

Education and the Liberalism Perspective

Annisa Riza Syaharani¹

¹SMA Negeri 22 Palembang, Indonesia

Corresponding author e-mail: annisarizasyaharani@gmail.com

Article History: Received on 7 March 2023, Revised on 13 April 2023,
Published on 22 May 2023

Abstract: The birth of liberalism is inseparable from recent developments in the West since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This development underlies many significant changes in Western culture and civilization, positioning the world of education strategically on the global stage. The influence extends across all nations, necessitating the need to adapt to the requirements of liberalization. In fact, liberalism, which supports the progress of the West through the development of science, technology, and industrialization, has left suffering and crises for humanity. This has triggered strong reactions and led to the emergence of socialism and communism. This article seeks to investigate the extent to which liberalism influences education. Additionally, the article aims to explore various positive and negative impacts. Therefore, we hope this article can foster a critical attitude towards this issue.

Keywords: Communism, Liberalism, Progressivism

A. Introduction

The term liberalism originates from the Latin word 'liberality' and the English word 'liberty,' both of which mean freedom. In Arabic, liberalism is referred to as 'al-libraliyah,' which translates to 'al-humiyyah' (freedom) (Darmadi, 2019). In short, liberalism can be interpreted as the ideology of freedom (Latif, 2020). Borrowed from the field of International Relations by Scot Burnhill and Andrew Linklater (1996), liberalism is a mutually beneficial doctrine that emphasizes cooperation, freedom of thought, and believes that both can overcome competitive desires for personal interests. Liberalism is a political and moral philosophical view based on freedom, consent of the governed, and equality before the law. It is an ideological and cultural paradigm that has become mainstream worldwide, dominating the current climate of thought and human constellations. Various changes that birthed global idioms such as freedom of the press, free markets, and democracy cannot be separated from liberalism as their starting point. These maxims have forced changes across various regions, not only altering political and economic orders but also cultures and even religions. While the collapse of communism is sometimes interpreted as the defeat of socialism, which is currently considered a major political competitor globally and

nationally, liberalism is the only paradigm that should do so. It is believed to be “recognized” by all nations, communities, and humanity.

The world seems to have to accept the creation of a new system of human values, with liberalism as its main pillar, to replace the traditional values that have developed before. The education world itself, which holds a strategic position in the cultural structure of each country, is not exempt from the need to adapt to the demands of liberalization. In fact, liberalism, which actually supports the progress of the West through science, technology, and industrialization, reacted strongly to the emergence of socialist communism, leaving behind suffering and humanitarian crises. The history of colonialism in various parts of the world is often seen as a result of the influence of liberalism as the face of capitalism. Through this article, we hope to understand the extent to which liberalism influences education. Given the undisputed historical fact that liberalism in its original habitat, namely Europe, has also supported development in various aspects of life, this article specifically discusses its various positive and negative aspects and attempts to explore its impact. Therefore, we hope this article fosters a critical stance on the matter.

B. Methods

This article utilizes the article review writing method, which is conducted by collecting and comparing various data from journal articles related to humanism in the study of philosophy. The data collection technique implemented involves gathering multiple data and information from various sources, which will be used as references from several relevant sources, ranging from books to national and international journal articles.

C. Results and Discussion

Liberalism was first championed by figures like John Locke, including Jean Jaquiu Rousseau, John Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Jeremy Bentham, and Immanuel Kant. Liberalism encompasses specific principles such as individualism, rationalism, freedom, responsibility, justice, and tolerance (Batubara, 2021). There are differing opinions on the origin of liberalism. Some scholars argue that this liberal group first emerged in the West in the 16th century, after which the concept of liberalism spread to the Arab world, shaping the Arab world at that time (Freire, born on September 19, 1921, in Recife, a poor region in northeastern Brazil, studied law at the University of Recife. Christian values prominently featured in Freire’s thoughts and involvement in the Catholic Action Movement, which later became the foundation for the Liberation Theology movement.

