

Development of National Education in General and Geographical Context in The Study of Philosophy of Education

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Abstract

The development of national education in Indonesia is a dynamic process and continues to change in line with the times, the needs of society, and global demands. This paper aims to analyze the development of national education (general and geography) in the study of educational philosophy. The literature study methodology looks at national education policies and their relevance to various schools of educational philosophy. Literature data on the development of national education amounted to 28, and educational philosophy 18, collected from government regulatory documents, books, journal articles, and proceedings articles. The data was analyzed using qualitative descriptive. The development of Indonesian national education continues to adapt to the dynamics of the times through the Merdeka Belajar, deep learning, and Kampus Merdeka policies. Geography learning is in line with these policies. Integration of educational philosophy to create a holistic, relevant, and globally competitive education system. Philosophy such as idealism, realism, constructivism, progressivism, pragmatism, and essentialism provide a basis for thinking for the development of national education that is holistic, adaptive, and relevant to global dynamics. The Merdeka Belajar and other educational policies viewed philosophically can accommodate diversity, innovation, and local and global needs to realize national education goals.

Keywords: Deep Learning, Merdeka Belajar, Philosophy of Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of national education in Indonesia is a dynamic process and continues to change in line with the times, the needs of society, and global demands. Since pre-independence to the reform era, the Indonesian education system has undergone various transformations in curriculum and education policy (Brewis, 2019; Imran, 2024). In 2003, the government enacted Law Number 20 concerning the National Education System (UU-20, 2003), the basis for organizing education in Indonesia. Specific articles such as Articles 36, 38, and 50 explain that the development of education must pay attention to the moral, intellectual, social, emotional, and national aspects of students, as well as relevance to the demands of the world of work, national development, and global dynamics.

In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the Merdeka Belajar policy as part of education reform to improve the quality of education and student independence. This policy aims to provide flexibility to educational units, teachers, and students in learning, assessment of learning outcomes, and acceptance of new students (Iqbal et al., 2023; Magdalena et al., 2022). One of the main focuses of Merdeka Belajar is empowering schools in determining student graduation without the pressure of normative national exams, as well as the implementation of a zoning system to create equal access to quality education for all levels of society (Hastangka & Hidayah, 2023; Magdalena et al., 2022). The national exam policy in

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2025 is being reviewed for re-implementation, while the zoning policy is relaxed by implementing a domicile system.

At the higher education level, the Merdeka Belajar policy is implemented through the Kampus Merdeka Program, which allows students to study outside their study program for three semesters. Implementing eight Main Performance Indicators (IKU) benchmarks for higher education achievements in increasing the competitiveness of graduates and institutions internationally (Ghulam, 2025). This effort is complemented by study program accreditation by the Independent Accreditation Institution (LAM) and strengthening the autonomy of state universities through Legal Entities (PTN-BH) (Fachriansyah & Sulastri, 2020; Khalilah, 2023).

The Merdeka Belajar Policy and the development of national education are closely related to geography subjects in high school and college. At the high school level, geography learning not only focuses on the physical and social aspects of the region, but also develops students' abilities in critical, analytical thinking, and understanding global issues such as climate change, environmental sustainability, and disaster resilience, in line with the Merdeka Belajar principle which encourages mastery of multidisciplinary competencies (Dixit & Dixit, 2024; Windsor et al., 2024). At the tertiary level, especially in the branches of educational geography, physical geography, human geography, and engineering geography, the implementation of the Kampus Merdeka provides flexibility for students to broaden their horizons through cross-disciplinary studies, internships, or field research for three semesters, thereby increasing the relevance of geography graduates to the needs of the labor market and sustainable development (Kurniawan, 2024; Purwanti, 2021). Integrating national education policies supports the development of more holistic and adaptive geographic competencies to global dynamics (Nadeak, 2023).

From the educational philosophy perspective, various schools of thought such as idealism, realism, constructivism, progressivism, pragmatism, and essentialism also provide a basis for thinking for developing national education. These schools emphasize the importance of developing individual potential, active and meaningful learning, adaptation to change, and preserving cultural and humanitarian values (Johnston, 2023). The Merdeka Belajar policy and other policies need to be viewed with these philosophical views because they provide ample room for education to accommodate diversity, innovation, and local and global needs (Gunardi & Hartati, 2024; Herawan, 2024). It is important to understand and further examine how the development of national education within the Merdeka Belajar framework can be implemented effectively, as well as how the philosophy of education supports and provides direction for the progress of the Indonesian education system in the future. This paper aims to analyze the development of national education (general and geography) in the study of the philosophy of education.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review type to examine the development of national education from the perspective of educational philosophy. The literature study methodology is seen in philosophy, and the research position analyzes the Merdeka Belajar policy and its relevance to various schools of educational philosophy (Gunardi & Hartati, 2024). This study collects and analyzes documents, regulations, and

literature on national education policies and views on educational philosophy. This approach allows researchers to deeply understand the concept and formulate arguments or conclusions based on available literature sources. Data were collected through a literature review of sources with document themes shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Document Themes

