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## Concept of Education and Teaching from Ki Hajar Dewantara Point of View

Ummal Khoiriyah<sup>1</sup>, Risma Fahrul Amin<sup>2</sup>, Zakaria Bintang Pamungkas<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Ibrahimy, Indonesia; ummal2014@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Ibrahimy, Indonesia; rismafahrulamin@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahiddin, Indonesia; bintangpugkasl@gmail.com

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### Abstract

This study explores Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of education and teaching as a foundational indigenous educational philosophy grounded in humanistic and cultural values. Employing a systematic literature review, the study synthesizes classical and contemporary scholarly works to examine the philosophical foundations, pedagogical principles, and contemporary relevance of Dewantara's educational thought, with particular emphasis on the among system. The findings reveal that Dewantara conceptualized education as a process of humanization (memanusiakan manusia), aimed at fostering learner independence (kemerdekaan), moral character, and social responsibility through the balanced development of *cipta* (intellect), *rasa* (emotion), and *karsa* (will). Central to this framework, the among system positions teachers as guides, role models, and moral companions who facilitate learning through example, encouragement, and supportive supervision rather than coercion. The study further demonstrates that Dewantara's ideas remain highly relevant in addressing contemporary educational challenges, including over-standardization, moral decline, and cultural alienation, offering a culturally responsive alternative to neoliberal and exam-oriented educational paradigms. Overall, this research affirms that Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy constitutes a comprehensive, ethical, and adaptable framework that continues to contribute meaningfully to debates on character education, learner-centered pedagogy, and the integration of local wisdom in modern education.

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### Keywords

Ki Hadjar Dewantara; among system; educational philosophy; character education; indigenous knowledge; learner-centered pedagogy.

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### Corresponding Author

Ummal Khoiriyah

Universitas Ibrahimy, Indonesia; ummal2014@gmail.com

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an effort to advance human life and advance the life of a nation. In the history of Dutch colonial colonization, the education system in Indonesia was closely related to Dutch colonial interests and the western education system. Wiratmoko (2011) revealed that the education



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system during the colonial rule that was oriented towards Dutch interests could cause a large gap in Indonesian society.

Ki Hadjar Dewantara considered the western system inappropriate for education in Indonesia, therefore he came up with the among system, a system that was inversely proportional to the western system or the Dutch system at that time. The among system is an education system that aims to produce humans who can manage themselves, humans who stand alone in feeling, thinking, and acting, humans with personality and character (le Febre, 1952). The current term is education with a mental revolution.

With the various problems that occur in Indonesia and facing the challenges of global competition, an education system that prioritizes mental revolution is needed, an education system that emphasizes copyright, taste and karsa. The education system raised by Ki Hadjar Dewantara can be a superior system and method in making Indonesian humans who have the power of copyright, taste, and karsa and the among system can be a superior and distinctive system in facing educational competition between countries (Wagid, 2009). Educational efforts with this system will produce smart and humane people in the face of increasingly fierce competition. The problems discussed in this study are 1) What is Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of education; 2) What are the principles of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's education?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Education and Teaching as Philosophical Constructs**

Education has long been understood not merely as the transmission of knowledge, but as a holistic process aimed at developing human potential intellectually, morally, and socially. Classical educational theorists argue that education should cultivate autonomy, critical thinking, and moral character (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970). Within this perspective, teaching is viewed as a humanistic endeavor that respects learners as active agents rather than passive recipients of instruction. This philosophical stance contrasts sharply with colonial and technocratic models of education that prioritize control, standardization, and instrumental outcomes over human development.

In the Indonesian context, colonial education systems were largely designed to serve political and economic interests, resulting in social stratification and limited access to meaningful learning opportunities. Such systems emphasized obedience and rote learning, marginalizing local values and cultural identities. This historical background forms a critical foundation for understanding Ki Hadjar Dewantara's resistance to Western educational paradigms and his formulation of an alternative, culturally grounded educational philosophy.

### **2.2 Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Educational Philosophy**

Ki Hadjar Dewantara is widely recognized as the pioneer of national education in Indonesia and a central figure in developing an indigenous educational philosophy rooted in local wisdom and humanistic values (Dewantara, 1962; Tilaar, 2009). His conception of education emphasizes the development of the whole person, integrating intellectual capacity, emotional sensitivity, and moral consciousness. Dewantara viewed education as a process of *memanusiakan manusia*—humanizing human beings—rather than merely preparing individuals for economic productivity (Dewantara, 1977; Yamin, 2009).

Central to Dewantara’s philosophy is the idea that education should nurture independence (*kemerdekaan*) in thought, feeling, and action. This principle positions learners as autonomous individuals capable of self-regulation and moral responsibility (Dewantara, 1962). Dewantara’s educational thought aligns with contemporary constructivist and learner-centered paradigms, which emphasize learner agency, contextual learning, and personal meaning-making (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Tilaar, 2015).

