

## Ki Hajar Dewantara's Perspective on Culture-Based Education in Indonesia's Educational System

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to examine and analyze Ki Hajar Dewantara's perspective on culture-based education and its relevance in the context of Indonesia's current education system. **Method:** Using a qualitative approach and literature review, the study explores the core concepts developed by Ki Hajar Dewantara regarding culture-based education and investigates its application in contemporary education. **Results:** The findings reveal that Indonesia's current education system tends to prioritize academic achievements and globalization, often sidelining local cultural values. However, the principles of culture-based education as proposed by Ki Hajar Dewantara remain highly pertinent for shaping national character. Integrating cultural values into the curriculum serves not only as a means to preserve cultural diversity and heritage but also as a strategy to nurture a generation with a strong identity capable of thriving in a globalized era. **Novelty:** This study underscores the enduring relevance of Ki Hajar Dewantara's culture-based education in addressing modern educational challenges. By bridging cultural values and academic achievements, it presents a balanced approach to fostering intellectual intelligence alongside noble character and cultural identity preservation.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a primary instrument for shaping character while simultaneously enhancing the quality of a nation's human resources [1]. In Indonesia, the function of education extends beyond fostering national intelligence; it also plays a crucial role in preserving and maintaining the nation's rich and diverse cultural identity [2]. However, Indonesia's educational system faces various challenges in integrating local cultural values into the curriculum while addressing the need to remain competitive on a global scale [3]. Ki Hajar Dewantara, as a prominent figure in national education, offers a perspective that is both relevant and worth deeper analysis regarding culture-based education [4].

Culture-based education according to Ki Hajar Dewantara is an approach that not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also focuses on character development rooted in the noble values of the nation's culture [5]. In his view, local culture plays a fundamental role as the foundation in the educational process, as culture is the identity that shapes the character and selfhood of a nation [6]. Dewantara argued that the ideal education system is one that can develop human potential holistically, not only in intellectual aspects but also in nurturing a love for culture and the nation [7]. Culture-based education serves to shape individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess noble character, uphold social values, and have a deep awareness of their own culture [8].

The importance of culture-based education, as proposed by Ki Hajar Dewantara, is not only relevant in his time but also holds profound significance for the current context of education in Indonesia [9]. Local cultural values and traditional wisdom are often undervalued or even ignored. As a result, the younger generation tends to lose their connection to the culture and traditions passed down by their ancestors [10]. However, culture is at the core of a healthy social and political life, as well as a solid foundation for maintaining national sovereignty amidst the forces of globalization [11]

The implementation of culture-based education in practice still faces various challenges. Curricula that prioritize academic achievement and global competence often overlook the essence of local cultural values [12]. The limited training for educators in integrating local culture into the learning process also presents a significant barrier [13]. Therefore, further exploration of Ki Hajar Dewantara's perspective on culture-based education is necessary, both from a theoretical and practical standpoint, and to explore how his perspective can be implemented in Indonesia's educational system in a more contextual and inclusive manner.

This study aims to examine and analyze Ki Hajar Dewantara's perspective on culture-based education, as well as to explore its relevance and the challenges of its implementation within Indonesia's educational system. It is hoped that through this study, a more holistic approach that focuses on cultural preservation can be identified, strengthening national character and addressing global challenges. Additionally, this study also aims to provide recommendations related to the development of a more culture-based curriculum that is relevant to the current needs of Indonesian society.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to analyze Ki Hajar Dewantara's perspective on culture-based education and its relevance within the context of Indonesia's current education system. The primary data sources in this study include Ki Hajar Dewantara's works, such as books, articles, and speeches that contain his views on education and culture, as well as secondary literature that discusses the implementation of culture-based education in Indonesia. Data collection is conducted through literature review and document analysis related to Dewantara's perspective and relevant national education policies. The collected data is then analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis techniques to identify key themes in Ki Hajar Dewantara's perspective on culture in education, as well as the challenges and opportunities for its application in Indonesia's contemporary education system.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ki Hajar Dewantara (born May 2, 1889 – died April 26, 1959) is a significant figure in the history of Indonesian education and is known as the Father of National Education [14]. Ki Hajar Dewantara was a pioneering educator who had a profound influence on the formation of Indonesia's education system, with ideas that remain highly relevant today

[15]. Born as Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat, he came from an aristocratic Yogyakarta family. Despite his noble background, he chose to dedicate his life to education and the empowerment of the people [16]. Dewantara was educated in European schools but was more drawn to culture and education rooted in local values and Indonesian traditions [17].

