

## Freedom to Learn: A Progressivism View and its Relevance to Teachers as Agent of Change

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of writing is to analyze Independent Learning from the perspective of progressivism in educational reform, and its relevance for teachers as *agents of change*. Method of writing with *literature review* (library review). The literature review is carried out by collecting data from various library sources as a source of ideas to explore new ideas. Writing results: (1). Freedom to learn as an effort towards quality education, creating innovative and fun education, building superior, intelligent, creative human resources to face future challenges; (2). The concept of independent learning has parallels with the concept of progressivism emphasizing independence and flexibility for teachers, students, schools towards the implementation of education towards a better direction; (3). Freedom to learn in the perspective of progressivism has relevance to the teacher as an *agent of change*. Conclusion: *Agent of change* for teachers, implies that teachers are very influential in educational reform. Changing himself to act professionally, encouraging students to always progress as a generation that will respond to the challenges of changing times, in line with the goal of independent learning in the perspective of progressivism.

**Keywords:** freedom to learn, progresivisme, *agent of change*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Along with the current developments that continue to move towards progress, education is a top priority for the country. Education has a goal, namely to produce a generation that is intelligent, superior and has a virtuous character. Not only that, education also encourages change for the better from generation to generation. Through education, it is hoped that it can give birth to innovative, creative things and produce generations that are capable of bringing about change. Through education, it is hoped that it can give birth to innovative, creative things and produce generations that are capable of bringing

about change. Education in Indonesia is also an important and valuable matter, especially in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution in the fourth paragraph, it is explicitly stated that educating the life of the nation is the responsibility of the state. The government always pays more attention to improving the quality of education in Indonesia. This is evidenced by the compulsory education program, scholarships for underprivileged and outstanding students, scholarships for educators and has even budgeted 20 percent of the state budget for the education sector.

Improving the quality of education is important in order to keep abreast of globalization developments and also to compete with several developed countries. Various regulations and policies were made by the Indonesian government in order to improve the quality of education which can improve the quality of human resources so that educational goals can be achieved. One of the newest policies in Indonesia today, as has been announced by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim, is the "Freedom to Learn" policy. This independent learning policy provides independence and freedom for students, teachers and schools in creating innovative education. The main objective of the Freedom to learn program is to liberate students, teachers and schools from various shackles (Beto, C. 2022).

Freedom to learn has the same concept in the perspective of "Progressivism". Both have the same direction and goals with the hope that education in Indonesia will become more advanced and of better quality. This is because progressivism assumes that in education all elements are considered as the driving force to achieve progress or "progress" in the future. For progressivism, ideas, theories, these ideals must be searched for meaning in order to achieve progress. In the context of education, progressivism also views that students are given the freedom and skills to conduct experiments. In addition, progressivism also requires changes in students to become individuals who are tough and able to face problems and be able to adapt to social life in society. In this context, education will be successful if it is able to involve students actively in learning that leads to the ability to think systematically.

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From the explanation above it is clear that in independent learning and also progressivism requires changes for the better and quality. The process of change needs to be addressed wisely by education practitioners, especially teachers. A teacher has a role in guiding the direction in which this education will be taken. The role of the teacher as a manager, designing learning, implementing learning, and controlling student competence, so as to produce qualified graduates, is an integral part that cannot be separated from the figure of a teacher. The role of the teacher is needed in encouraging change for the better. An agent of change for a teacher implies that the teacher is very influential in reforming the world of education.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this paper is literature review. This literature review is intended to solve a problem that basically rests on a critical and in-depth study of relevant library materials. Literature review is carried out by collecting data or information from various sources of literature which are needed as a source of ideas to explore new thoughts or ideas, as a basis for making deductions from existing knowledge, so that new theoretical frameworks can be developed, or as a basis for solving problems. Harahap (2014) library research is research that utilizes library sources in obtaining research data. The method is to find and collect several sources of research results and other supporting sources. Bungin, B. (2017) literature study is a method of collecting data by examining the literature needed in writing.

## **DISCUSSION**

The government also continues to improve education by making changes to education sector policies. The aim is to make education in Indonesia better and to apply the government's moral burden as contained in the preamble to the 1945 Constitution. The policy designed to make a big leap in the quality aspect of education is "Freedom to Learn" which is a new policy proclaimed by the Minister Education and culture. The main goal of the Merdeka Learning program is to liberate students, teachers and schools from various things that shackle the "Freedom to Learn" policy, the spirit and purpose of which is to build superior human resources (HR) to face future challenges.