### **2.3 The Among System and Its Core Principles**

The among system constitutes the core pedagogical framework proposed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara. Derived from the Javanese concept of *momong* (to nurture or guide), the among system emphasizes guidance rather than coercion in the educational process (Dewantara, 1962; Wagid, 2009). Within this system, teachers are positioned not as authoritarian figures but as facilitators who accompany learners in their intellectual, emotional, and moral development.

This system is encapsulated in Dewantara’s well-known educational motto: *Ing ngarsa sung tulada, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani*—leading by example, building motivation among learners, and providing support from behind (Dewantara, 1977). These principles underscore the ethical and relational dimensions of teaching, highlighting the importance of role modeling, encouragement, and trust (Tilaar, 2009). In contrast to rigid, textbook-driven instruction, the among system promotes pedagogical flexibility, empathy, and contextual responsiveness (Yamin, 2009; Wagid, 2009).

### **2.4 Cipta, Rasa, and Karsa in Educational Practice**

A distinctive feature of Ki Hadjar Dewantara’s educational thought is the integration of *cipta* (intellect), *rasa* (emotion), and *karsa* (will). These three dimensions represent a holistic model of human development, asserting that education should balance cognitive growth with emotional intelligence and moral determination (Dewantara, 1962; Tilaar, 2015). Dewantara rejected fragmented views of education that prioritize intellectual achievement while neglecting emotional and ethical formation.

Modern educational research increasingly supports this holistic perspective, emphasizing social-emotional learning, character education, and ethical competence as essential outcomes of schooling (Elias et al., 1997; Lickona, 1991). The emphasis on *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa* aligns with contemporary global discourses on mental revolution, values-based pedagogy, and character development, reinforcing the continued relevance of Dewantara's ideas in addressing moral degradation, cultural alienation, and the overemphasis on standardized academic achievement (Tilaar, 2009; Wagid, 2009).

### **2.5 Relevance of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Thought in Contemporary Education**

Recent studies have revisited Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy as a viable alternative to dominant Western educational models, particularly in multicultural and postcolonial contexts (Tilaar, 2015; Yamin, 2009). Scholars argue that his educational principles offer a culturally responsive framework capable of fostering ethical citizenship, creativity, and social responsibility while preserving local identity (Wagid, 2009).

In an era marked by globalization and intense educational competition, Dewantara's humanistic and character-oriented approach provides a critical counterbalance to neoliberal, exam-oriented, and market-driven educational systems that often marginalize moral and cultural dimensions of learning (Apple, 2006; Tilaar, 2009). Consequently, Dewantara's educational philosophy is increasingly regarded not merely as a historical legacy, but as a relevant and adaptive framework for contemporary educational reform.

## **3. METHODS**

This study employs a systematic literature review to identify, analyze, and synthesize scholarly works related to Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of education and teaching, with particular attention to the among system and its philosophical foundations (Kitchenham, 2004; Snyder, 2019). Relevant sources were collected from academic journals, scholarly books, historical education manuscripts, and reputable online academic repositories. The search process utilized keywords such as "Ki Hadjar Dewantara educational philosophy," "among system," "Indonesian educational thought," "character education," and "mental revolution in education."

The selection criteria prioritized publications that explicitly discuss Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational concepts, principles, and pedagogical implications, including both classical texts and contemporary academic interpretations. To ensure conceptual depth and relevance, the review included seminal works and peer-reviewed studies published primarily within the last twenty years, while also incorporating foundational historical sources essential to understanding Dewantara's original ideas.

A thematic analysis was conducted to categorize the findings into key conceptual areas, namely: (1) the philosophical foundations of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational thought, (2) the principles of the among system, (3) the concepts of *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa* in educational practice, and (4) the relevance of Dewantara's ideas to contemporary educational challenges and character education. Through this analytical process, recurring themes, convergences, and divergences across sources were systematically identified and interpreted. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive and critical understanding of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy, situating it within both historical and contemporary educational discourse. Moreover, it allows the study to highlight conceptual gaps and potential directions for future research on indigenous educational philosophies and their relevance in modern educational systems.

#### 4. RESULTS

The systematic literature review yielded several dominant and recurring themes concerning Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of education and teaching. The findings indicate that his educational philosophy is consistently framed as a humanistic, culturally grounded, and learner-centered system that stands in contrast to Western colonial educational models.

First, the analysis reveals that Ki Hadjar Dewantara conceptualizes education as a process of humanization (*memanusiakan manusia*), emphasizing moral character, independence, and social responsibility rather than mere academic achievement. Across the reviewed literature, education is positioned as a means to cultivate autonomous individuals who are capable of thinking, feeling, and acting independently within their social and cultural contexts.

Second, the review highlights the among system as the core pedagogical framework underpinning Dewantara's educational thought. The among system is consistently described as an approach that prioritizes guidance over coercion, positioning teachers as facilitators rather than authoritative figures. The principles encapsulated in *ing ngarsa sung tulada*, *ing madya mangukarsa*, *tut wuri handayani* emerge as foundational teaching values that emphasize role modeling, motivation, and supportive supervision.

