John Dewey's Pragmatic Ethics", *Diskursus - Journal of Philosophy and Theology Stf Driyarkara*, Vol.13, No. 2, (2014), 183.

²¹J. Sudarminta, "The Benchmark of Moral Judgment in John Dewey's Pragmatic Ethics", *Diskursus - Journal of Philosophy and Theology Stf Driyarkara*, Vol.13,

²²J. Sudarminta, "The Benchmark of Moral Judgment in John Dewey's Pragmatic Ethics", *Diskursus - Journal of Philosophy and Theology Stf Driyarkara*, Vol.13,

²³<https://an-nur.ac.id/blog/pendidikan-karakter-menurut-john-dewey-prinsip-dan-implementasi-dalam-pembelajaran-kontekstual.html> Accessed December 07, 2023.

Here are some examples of the application of moral aspects, ethics, and character values in the education process:

- a. Teachers can teach students about moral and ethical values through discussions, stories, or simulation activities.
- b. Teachers can encourage students to participate in volunteer or community service activities.
- c. Teachers can create an inclusive learning environment that respects differences.

By applying moral aspects, ethics, and character values in the education process, teachers can help students to become responsible citizens with integrity.

D. Formation of critical thinking skills

John Dewey, a pragmatic philosopher, highlighted the importance of developing critical thinking skills in an educational context. For Dewey, education should encourage individuals to actively explore, discover, and develop critical thinking skills. Some of the key concepts Dewey emphasized regarding the development of critical thinking skills include active understanding, experiential learning, questions and answers, the role of the teacher, and a rich and varied learning environment.

Dewey views the importance of active understanding, where education involves individuals in active and self-directed activities such as conversation, exploration, and discovery. During this process, students need to apply critical thinking to analyze and interpret the information they encounter. The learning experience is also considered by Dewey to be an interaction between the individual and their physical and social environment. In this situation, critical thinking becomes key in listening and adjusting learning strategies.

Questions and answers are considered by Dewey as essential elements of knowledge that interact with each other. Students are expected to think critically in generating in-depth questions and seeking appropriate answers.²⁴ The role of the teacher in supporting the development of critical thinking skills is also emphasized, where the teacher functions as a coordinator, mentor, and controller of the learning process.²⁵

Dewey also considered that a rich and diverse learning environment is important to support the development of critical thinking skills. Students need to be allowed to explore various resources and learning methods to optimize their critical thinking skills.²⁶

In the context of education, Dewey emphasized that developing critical thinking skills is not only important conceptually but also to prepare students for real-world challenges. With critical thinking skills, students can understand how to convey information, identify problems, and find solutions that fit the situation. In addition, the development of critical thinking skills will help students hone their practical skills, making them better equipped to deal with problems they may encounter in their daily lives.

E. Cover

Dewey's educational thinking is still relevant because it emphasizes education that is child-centered, active and creative, and relevant to real life.

²⁴Wasitohadi, "The Nature of Education in John Dewey's Perspective Theoretical Review", *Journal of Satya Widya S1 PGSD Study Program FKIP - Satya Wacana Christian University*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2014), 51.

²⁵<https://binus.ac.id/character-building/2022/07/john-dewey-dan-pendidikan-progresif/>. Accessed December 07, 2023.

²⁶Maria Lodika Long & Omiano Sabu, "Analysis of John Dewey's Thought on Educational Reform", *Journal Development and Research in Education*, (2022), 12.

Examples of its application are a child-centered curriculum, active and creative learning methods, and education that is relevant to real life. Dewey's ideas can be an inspiration to develop better education for children.

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