Ki Hajar Dewantara's perspective on education was deeply influenced by the social and political conditions during the colonial era. He strongly emphasized the importance of education that not only focuses on intellectual development but also on character building and fostering a love for the nation's culture [18]. One of the key concepts developed by Ki Hajar Dewantara is "Tut Wuri Handayani," which means "Behind, providing encouragement; in front, setting an example; in the middle, offering guidance" [19]. This philosophy underscores the vital role of educators in directing, inspiring, and setting a positive example for their students.

The concept of culture-based education proposed by Dewantara represents a holistic system that integrates intellectual, moral, and social education in an interconnected manner. From various writings, speeches, and documents discovered, several key points related to Dewantara's perspective on culture-based education are as follows:

1. Education as a Means of Character Development

Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized that the goal of education is not only to create individuals who are intellectually intelligent, but also to shape a character with noble morals. Through the concept of "Tut Wuri Handayani," Dewantara explained that educators must be able to set a good example and guide students to not only master knowledge but also possess good character, which is built upon the cultural values present in society [20]. According to Dewantara, education should focus on character development through the teaching of social values such as cooperation, honesty, and respect for others, all of which are reflected in Indonesian culture [21].

2. Culture as National Identity in Education

Dewantara strongly emphasized the importance of culture as the foundation of education. Ki Hajar Dewantara argued that culture is not just an additional element in education, but the core that must be instilled in every individual from an early age [22]. In his works, Dewantara explained that good education must teach children to understand and love their own culture. This is evident in Dewantara's statement that education must connect children to the roots of the nation's culture so that they can not only compete in the international arena but also have a strong sense of identity [23]. In this context, local culture, such as art, traditions, language, and customs, must be made an inseparable part of the educational curriculum.

3. Culture-Based Education in the Context of Nationalism

In Dewantara's works, Ki Hajar Dewantara connects culture-based education with the development of nationalism. Ki Hajar Dewantara argued that by instilling a love for the nation's culture, individuals will grow into citizens who love their homeland and

contribute to the country's development [24]. Culture-based education is not only beneficial for individual development but also for fostering a collective awareness of national identity. Through education rooted in culture, Dewantara believed that the younger generation would develop a greater sense of responsibility toward the nation and be able to face challenges in the context of Indonesia's diversity [25]

#### 4. Integration of Education and Nature as Part of Culture

The importance of the connection between education and nature is also strongly emphasized by Dewantara in his various works. Ki Hajar Dewantara believed that nature is a part of culture that should be utilized as a medium for learning. The concept of education that encourages students to be closer to nature, understand the cycles of life, and use nature wisely is a cultural heritage of Indonesia that must be preserved [24]. Dewantara emphasized that nature-oriented teaching will not only help students understand life better but also foster a love for the homeland and the existing culture [24]

#### 5. Education Encompassing All Aspects of Life

Dewantara's perspective on culture-based education is also reflected in his views on the relationship between formal and non-formal education. Dewantara asserted that education does not only take place within the classroom but also outside of it, in everyday life, which is influenced by culture [26]. In other words, education is a process that encompasses all aspects of life, including traditions, customs, arts, language, and the way of life of a society. Ki Hajar Dewantara also believed that schools should create a learning environment that balances scientific knowledge with cultural values, and teachers must serve as exemplary figures in introducing and preserving culture [27].

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** Ki Hajar Dewantara's culture-based education philosophy underscores the importance of integrating character building, intellectual development, and cultural preservation into the education system. This approach emphasizes not only academic success but also the cultivation of a strong national identity and appreciation for cultural diversity, offering a foundation for a holistic and balanced educational framework. **Implication :** The integration of cultural values into education implies a dual benefit: fostering national pride and preparing students to navigate globalization. By adopting Ki Hajar Dewantara's perspective, educators can create curricula that balance local wisdom with global competencies, shaping individuals who are both culturally rooted and globally competitive. **Limitation :** Despite its strengths, implementing culture-based education faces challenges, including limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and resistance to change. These barriers can hinder the effective incorporation of cultural values into the curriculum, potentially limiting the reach and impact of this educational approach. **Future Research :** Future research should explore practical strategies for embedding cultural values into modern educational systems, addressing resource constraints and teacher readiness. Studies can also examine the long-

term impact of culture-based education on students' global competitiveness and their connection to national identity.

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