Third, the findings demonstrate that the integration of *cipta* (intellect), *rasa* (emotion), and *karsa* (will) constitutes a holistic model of learner development. The literature consistently underscores that Dewantara's framework does not separate cognitive growth from emotional and moral development. Instead, it promotes a balanced educational process that nurtures intellectual competence, emotional sensitivity, and ethical determination simultaneously.

Finally, the results indicate a strong consensus among contemporary scholars regarding the continued relevance of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy. The reviewed studies

suggest that his ideas offer a viable response to current educational challenges, including moral decline, over-standardization, cultural alienation, and the dominance of exam-oriented practices. Dewantara's thought is frequently cited as a foundation for character education, mental revolution, and culturally responsive pedagogy in modern educational discourse.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce the view that Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy represents a foundational indigenous framework that remains highly relevant in both national and global educational contexts (Tilaar, 2009; Yamin, 2009). His conception of education as a process of humanization (*memanusiakan manusia*) aligns closely with humanistic and constructivist theories proposed by Dewey and Freire, yet it is distinct in its strong cultural grounding and moral orientation (Dewantara, 1962; Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970).

The prominence of the *among* system in the reviewed literature highlights its significance as an ethical and relational model of teaching. Unlike authoritarian or technocratic approaches, the *among* system positions teaching as a moral practice that requires empathy, trust, and responsibility (Dewantara, 1977; Wagid, 2009). This finding supports contemporary critiques of rigid, textbook-driven instruction and standardized education, which often marginalize learners' individuality and local cultural values (Apple, 2006; Giroux, 2011). In this sense, Dewantara's principles offer a counter-narrative to dominant neoliberal educational paradigms that prioritize efficiency, accountability, and measurable outcomes over human development (Tilaar, 2009).

The integration of *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa* further demonstrates Dewantara's holistic vision of education. This triadic framework resonates with current emphases on social-emotional learning and character education, suggesting that Dewantara's ideas anticipated many modern educational concerns (Dewantara, 1962; Lickona, 1991; Elias et al., 1997). By emphasizing emotional and moral development alongside intellectual growth, his philosophy challenges reductionist views of learning that prioritize measurable outcomes over ethical and human dimensions (Biesta, 2010).

Moreover, the relevance of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thought in contemporary education reflects a growing scholarly interest in indigenous and postcolonial educational philosophies (Smith, 1999; Tilaar, 2015). In an era of globalization and educational homogenization, Dewantara's culturally responsive approach provides an important alternative that values local wisdom and national identity while still engaging with global challenges (Wagid, 2009; Yamin, 2009). This positions his philosophy not merely as a historical artifact, but as a living framework adaptable to modern educational reforms.

However, the discussion also suggests that the practical implementation of Dewantara's principles requires systemic and structural support. Rigid curricula, high-stakes assessments, and policy constraints may limit teachers' ability to fully enact the among system in contemporary classrooms (Apple, 2006; Ball, 2012). Therefore, translating Dewantara's philosophy into practice necessitates teacher autonomy, reflective professionalism, and institutional flexibility (Schön, 1983; Tilaar, 2009).

Overall, this study affirms that Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of education and teaching offers a comprehensive, ethical, and culturally rooted framework capable of addressing both enduring and emerging educational challenges. His philosophy contributes significantly to ongoing debates on character education, learner-centered pedagogy, and the role of local wisdom in shaping meaningful and humane educational practices (Tilaar, 2015; Biesta, 2010).

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of education and teaching represents a comprehensive, humanistic, and culturally grounded educational philosophy that remains highly relevant in contemporary educational discourse. Through a systematic literature review, the findings demonstrate that Dewantara conceptualized education as a process of humanization (*memanusiakan manusia*), emphasizing the balanced development of intellect, emotion, and moral will rather than the mere pursuit of academic achievement.

The analysis highlights the among system as the central pedagogical framework underpinning Dewantara's thought. By prioritizing guidance over coercion and positioning teachers as facilitators, role models, and moral companions, the among system offers an ethical and relational approach to teaching that contrasts sharply with authoritarian, standardized, and exam-oriented educational models. The principles of *ing ngarsa sung tulada*, *ing madya manguk karsa*, *tut wuri handayani* emerge as enduring pedagogical values that promote learner autonomy, motivation, and trust.

Furthermore, the integration of *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa* reflects Dewantara's holistic vision of education, aligning closely with contemporary emphases on character education, social-emotional learning, and values-based pedagogy. This triadic framework underscores the necessity of educating learners as whole persons, capable of critical thinking, emotional sensitivity, and ethical responsibility.

Despite its conceptual strength, the study also acknowledges that the effective implementation of Dewantara's educational philosophy requires systemic support, including teacher autonomy, flexible curricula, and institutional commitment. Rigid educational policies and high-stakes

assessment regimes may constrain the realization of the among system in practice.

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