Suyanto (2020) in his scientific ideas says that the independent learning policy is a scenario of significant and fundamental educational changes compared to current educational practices. Jackson (2013) so that change can

occur quickly, the character of the change must be carried out with the abilities and competencies of the actors; can be tested for truth and can also be proven; and can provide meaning and benefit to implementers and targets of change. Taufik, et al. (2020) in order to achieve this change, change must be managed by leaders (teachers) who are visionary and transformational, quickly adapting to environmental changes so that educational goals can be quickly achieved and survive in the era of global competition.

Fundamental changes to the implementation of education in a better, quality and more advanced direction, is a concept in independent learning. Besides that, Freedom of Learning is a policy created to give freedom of reasoning. Irwinsah (2020) explains the importance of freedom in reasoning that educators should have first. If it has not been realized in educators, of course it will not be applied to students. Sedana (2019) professional teachers must have integrity, knowledge, good personality, appropriate abilities, and must be educated (they are educated, not only trained). Thus, teachers can prepare students who have high reasoning, creative, and able to establish a flexible working relationship with teachers as agents of change.

The concept of Freedom to Learn has the same direction and goals as the concept in the view of "Progressivism" which emphasizes the importance of the basic principles of independence and freedom for students. Mustaghfiroh, S. (2020) in his article explains that the concept of "Freedom to Learn" and the concept of "Progressivism" both offer independence and flexibility to educational institutions to explore the potential of their students to the fullest by adjusting the interests, talents and tendencies of each participant. educate. Independence and flexibility are also given to teachers to use various teaching tools according to the needs and characteristics of students. Applications that provide various references for teachers will be used so that teachers can develop teaching practices independently, creatively, and always innovate. Therefore, the involvement of teachers from the planning of educational innovations to their implementation and evaluation plays a very large role as agents of change for educational success.

### **Independent Learning**

Freedom to Learn is a new policy program of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI) launched by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Nadiem Makarim. In his speech commemorating National Teacher's Day (Directorate General of Education and Education Personnel, 2019) explained the concept of "Freedom to Learn" which is freedom of thought and freedom of innovation. Not only improving teacher skills in teaching, but in the teaching system in the classroom must also be given innovation that is different from before. The

teaching system also underwent a process of change, from what was initially nuanced in the classroom to outside the classroom (outing class) and not only listening to the teacher's explanation, but rather forming the character of students who are brave, independent, competent and broaden students' insights in creative thinking and critical.

The main essence of freedom of thought, which is in the educator. Without it happening to educators, it would not be possible for students to happen (Ainia, D.K., 2020). Independent learning, in addition to improving students' way of thinking, by freeing students to learn outside the classroom will shape the character of students so that they are more independent in their attitudes, and more courageous in expressing their opinions. This is where the function of the form of student independence in learning. They are freed in creative thinking and innovation. Bourn (2016) the role of the teacher as an agent of change is not only in class, but also in the school environment and in the community as a whole. Making changes outside of the classroom is certainly more of a challenge and can be difficult than when making changes in the classroom. However, teachers must view this situation as a form of greater involvement as agents of change in society broadly or globally.

The purpose of independent learning is so that teachers, students and parents can get a pleasant atmosphere (Media Indonesia, 2019). It is hoped that from independent learning, teachers and students can be independent in thinking so that this can be implemented in the teacher's invasion in conveying material to students. Not only that, students are also facilitated in independent learning because it is facilitated in innovation and creativity in learning. The teacher is also expected to be a driving force to take actions that ultimately provide the best for students. The existence of the concept of the free learning movement will encourage the education system in Indonesia to be more enjoyable and students are not burdened with a value system or ranking. It is hoped that the implementation of independent learning can form students who are virtuous, competent, and ready to engage in society according to their fields.

The new policy of the Minister of Education and Culture related to independent learning, namely (Kemendikbud, 2019) is as follows.