No.	Document Theme	Document Type	Number of Documents
1	Development of National Education	- Government regulations such as Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas), Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 1 of 2020, and Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3/M/2021. - Merdeka Belajar policy documents, Kampus Merdeka Program (MBKM), Main Performance Indicators (IKU), and the Sekolah Penggerak program. - Books, scientific journals, articles, and academic references related to the development of national education.	28
2	Philosophy of Education	Books, scientific journals, articles, and academic references related to the philosophy of education, such as Plato's idealism, Aristotle's realism, Jean Piaget's constructivism, John Dewey's progressivism, pragmatism, and essentialism.	18

The analysis process was carried out descriptively-qualitatively using four stages of collaborating with various sources of analysis methods (Kordel & Gruber, 2024; Ravindran, 2019; Zeegers & Barron, 2015). First, data reduction involves sorting relevant information from sources that have been collected. Second, categorization, grouping data based on central themes such as education policy, implementation of Merdeka Belajar, implications for geography, and schools of educational philosophy. Third is interpretation, which gives meaning to the data obtained by linking the philosophy of education and implementing general and geographical policies in the field. Fourth, the relationship must be mapped, and the suitability of the principles of the philosophy of education and the direction of the Merdeka Belajar and MBKM policies, both in general and in geographical topics, examined.

This study has limitations in terms of access to empirical data directly from the implementation of policies in the field. The interpretation of the relevance between the philosophy of education and educational policy depends on theoretical understanding. There are six research steps (Jaya et al., 2023). First, the problem must be identified, the scope determined, and questions related to the development of national education (general and geographical) and the relevance of the philosophy of education must be researched. Second, formulating objectives, setting research objectives, namely identifying the implementation of Merdeka Belajar, and evaluating them through the philosophy of education, and third, collecting literature, looking for legal documents, regulations, policies, and references to the philosophy of education. Fourth is literature analysis, which involves conducting a review of the literature that has been collected and linking it to current educational issues. Fifth, compiling findings, systematically compiling the results of the analysis, and presenting the

relationship between philosophical theory and the practice of educational policy, both in general and in geographical terms. Sixth, concluding, providing conclusions regarding the relevance and implications of using educational philosophy in developing national education under the Merdeka Belajar policy and other important policies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Development of National Education Policy (General and Geography)

The development of National Education in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas), article 36 explains that curriculum development should pay attention to increasing faith and piety; increasing noble morals; increasing potential, intelligence, and interests of students; diversity of regional and environmental potential; demands of regional and national development; demands of the world of work; development of science, technology, and art; religion; dynamics of global development; and national unity and national values (UU-20, 2003). Article 38 further explains the curriculum development at the Elementary, Secondary, and Higher Education levels, where the value of relevance and reference to National Education Standards is of concern. Article 50 explains that education development should be directed towards the international level. Articles 1, 3, 7, and 45 state that education development should pay attention to the development of students in the form of physical potential, intellectual intelligence, social, emotional, and mental aspects of students.

Previous education development policies occurred in the pre-independence era during the Dutch colonial era with Sekolah Rakyat, the independence period with the 1994 curriculum, the reform period with the 2004 curriculum, and the 2013 curriculum (B, 2017; Rama, 2023). Oriented to the National Education System Law, in 2020 some developments were applied in the Merdeka Belajar policies by the Minister of Education and Culture starting with the Circular of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 1 of 2020 concerning the Independent Learning Policy in Determining Student Graduation and Implementing New Student Admissions (SE-Mendikbud-1, 2020). The policy regulates policies on student graduation, exam materials, technical instructions for implementing regional New Student Admissions (PPDB), and determining zoning areas.

Regarding the policy of determining student graduation, the Minister of Education and Culture observed that (1) Student graduation is determined through school exams and is organized by educational units based on learning outcome assessments carried out by teachers, (2) School exam materials for student graduation (such as written tests, portfolios, assignments, and/or other forms of activities) are made by teachers at each educational unit. (3) Educational units not ready to make school exam materials can use assessment materials (written tests, assignments, and/or other exams) obtained from various sources, such as questions made by the Teacher Working Group or MGMP. (4) The education office cannot force educational units to use certain materials in implementing school exams. (5) The Ministry of Education and Culture provides examples of good practices for school exams.

