

## The Essence of Education and Character Education in the Paradigm of Critical Education Philosophy

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### **Abstract**

The writing of this study is to explain education and character education from the point of view of critical educational philosophy. Education is a process to achieve competence and self-maturation, and character education is currently essential in overcoming moral degradation. However, its implementation still needs to be strengthened, considering that there are still many phenomena of juvenile delinquency in school-age children. So that studies in the critical paradigm are essential to be carried out to put back the position of education and the implementation of character education in the learning process in educational institutions. This study uses qualitative research with a literature study approach; analysis uses a reduction analysis model, data presentation, and verification. The results of the interpretation can be explained that the study of critical philosophy in education seeks to criticize the essence of education and character education that is understood today. Proper education is not only the process that runs in schools, but education runs within the family, school, and community. Character education is a process of internalization, and integration of values, in order to realize students with character and become a guideline for attitudes and behavior, as well as moral awareness to mitigate moral degradation by students, so it must be strengthened not only in the policy context but must be strengthened in its implementation. This study can increase knowledge about the philosophy of critical education and is helpful to be a reference library for relevant studies.

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**Kata kunci:**  
Filsafat, Kajian  
Kritis, Karakter,  
Pendidikan

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### **Abstrak**

Penulisan kajian ini, untuk menjelaskan pendidikan dan pendidikan karakter, dalam sudut pandang filsafat pendidikan kritis. Pendidikan adalah proses untuk mencapai suatu kompetensi, dan pendewasaan diri, serta pendidikan karakter saat ini menjadi penting, dalam menanggulangi degradasi moral yang terjadi, namun implementasinya masih perlu untuk dikuatkan, mengingat masih banyaknya fenomena kenakalan remaja pada anak usia sekolah. Sehingga kajian dalam paradigma kritis, penting untuk dilakukan untuk meletakkan kembali posisi pendidikan, dan implementasi

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pendidikan karakter dalam proses pembelajaran di institusi pendidikan. Kajian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif, dengan pendekatan studi pustaka, analisis dilakukan menggunakan model analisis reduksi, penyajian data dan verifikasi. Hasil interpretasi dapat dijelaskan bahwa kajian filsafat kritis dalam pendidikan, berupaya untuk mengkritisi esensi pendidikan, serta pendidikan karakter yang dipahami saat ini. Pendidikan sejatinya, bukan hanya proses yang berjalan di sekolah saja, namun pendidikan berjalan dilingkup keluarga, sekolah dan masyarakat. Pendidikan karakter, adalah proses internalisasi, dan integrasi nilai, agar dapat mewujudkan peserta didik yang berkarakter, dan menjadi pedoman sikap dan perilaku, serta kesadaran moral untuk memitigasi degradasi moral oleh peserta didik, sehingga harus dikuatkan, bukan hanya pada konteks kebijakan, namun harus dikuatkan dalam implementasinya. Diharapkan, kajian ini dapat menambah pengetahuan mengenai filsafat pendidikan kritis, dan bermanfaat untuk dapat menjadi pustaka rujukan bagi kajian-kajian relevan.

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## **Introduction**

Education has a fairly special place in people's lives. This special position is not only one side of a life lived by individuals as educational actors, both as educators and students, but this special position is more for society to view education as one side of life that "can" bring an increase in individual status in the community or social life. How will the higher educational strata possessed by individuals publicly recognize academic degrees through the educational process that individual learners have carried out?

From this side, education has a broad paradigm because the context of education by the community can be viewed from various directions depending on the perspective or interest of the community in understanding and implementing education. This certainly does not become a mistake because every individual has motivation for what he will do, especially in the process of carrying out education. Motivation becomes one of the driving spirits of individuals in life to fulfill their interests. Motivation is an impact that occurs in an individual who experiences a situation that makes him have the drive to carry out and achieve something; motivation is a driving force so that humans can realize what they hope (Kadji, 2012). One of the theories of motivation that are often used in the context of education is Maslow's theory of motivation; Maslow said that motivation is the drive possessed by individual humans as a drive to achieve something by fulfilling aspects of their needs; the theory Maslow suggests that there are several needs including physiological needs, security needs, social needs, the need for self-esteem or self-recognition, and finally, the need for self-actualization (Zebua, 2021).

From this context, motivation becomes an individual driving force to do something, especially to meet his needs. Maslow's theory of motivation is certainly also a reflection of the essence of human life, which in his life seeks to meet his needs, as well as in the context of education; education is one of the basic needs that humans must own, as well as education, is one of the factors and capital used by humans to achieve their needs. Physiological needs are one of the basic needs in Maslow's theory, and physiological needs are basic needs that become the foundation for humans to carry out or meet other needs. The need for security is self-security in which individuals hope not to happen something that certainly endangers them or not to worry about certain things. Social needs are one aspect of the human need to have social ties. The need for appreciation is a further need where each individual seeks to be noticed and appreciated for his position in social interaction. The need for self-actualization is the last. This need will occur and be achieved when the individual can meet other needs where the individual can express himself. as he expected (Bari & Hidayat, 2022; Kurniawati & Maemonah, 2021; Noor & Qomariyah, 2019).