Several works influenced Freire’s ideology, including Frantz Fanon’s ‘The Wretched of This Earth.’ He was also influenced by Albert Memi’s book, ‘The Colonizer and

the Colonized,' especially when writing 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed.' This concept was later adopted by Lev Vygotsky through his book 'Thought and Language' and also by Gramsci. Furthermore, Freire's educational ideas were influenced by Catholic liberation theology and "Marxist" ideas. Some of Freire's works include: (1) 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed,' (2) 'Urban Pedagogy' (1993), 'Pedagogy of Hope' (1995), 'Pedagogy of Thinking' (1997), 'Pedagogy of Freedom' (1998), and 'Pedagogy of Anger' (Sudjana, 2001). On May 2, 1997, Paulo Freire passed away at the Albert Einstein Hospital in São Paulo at the age of 75 due to a heart attack. Apart from his diverse works, he left a life example as an open, honest, straightforward, creative, and assertive individual. Most importantly, he always made a genuine effort to ensure that his actions reflected his words (Azmi, 2013).

The Roots of Liberalism as Discourse and Paradigm (Alsubaie, 2016) argue that the influence of liberalism exists in the field of education. This perspective is fundamental to all aspects of curriculum definition and its operational impacts. Schools teach students how to solve practical problems using individual and group problem-solving techniques based on rational scientific methods. Current educational neoliberalism focuses on high technology, industrial and information technology, as well as economic services (Arliman, 2020). This explains the emphasis of neoliberal education on human resources to generate higher economic productivity.

The history of educational neoliberalism began with the post-World War II conference known as the Bretton Woods Conference. This conference was held against the backdrop of the post-World War II era, where many countries around the world faced economic difficulties due to a shortage of human and natural resources. The conference was attended by 44 countries, including the United States. During the conference, the United States proposed deregulation and a reduction in the role of the government, often referred to as the liberalization of the service sector (Zulaeha, 2020). The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) was also signed at this meeting. The agreement reached in this treaty was that participating countries agreed to liberalize the service sectors, including trade, agriculture, intellectual property, and education.

GATS serves as the basis for the World Trade Organization (WTO), an international trade organization. However, when examined in terms of implementation patterns and strategies, as well as considering globalization and the ideologies behind it, it is evident that the state's role in fulfilling responsibilities for the education world has been withdrawn. GATS positions education as liberalized, where education operates as an open market with buyers and sellers.

GATS locks countries into a rule-based system, meaning it is effectively impossible for governments to change policies. This implies that countries indirectly support

the policies adopted by GATS unless voters have the right to choose a new government with different policies (Y, 2013). Not only limited to the formation of GATS, neoliberalism was also legalized through the establishment of the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). GERM is an education reform movement in various countries worldwide as a shift from the development paradigm in the 1980s (Resistance of Finland to the Global Educational Reform Movement, 2015). With the involvement of international development institutions such as the World Bank, WTO, and IMF, the GERM movement became the orthodoxy of education policy in various countries around the world.

Neoliberal education reforms were then implemented in various countries, especially Anglo-Saxon countries (England, Australia, and New Zealand). These reforms emphasized changes in the management of the education sector to be more flexible and meet the needs of the industry sector generated by education. Indonesia itself actively became a member of GATS since 1994, marked by the issuance of Law No. 7 of 1994 concerning the ratification of the Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (O'Neil, 2008). In line with this, Indonesia revised its education sector to align with the goals of the WTO and GATS. Curriculum and educational concepts became crucial points in aligning with the ideologies of the WTO and GATS. The link and match education policy are one of the policies implemented in line with the goals of GATS.

The long-term goal of education according to Liberal Education is to preserve and enhance the quality of existing social resilience by teaching each child how to effectively address their own life problems. In a more detailed sense, a liberal educator considers the school as an educational institution that specifically seeks to: (1) Provide information and skills needed for students to learn independently effectively, (2) Teach students how to solve practical problems through the application of problem-solving processes individually or in groups, based on scientific-rational procedures for testing the proof of ideas (Tilaar, 2009).