This policy is currently being reviewed for the implementation of the national exam to improve student readiness in learning more seriously. The geography subject's position is still being implemented in national standard school exams. Students can choose the subjects to be tested, including geography. The existence of geography is important to continue to be taught;

countries such as Japan, the United States, and Finland also teach geography in elementary and secondary schools (Solem & Tani, 2017).

Regarding the policy of accepting new students, the Minister of Education and Culture mandated: (1) Regional Governments immediately prepare technical instructions for implementing regional New Student Admissions (PPDB) and determine zoning areas according to their authority. (2) Do not use national exam scores or other exams in PPDB zoning and affirmative pathways. (3) If the Regional Government wants to carry out a test to select junior high school achievement pathways, the test can be carried out as part of the school exam, and student participation in the selection test must be voluntary and not mandatory.

The zoning policy in 2025 will no longer be implemented and will be replaced by a domicile system. As evidenced by the Family Card document, the zoning system, 3-10 km away, becomes a more flexible domicile system following the school district and the surrounding districts. The zoning system that has changed to domicile is also limited by quota. However, it still dominates the areas around the school. The school's location close to the residence helps equalize education and the focus of contextual education. Geographical studies that examine the environment around students become the object of study, making learning more contextual and meaningful for students (Amaluddin et al., 2019; Harianto et al., 2019; Sejati et al., 2023).

Merdeka belajar also implements a one-page Learning Implementation Plan (RPP). Learning tools are no longer complicated and complex, from developing an educational calendar to the Annual Program, Semester Program, Syllabus, RPP, assessment sheets, some to Student Worksheets and Teaching Materials. RPP can be made on one page or sheet if it meets three main points: learning objectives, learning activities, and assessments. RPP is the basis for teachers implementing learning (Sejati et al., 2021).

The success of student education is the school's responsibility; whether students graduate or not is the autonomous right of each school. According to Ilham (2019), the UN has been unable to measure educational goals other than those related to material, namely character. The zoning system for accepting new students is an effort to provide equal education. Equal education allows citizens to improve life skills (Suroto, 2014). Equal education is also a concentration in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers (UU-14, 2005). The one-page RPP makes it easier for teachers, including geography teachers, to focus on teaching without considering the administrative burden (Purwantiningsih et al., 2021).

To improve the quality of the three things above, the Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology created a Sekolah Penggerak program through the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel. The program is implemented for 3 years in selected schools that will be given direction, guidance, and intensive training to achieve the status of pioneer schools in implementing education, which is expected to influence surrounding schools. The pioneer school consists of a program for pioneer principals, pioneer teachers, expert trainers, pioneer school assessors, principal strengthening training, prospective principal training, and prospective supervisor training. The number of pioneer schools until December 2021 is 2,500, with a target of 40,000 in 2025. Pioneers are catalysts for positive change (Amalia et al., 2017).

Sekolah Penggerak in 2025 will no longer be continued and will focus on implementing deep learning. Deep learning as a learning approach has three pillars, namely mindful learning,

meaningful learning, and joyful learning. Students, including those studying geography, can be stimulated with learning models that can trigger high-level thinking, have direct benefits to the surrounding environment, and are carried out in a fun way (Mystakidis, 2021; Suwandi et al., 2024; Yuan et al., 2024).

The development of education based on Merdeka Belajar is also implemented at the Higher Education level. First, implement Merdeka Belajar through the Kampus Merdeka program (MBKM). Kampus Merdeka is one of the policies that gives students the right to take three semesters of study outside the Study Program. The program is a mandate from various regulations/legal bases for higher education to improve the quality of learning and graduates of higher education, starting from the Law, Government Regulations, Presidential Regulations, Village and PDDT Regulations. This program includes teaching campuses, internships, independent studies, Thematic KKN, Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards, Independent Student Exchange, Young Campus Independent Fighters, Humanitarian Projects, Research, and Entrepreneurship. These programs provide experience to lecturers, students, and campus administrators about culture or learning outside the campus, domestically and abroad, and with business actors. Although it began during the pandemic, the spirit of an Kampus Merdeka was implemented with the help of technology and platforms in e-learning and blended learning (Anhusadar, 2020).

Although these programs are being reviewed for implementation in 2025, they are ongoing. An Kampus Merdeka with many programs outside the original study program can increase students' insight and experience, including students majoring in/studying programs in geography education in Indonesia (Utami et al., 2024). Study programs with open offers must maximize involvement in the Kampus Merdeka program.