From this, it can be correlated in the context of education, namely: Education is a basic human need, and education is an effort carried out by individual humans to develop their potential; education is a basic need and is the right of every individual to be able to live it, through education every human being seeks to develop himself to be able to master a competence that will later be used to achieve other needs.

Education is a need for a sense of security; through the educational process, every human being who already has or mastered certain competencies will have no worries in living his life because the skills of the educational process he undergoes become a provision in living life.

Education is a social need; it is undeniable that in the context of social life, there is a social stratum contained in it, through education humans strive to learn themselves to be able to adapt to the environment so that this adaptation will make individuals able to develop and interact with their social environment. Through education, humans are taught to become adult individuals who can adapt to their social environment.

Education is a need for self-recognition; through education and the skills it already has, humans or individuals will get recognition of their competencies so that individuals will be recognized for their achievements based on their abilities, the context of education here is not only the educational process undertaken in an educational institution but experiences as learning efforts are also one of the educational contexts.

Education is a need for self-actualization, and education in a position to achieve this need becomes capital for humans to express themselves, with education the individual becomes confident in himself so that he can appear and display every skill and competence he has to get recognition and appreciation by others and for those around him.

In terms of this context, education has a practical and pragmatic position; education is only positioned as a means and medium to achieve self-needs which, of course, will deviate slightly from education. This certainly makes education only a place to achieve a certain degree. This certain diploma becomes a scapegoat for deviations that are not related to education but are correlated with education itself. Education as a motivation to achieve needs is mostly done by deviant actions, one of which is falsifying diplomas, which is driven by the desire to achieve the needs of something instant without going through the right and procedural process (Nugroho, 2020; Sari, 2015). This is certainly a deviant event, especially seeing education that seeks to develop human potential but is misinterpreted and misused, especially the deviation of the desire to achieve something through the wrong path.

Textually, education itself, especially in Indonesia, has been regulated in such a way through Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system, which defines education as "a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious, spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by themselves and society." Contextually, this defines education as an effort made by individuals in order to achieve certain competencies and skills that will be used to live life and meet their needs in the future, especially not only for themselves but also for their nation and country, but more deeply education itself implies that the output of education is not only an intellectual human being but also a human being with a character who can humanize human.

In fact, education has three common dimensions: education as an effort to improve quality and self-competence, education as an effort to improve human resources, and education as an effort to transform culture to the next generation (Husamah et al., 2015). Reflecting on this, of course, the event of falsification of diplomas as a deviation from the educational process becomes a slap in the face to education itself. So there needs to be a critical study of how education should be done because these deviations become a

slap in the face to education and deviations from the expected educational output, namely character.

Based on this, it is interesting to see how education and character education are viewed from paradigms or critical theories, as well as how critical paradigms in existing dimensions of education. So pragmatically, this study will discuss education and character education in a critical review and dimensions of education in a critical paradigm so that the study results can be a guideline or library reference for future educational development.

## **Method**

The study of education and character education in this critical paradigm uses qualitative research with a type of literature study approach. The literature study in this study examines various articles and writings related to education and character education. The literature study is not just a data collection technique but also an approach. Because literature studies seek to strengthen concepts, ideas, and theories, they are also useful for positioning the research to be carried out (Karuru, 2013; Ridwan et al., 2021; Surahman et al., 2020) (Karuru, 2013; Ridwan et al., 2021; Surahman et al., 2020). The data analysis technique used is a combination of systematic literature review techniques and the Miles Huberman Model, namely data reduction, data presentation, and data verification (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Leavy, 2017; Miles et al., 2014).

The assessment steps are carried out by researchers who collect various articles, books, scientific writings, and other relevant literature related to critical studies, education, and character education topics. Articles and libraries that have been collected are then categorized based on relevant topics, and researchers conduct analysis to obtain data that supports the topic and focus of the problem, namely education and character education. The results of the data are collected, then sorted to fit the problem. The data that has been sorted is then presented in certain patterns and then verified. After the analysis process is complete, the researcher then interprets the results of the analysis to get an idea of how education and character education are related in critical studies.