1. The National Examination (UN) will be changed to a Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) and a Character Survey. The value of this assessment will emphasize students' literacy and numerical reasoning abilities based on the PISA test.
2. The National Standardized School Examination (USBN) will be submitted to schools. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, schools are given flexibility in determining assessments, such as portfolios, papers or

- other forms of assignments.
3. Simplification of Learning Implementation Plans (RPP). According to Nadiem Makarim, it is sufficient to make only one page of the RPP at this time.
  4. In the acceptance of new students (PPDB) the zoning system is expanded

Through this policy, it is hoped that independent learning can truly be realized effectively. Kompasiana (2020) states that if learning independence is well fulfilled, it will create "independent learning" activities and the school is called an "independent school". It is hoped that the freedom of learning that is provided can improve the quality of education in these schools (Anjelina, W., et al., 2021)

### **Progressivism**

In language the term progressivism comes from the word progressive which means to move forward. Progressivism can also be interpreted as a change movement. Progressivism is often associated with the word progress, namely progress. That is, progressivism is a philosophical school that wants a progress that will bring about a change. Progressivism emphasizes the concept of "progress" which states that humans have the ability to develop and improve their environment by applying their intelligence with scientific methods. Progressivism also emphasizes that education is not just an effort to provide a set of knowledge to students, but contains a variety of activities that lead to the training of their thinking skills as a whole, so that they can think systematically in scientific ways and make conclusions towards selecting the most feasible alternative. for solving the problems being faced (Muhmidayeli, in Rodiyah Eka, 2018).

Progressivism requires changes in students to become individuals who are tough and able to face problems and be able to adapt to social life in society. Therefore, progressivism education requires students to always progress, act constructively, think innovatively, and move actively. This is in line with the concept of independent learning applied by the current Ministry of Education and Culture which provides educational independence for students, teachers and educational institutions (Rodiyah Eka, 2018). Progressivism sees that thinking with intelligence is the main grip in education. The intelligence in question is intelligence in the context of multiple intelligences, meaning that the intelligence that is developed is multidisciplinary intelligence that has a wider scope. Omeri, N. (2015) added that multiple intelligences are to develop all the potential of students which is the potential development that builds self-concepts that support mental health. In this context, students are not only seen as individuals, but are looked up to

Progressivism also sees that the existing environment, both regarding humans and others, is not the same and static, but always changes. These changes are caused by human ability to learn many things by anticipating things that might happen in the future. Fadlillah, M. (2017) in the context of education, students are given the freedom and freedom to explore knowledge and choose education according to their interests and talents. In addition, this concept also offers independence for teachers to develop creativity in teaching and see the potential in each student. With the provision of abilities and skills that have been possessed, students are expected to be able to find and find alternative solutions for themselves that can be used to overcome any problems that will be faced in the future. In other words, education plays a role in making students more advanced in terms of the individual as well as their social environment. (Barnadib, in Ibrahim, R. 2018).

### **Agent of Change**

Educational institutions need change agents who can drive change (drive to change) not be led by change, or lead by change (<http://meeliwati.blogspot.com/2012/06/agent-of-change.html>). As a change agent, you must be more prepared to improve the quality of your human resources. The change agent needed is a change agent who has knowledge about change and knowledge of the basic aspects of change as something that is critical to the process of planning, leadership, managing, and evaluating change. One of the agents of change in education is the teacher

Teachers must be the most prepared agents of change in the implementation of educational innovations. Teachers must take steps and initiatives to design learning processes that are active, innovative, creative, effective, and fun. In addition, as the spearhead in the implementation of education, the teacher's role is needed in encouraging change for the better. Charisma and expertise in managing and facilitating students in the teaching and learning process as well as the preparation and management of administration, are very much needed by students, schools, the community and the government. The competence of the teacher as a professional, educational, social, and personality figure is needed in helping to realize the ideals of educating the life of the nation.

As explained by Zaragoza, et al., (2021) they are required to have pedagogic, professional, personality and social competencies. In the 21st century, schools need teachers who can innovate in a sustainable manner using these four competencies. Furthermore, according to Andrian (2018) competence is a provision for teachers to become agents of change in the educational process. The term refers to someone who is professionally tasked with influencing others in innovative ways. In essence, the role of the teacher is to

shape and produce a potential and superior generation. To be able to become agents of change in schools, teachers must be skilled at using authority, responsibility, connections, demonstrations, and professionalism (Blake Yancey, in Damayanti, R.R., et al. 2022)

Observing the teacher's role as an educator, then he is the person who bears the responsibility to guide. With his teaching activities, he forms his teacher's identity and will provide change in his students. As agents of change, teachers change students to be better, smarter, have more skills that are useful for their professional development in society. The teacher's role is very strategic and needed in responding to changing times, so that their presence is expected to guide education in a better direction. Raihana (2018) explains that the role of an agent of change includes changing knowledge, ways of thinking, lifestyle, habits, and social relations of students. Changes in knowledge are carried out by guiding children to find answers to each question through various activities in the learning process.