Second, the Main Performance Indicators (IKU) are set according to the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3/M/2021, totaling eight (Kepmendikbud-3/M, 2021). IKU 1: Graduates get decent jobs. IKU 2: Students get experience outside the campus. IKU 3 lecturers are active outside the campus. IKU 4 practitioners teach on campus. The community uses IKU 5 lecturers' work results and receives international recognition. IKU 6 study programs collaborate with world-class partners. IKU 7: Collaborative and participatory classes. IKU 8 study programs with international standards. IKU aligns with MBKM, namely IKU 2, IKU 3, and IKU 4. Regarding the direction to the International World, it aligns with the National Education System Law Article 50 and global competitiveness (Sari, 2019).

The eight IKUs above improve the quality and quantity of geography teaching in Indonesia for lecturers and students. Improving quality, quantity, and experience with activities outside the home base, domestically and abroad (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Collaborating with practitioners, the Business World and Industry World (DUDI) can better prepare students for the world of work in their scientific fields (Kurniawan, 2024).

Third, study program accreditation is assessed by the Independent Accreditation Institution (LAM) according to the scientific field by the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 5 of 2020 and the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 186/M/2021 concerning Study Programs Accredited by the Independent Accreditation Institution (Kepmendikbudristek-

186/M, 2021; Permendikbud-5, 2020). Higher Education Accreditation is still under BAN-PT. Accreditation determines stakeholder trust in educational institutions (Rahyasih, 2016).

Accreditation at the Independent Accreditation Institution has two sides to the view. First, focus on scientific fields such as education, paying attention to teaching practices and curriculum. Second, study programs through each university must pay to the Independent Accreditation Institution, some argue that this is a commercialization of education and burdens study programs on small campuses, especially private ones (Pratiwi & Kusumah, 2024; Welch, 2007).

Fourth, the existence of State Universities with Legal Entities (PTN-BH) by the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020 (Permendikbud-4, 2020). LAM and PTN-BH are efforts by the University/Institute/Higher Education Management to be independent in management. According to Ilham (2020), the government's desire for education management is no longer centralization, but decentralization with a spirit of autonomy. Universities must be more creative in opening businesses such as renting buildings, hotels, gas stations, food courts, courses, training, language tests, hospitals, polyclinics, and other businesses that generate income (Novela et al., 2021).

Philosophical View of Education

The view of the philosophical school of education related to the Development of National Education can be reviewed in the idealism school which is oriented towards Plato's opinion, where the essence of everything is in the order of ideas, reality is initially formed in the mind and reality of ideas, and will always exist even if matter is destroyed. Education should free individuals to develop ideas according to their talents, interests, and abilities. Learning activities carried out by students should be an expression of beliefs and ideas. Education through teachers must support in making ideas a reality. The development of Merdeka Belajar education focuses on the philosophy of idealism, as stated in IKU 7, namely, case-based learning, students will get ideas for constructing material. The idealism RPP begins by determining the topic to be developed (Kusmana, 2011). The idealist view emphasizes the form of material that directly leads to ideas and concepts, while the curriculum emphasizes humanistic-based freedom, namely according to students (Beliani, 2024; Nurmalina & Wahab, 2024). Case-based learning can be applied to many geosphere phenomena (Holley, 2017). The development of education through Merdeka Belajar shows its relevance to this school of thought and can be supported to continue to develop its application.

The development of education through Merdeka Belajar also refers to the school of realist educational philosophy, Aristotle, who argues that students are material and spiritual beings in matter, and social natural conditions. Students must be guided towards the ideal human process by forming habits at a young age (Saputri, 2024). Aristotle directed that students' logic, reality, and experience must be developed to understand reality (Erikawati, 2023). Education development through deep learning, the MBKM program, and IKU supports the philosophical view of realism. In deep learning, students must be active or student-centered, where learning is done chiefly through practice inside and outside the classroom. In the MBKM program, realism is seen in activities in the industrial world, where real knowledge is obtained in the world of work. IKU 7 in project-based learning also explores the reality of everyday life linked to learning or subject matter-centered (Dilekli, 2020; Thabrani, 2015).

The development of education is also relevant to the philosophy of constructivism in education. Constructivism refers to Jean Piaget's opinion that the thinking process should build abilities and understanding (Taber, 2024). Constructivism in education is an active process of building knowledge, seeking meaning from what is learned, and completing new concepts and ideas from what has been learned (Nurhasnah et al., 2024). Learning in this stream directs students to make hypotheses, solve problems, seek answers, describe, reflect, express questions, express ideas, and form new constructs. Learning is not transferring knowledge or inheriting ideas, but constructing knowledge through activities on various phenomena and objects that are already known (Harianto et al., 2019). Education implementers, especially teachers, are mediators and facilitators. Learning through Merdeka Belajar supports the constructivism stream, especially in deep learning, which encourages all schools to implement student-centered learning. Independent learning is even implemented by realizing that specific existing ideas cannot determine student success through national exams, so it emphasizes the process that is gone through and the good behavior that teachers facilitate directly.