## **Results and Discussion**

Based on the background described at the beginning of the discussion, the study of the critical paradigm in education seeks to describe and examine what education is and how education should run to build intelligent individuals. However, deviations that

occur related to and related to education make it necessary to have a critical review so that education is no longer a scapegoat sacrificed by individuals in seeking to meet their needs. Therefore, these things will be discussed as follows:

### **Critical theory**

Critical theory is one of the theories in the social view that refers to groups of thinkers who are guided or refer to their thoughts or the direction of Marxism which began its development in Frankfurt, Germany. At the beginning of its development, the critical theory began with Marxist thought or theory itself in social theories (Sholahudin, 2020). Critical theory or critical thinking bases itself on autonomy or freedom for humans to think critically about something; critical thinking will bring knowledge because true knowledge does not refer to existing objects or reality but the subject of knowledge itself; critical theory seeks to be neutral, especially in the concept of knowledge and science, critical theory rejects the view that knowledge exists and occurs because it is so, The critical theory holds that knowledge or anything that exists is a form of construction that is interrelated and formed from religious aspects of social reality that are present and formed dialectically; critical theory holds that humans are free beings (Sholahudin, 2020).

One of the critical thinkers in philosophy is Jürgen Habermas; Habermas's critical theory arises from the criticism of the state of society that occurs due to the phenomena of social life, social structures, and power systems that develop and demand changes. A critical theory exists as an effort that exists amid the tension between philosophy and science; critical theory is a form of ideology that seeks to penetrate social reality to find transcendental things in the structure of people's lives (Sholihah, 2021). Furthermore, a critical theory exists as an effort to liberate and provide freedom to humans who are confined in social domination through philosophy and science so that humans gain freedom over the constraints of dominant structures in their social life, so that critical theory is present to remove the injustice experienced by humans (Iwan, 2014).

Critical theory is also present to build knowledge, where society or individuals can appear for their liberation, especially criticisms of social life that shackles themselves (Donatus, 2015). Based on this, critical theory is a theory born from Marxist thought, where this theory holds that human development that occurs should free humans from various shackles that shackle them, an especially social reality that seeks to limit human development; critical theory is present amid philosophical and scientific upheaval to be

able to criticize social reality that makes circumstances or situations unfair to humans and free man from the situation.

Although the development of critical theory exists to criticize social practices and realities, in the context of education, the meaning and principles of critical theory to criticize human bondage can be correlated. Education in its development in social life began to experience deviations, especially in its practices and processes, various events that tarnished education defined that something wrong and wrong had happened to exist educational practices, especially deviations in the meaning of education in society, so that the position of education was only as a process to obtain degrees and diplomas, thus marginalizing the function and purpose of education that sought Building individuals with character so that they can build the quality of the nation and state for their progress in the future.

### **Education and character education in the Critical Paradigm**

The critical theory exists as an attempt to criticize social reality that is considered to exist because it is what it is; critical theory seeks to construct "something" that is comprehensive because circumstances occur not only because they should exist but because there are various aspects that build and influence these conditions. Education as an effort to educate the nation's life is not only in the dimension of output but also must be viewed from the dimension of the process so that the output that occurs is indeed through a procedural process, and the output that occurs is indeed the desired expectation.

Various events that tarnish education as a part of human life to build themselves in the context of skills and abilities that will later help themselves certainly become a slap in the face of how far educational expectations have been able to be achieved. Falsification of diplomas, violence in the educational process, juvenile delinquency, and criminality in the context of education is certainly an illustration of errors in the existing educational process. How not? Education is a conscious and planned effort by humans, actually trying to build a whole person. However, the event seems to illustrate that there is a "failure" in the pattern of education in Indonesia.

Critical education is one of the alternatives to the education process in Indonesia today; this is a form of problem-solving for wrong policies by policymakers that seem to be solutions but bring other problems, so the paradigm of Indonesian education must be revisited (Kartono, 2010). Critical education for the Indonesian nation is striving to transform educational change so that education is no longer routine. However,

education seeks to identify all the potentials possessed by educational actors, such as educators and students, so that critical awareness is built by education actors (Ramadhansyah & Ali, 2019).

Similarly, in character education, the critical paradigm seeks to build awareness of the importance of character being awakened in the educational process. The character becomes an important part of humans so that they do not lose their identity as individuals; character education seeks to build and develop individuals who are not only intelligent but have an identity; the identity in question is their national identity (Zubaedi, 2013). This indicates that character education is not only "*jargon*" but must be implemented in the educational process.

The fundamental problem now in the context of this character is the marginalization of the understanding that education takes place in the three centers of education. Society only understands that education occurs in formal educational institutions such as schools, colleges, course institutions, or tutoring. The marginal and unequal understanding then makes education that occurs in the family, and the community neglected. However, individual character is built and formed in schools, families, and the community.