There are two ways that must be done by teachers so that they can survive in their professional performance, firstly being critical of various kinds of government education policies that suppress their autonomy and professionalism, and secondly, being self-critical in order to rediscover their freedom and autonomy as agents of change (agents of change). of change). When education policies are not in favor of teachers, there is one force that can become a bargaining chip for teachers' strength, namely to regain freedom and live their own identity as agents of change. That is actually the deepest essence of the existence of a teacher. Drajadi, N. A. (2021) in his article interprets that teachers as agents of change will transform themselves into someone who acts professionally; teachers who turn their students into students with character; and teachers who change the learning process to be more qualified and meaningful.

### **Teachers as transformative intellectuals**

The role of the teacher in society determines the way in which we construct the social order. We must re-understand the role of teachers as engaged and transformative intellectuals. In addition to being critical, teachers are also able to relate pedagogical theory to broader social issues so that they are able to control and direct their performance more actively and transformatively. Through their professional performance, teachers can play a more active role in developing more productive critical awareness in students.

Putra, A. P. (2015) explains transformational leadership regarding how to encourage others to develop and produce performance beyond the expected standard, and focuses on the influence and relationship of superiors and subordinates (in this case teachers and students). Snaunasu (2012)



transformational leadership to deal with transformational change. Transformational leadership is a more complex process, the implementation of which requires more inspiration and vision. Budiyanto, et al. (2014) Transformational leadership is able to bring about changes in values, goals, which have an impact on progress. The role of the change agent becomes important in the transformation of change. They can cause change through information and various exemplary traits (role models).

If education is a means of liberation that allows everyone to participate actively in shaping social order in society, then democratic inspiration is the soul that supports the performance of teachers as agents of change. For this reason, teachers must develop a new paradigm whose basic inspiration is democratic values that prioritize the participation of each individual in managing the governance of community life. The basic idea of inspiring democracy in education is the belief that every individual has the same right to be involved in community development. It is in this context that teachers have a very central role in instilling this democratic inspiration in every student so that later when they enter society, they can be actively and productively involved. The teacher must live up to his identity as a transformative intellectual who through his performance contributes to the development of a new social order, as well as his existence and role as an agent of change in society.

### **Leaders are agents of change**

Teachers as agents of change are none other than becoming leaders for themselves and for others so that together they are able to build a new order in accordance with their aspirations and hopes (Koesoema, D., 2016). This view presupposes that within the individual there is the potential to develop. An absolute requirement for teacher self-development as agents of change is that we believe that in every individual there is goodness, potential, and growth to change for the better and develop to become more perfect. For that every individual teacher has the potential to become a leader. Teachers are leaders and agents of educational change, because without the involvement of teachers any attempt to renew education will fail. In any school reform, a change initiative that doesn't touch the teacher's life won't change things. Teachers are at the forefront and agents of change in the world of education.

Structurally, the principal is an educational leader. But the real teacher is the real teacher because he manages the class and meets students face to face. The teacher's ability as a leader is really tested in meetings with students. The teacher is basically a leader for his own life and with that he builds shared ideals and aspirations. Leadership is a human capacity to jointly build a better future and be able to maintain an ongoing process of change (Senge, in

Koesoema, D., 2016). This change in turn fosters and strengthens individual identity as agents of change.

## CONCLUSION

Referring to the results of the discussion and description above, it can be concluded as follows: First, Freedom to Learn is the right step to achieve an ideal education, with the aim of building superior, intelligent, creative human resources to face future challenges; Second, the concept of "Freedom to Learn" has parallels with the concept of "Progressivism" education, emphasizing the independence and flexibility of educational institutions in maximally exploring the abilities and intelligence of students, as well as the potential of teachers in creating innovative, quality and fun education, providing real benefits to students. learners; Third, Freedom to Learn in the perspective of progressivism has relevance to teachers as agents of change. The teacher as a change agent will transform himself into someone who acts professionally; teachers who encourage their students to always progress as a generation that will respond to the challenges of changing times, in line with the goal of independent learning in the perspective of progressivism.

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