Merdeka Belajar is also adjusted to the philosophy of progressivism. John Dewey argued that correct knowledge today may not be correct in the future, so education must be based on the challenges and realities of life (Sopacua & Fadli, 2022). Education does not even focus on the field of content. This school of thought rejects political and authoritarian interference in education. Progressive education recognizes that human intelligence is a tool for living and developing a personality influenced by the environment. According to progressivism, education is always in a process that emphasizes the development of individuals, society, and culture (Sulistyaningsih, 2023). The Merdeka Belajar program through the Kampus Merdeka and the implementation of subject matter-centered learning need to be supported because they are based on the progressive school. Students are free to exercise their right to study outside the main study program, which opens up the stigma of authority in higher education. Students have the right to determine what abilities are needed according to their needs and the times. They can even differ from the thematic study program, such as geography education, studying pure tourism.

The pragmatism view can also be studied through the independent learning program in education development. The school of thought, considered the original American philosophy, argues that learners only learn what they experience (Shook, 2023). Pragmatism considers truth by looking at the consequences or results that are practically useful, where the logic of observation is individual, concrete facts. This school also assumes that education only occurs when learners learn the meaning contained in it, which never existed without creation (Nidawati, 2022). Learners are dynamic and plastic creatures. The pragmatic view is close to realism and constructivism, where the reality experienced in learning is used as material to test the truth of material or science. The relevance of the pragmatic school to the independent learning program can be seen from the development of internship programs and the application of deep learning. The emphasis on finding reality through internships in the independent program aligns with realizing that this school, internships at BMKG, Mining Companies, BPBD, and other agencies for geographical science, greatly complement the theory in the classroom. Deep learning that carries out student-based learning, where students seek the truth through a series of trials to conclude the material. Pragmatism is also close to

rationalism, where logic based on facts and data is the basis for learning (Marsonet, 2018; Rescher, 2016).

Flexibility and progress have been explained in previous philosophical schools. However, the development of education through the independent learning program does not immediately assume that what already exists and is believed is reprehensible. The MBKM program with cultural exchange, especially in the Nusantara module, makes cultural understanding well-honed to influence character formation. This program is, by the view of the essentialist philosophical school, emphasizing the inheritance of cumulative historical and cultural values, providing the right skills, attitudes, and values, as the essence of education (Mariyono, 2024). This program, which is oriented towards the inheritance of Indonesian culture, is the basis for its suitability with the essentialist philosophical school. Essentialism is education based on cultural values that have existed since the beginning of civilization. Cultural geography and human geography are branches of the Nusantara module.

4. CONCLUSION

The development of national education in Indonesia continues to adapt to the times, the needs of society, and global demands, with various changes since the pre-independence period to the reformation. In 2003, the National Education System Law became the basis for organizing education, emphasizing the development of students' morals, intellectual, social, emotional, and national identity, and their relevance to the world of work and global dynamics. In 2020, the government launched the Merdeka Belajar policy to improve the quality of education through flexible learning, assessment, and admission of new students, including empowering schools in determining graduation without national exams and zoning systems. However, in 2025, the national exam policy is being reviewed, and the zoning system is being replaced with domicile. Merdeka Belajar in higher education is realized through the Kampus Merdeka Program, which allows students to study outside their program for three semesters, supported by eight Main Performance Indicators (IKU), LAM accreditation, and PTN-BH autonomy. This policy is also relevant to geography learning, both in high school and college, which not only discusses the physical and social aspects of the region but also develops critical thinking skills and understanding of global issues such as climate change and disaster resilience. At the same time, the Kampus Merdeka Program increases the relevance of geography graduates to the job market's needs through internships and cross-disciplinary studies.

From the educational philosophy perspective, various schools of thought such as idealism, realism, constructivism, progressivism, pragmatism, and essentialism provide a basis for thinking in developing a holistic, adaptive, and relevant national education to global dynamics. These schools emphasize the importance of developing individual potential, active and meaningful learning, adapting to change, and preserving cultural and humanitarian values, so that the Merdeka Belajar policy and other educational policies are viewed through the lens of this philosophy to accommodate diversity, innovation, local, and global needs. The integration between national education policy and educational philosophy is expected to enable the Indonesian education system to achieve national goals, namely to create faithful people, have noble morals, be healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible.

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