Character education as one of the educational processes through the internalization of character values, ideally not only becomes the responsibility of the school as a formal educational institution, but cooperation between family and community will increasingly make character education not only an academic program. However, it will have implications for the practical context of society. Education does not want humans to become robots that are only intellectually intelligent and ignore their emotional and psychological aspects. However, in this case, character education seeks to build humans with coherent and comprehensive intelligence, namely intellectually intelligent and emotionally and spiritually mature.

This indicates the need for critical thinking to build an educational paradigm that adapts to Indonesia. So that Indonesian education not only adapts to the progress of other countries but also must facilitate the culture and noble values that exist and become the identity and identity of the Indonesian nation as a nation rich in culture. So that critical education not only seeks to deconstruct the established order but also to reconstruct and construct the established educational order to fit the identity and identity of the nation.



In Mansour Fikih's view, critical education practice has five stages in the process, namely the process of learning and learning, reconstruction, analysis, concluding, and applying (Ramadhansyah & Ali, 2019). This illustrates that critical education is not just criticizing the established order but seeks to reconstruct awareness in the educational process through stages so that the educational paradigm is formed through a comprehensive study process. Critical education starts by criticizing the learning process that occurs both from the aspect of educators, students, and even the learning environment; this aspect only then leads to the context of development through existing data so that educational planning runs maturely.

Based on this, the critical education paradigm in education and character education seeks to criticize the educational process that occurs in Indonesia; this process seeks to build an educational paradigm that is under the identity of the Indonesian nation itself so that it is not only an adaptation of the educational paradigm of foreign nations but facilitates the advantages possessed by the Indonesian nation, namely character. So that the progress of education, which is supported by advances in science and technology, still needs to eliminate the character and identity of the Indonesian nation as a nation with character and culture. So that the internalization of the nation's character in the educational process in Indonesia becomes very important, not only jargon and theoretical programs but must be applied and have a practical impact on the educational process.

### **Dimensions of Education in the Critical Paradigm**

The scope of education is more than just a medium for strengthening competence. However, it has a fairly broad dimension, including education as a strengthening of the quality of self-competence for humans, education as an effort to form superior and competitive human resources, and education as a vehicle to transform culture for the younger generation as the successor of the nation. This will certainly be very impactful when viewed from a critical education point of view. Based on this, the critical education paradigm can be described in the educational dimension, namely:

Education is a strengthening of self-quality. From the point of view of critical education, education is not only a routine, but education seeks to construct humans with skills that will greatly help them in the future. So that the critical education paradigm strives for humans to have a critical awareness of improving self-quality through processes and mechanisms oriented to the talents and potentials humans possess so that education is built to make humans aware of their potential. Education seeks to

strengthen their potential into competency. Education becomes a means for using competencies to benefit themselves and society, so education becomes a trigger, implementer, and guideline for humans.

Education as a means of human resource development, in the critical paradigm of education, is not intended only to form working-class people alone, but ideally, education so that every human being can open jobs. In this aspect, resource development is not building working-class resources but characteristic resources. Education as a vehicle for cultural transformation, in the view of critical education, Indonesian education should not marginalize its noble cultural values but must preserve its cultural aspects. Culture is not only in the form of concrete objects, but there is an invisible abstract dimension, namely the order of values (Sumarto, 2019; Yuristia, 2018). Culture will certainly change throughout the progress of civilization, but what must not be lost in culture is a noble value order that is useful for future generations. So education, as a vehicle for cultural transformation, education seeks to preserve and transform the textual value order into contextual, which is certainly useful for the next generation. Education strives to maintain the value order so that the noble and important value order will be the foundation for building education with character and identity.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the discussion results about critical education, several things can be concluded, namely. A critical theory that begins in the view of sociology not only functions to review social aspects but can also be used to review and create new paradigms for human critical thinking; critical theory seeks to free humans from the shackles that constrain humans from unfair situations, In the critical education paradigm, education is ideally carried out through appropriate processes and mechanisms in the sense that education is not only a means of achieving needs but also a means of maturation so that education creates a human output with character.

Education has a fairly broad dimension, namely as a reinforcement of human self-quality, human resource builders, and cultural transformation; through the critical education paradigm then, education is true to build people who have self-quality under their potential to be able to become superior and competitive resources for their nation but do not lose their identity as Indonesian people with character according to the order of Indonesian cultural values.

Based on the conclusions above, suggestions can be given that are expected to provide benefits, including 1) Critical education not only deconstructs the existing educational order but also seeks to reconstruct education by situations and conditions, so critical studies are needed again by education actors and policymakers to put education in its original essence, 2) It is hoped that through critical thinking on educational aspects, it is advisable to build awareness of the importance of character education in the educational process in Indonesia so that education actors both in the family, school, and community education environment to participate in its implementation.

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