The emergence of liberalism is inseparable from recent developments in the West since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This underlies significant changes in culture and civilization. Liberalism arises from the need of every individual in the West to establish a value system that governs itself as a result of the development of humanistic awareness that places humans at the center of the intellectual universe. The exclusive rights of certain groups as holders of power to establish various policies and rules passed down from generation to generation are contested, even in the name of God.

This is because every individual must participate in the formulation of rules and values that govern themselves. Conceptually, this is a continuation of the tradition of ancient Greek thought that emphasizes the authority of reason and disregards myths

and traditions. Discursively, philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had different views on the extent of human thinking ability, but the ancient Greek tradition accustomed to rational and practical thinking is revived, and society is given the right to formulate its thoughts. Laws and values created by humans influence them. Therefore, obedience to the law does not come from coercion, fear, or obedience, but from self-discipline.

This pattern of thought experienced stagnation in the Middle Ages when freedom of thought was overshadowed by the Church. The Renaissance and Enlightenment revived the Greek humanist tradition, where pure thought reached the depth of vast space and time. Humanism emphasizes the human need for modern prosperity, the world. In philosophical discourse, humanism regards the rational individual as the highest value and aims to encourage the creative and moral development of individuals in a meaningful and rational way, without reference to supernatural views. The specific emphasis on rationality automatically means respect for individual rights. Western society is not only characterized by rational and empirical thinking but also by realist and utilitarian society, where apocalyptic norms are displaced by norms set by society itself.

Ideas that were frozen in the Middle Ages have been revived and conceptually strengthened by thinkers since the Renaissance and modern times. The most significant influence of the liberal revival in the early 17th century is most evident in political thought, with the opponents of the monarchy, the Monarchomachs, emphasizing the concept of popular sovereignty with secular claims and overriding religious doctrines. The implication is that the people need a parliament as their representative, not the king as their representative. This demand was translated into secularization in the 18th century, with the words "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," marking the end of religious, in this case, church, control over the state. Support for the king diminished, and the political revolutions in Europe in the 18th century, particularly in France and England, spread through the promotion of the terms Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity, coupled with demands for social and economic revolutions in the 19th century. At a political level, this recognition created a desire for different ethnic groups to form their own communities (nation-states) and create small republics in Europe.

Although the principle of responsibility cannot be used to realize a liberal social order that is optimistic about humanity, liberalism seeks to expand the realm of individual freedom by enhancing social aspects. Liberalism is a thought system based on freedom, an understanding that humans are free, or in a philosophical perspective, that humans are free. Liberalism as an ideology that focuses on individual or private freedom, emphasizing human freedom and the regulation of production, consumption, and competition, as well as private ownership of various

types of goods (Rachmahana, 2011). Liberation is essentially a social aspect of liberation, with the aim of freeing society from violence, structural poverty, the arrogance of science and technology, the exploitation of wealth, the domination of oppressive structures, and the hegemony of false consciousness (Nemiroff, 2003). O'Neil (2008) states that the direction of liberal education is to improve the quality of maintaining social structures by teaching each student how to effectively handle the problems of their lives. Liberal education includes three main forms: a) Methodological liberalism, i.e., supporters of methodological liberalism who believe that teaching methods or learning methods should be in line with the times to incorporate new psychological dimensions and the essence of human learning itself. This method is non-ideological and involves individuals in new and better methods to facilitate the achievement of current educational goals. Directive liberalism, also called directive liberalism or structural liberalism, this perspective focuses on fundamental reforms to the goals of educational institutions. There are significant concerns about compulsory education in this way. Non-directive liberalism, i.e., non-directive liberalism or free-market liberalism. In this case, we argue that the goals and methods of education need to be fundamentally reoriented from the traditional orthopractic orientation to the educational goal of educating students to solve problems optimally (Suryaman, 2020). In this regard, liberationism emphasizes the freedom of individuals to regulate existing systems, thus fulfilling the essence of agreed-upon goodness.

This last paradigm begins to approach the values of consciousness that were originally contained in the existing system. In this regard, what is interesting is when this process surpasses the boundaries of consciousness previously closed by awareness and devours regularity in the form of science and knowledge: Education becomes more radical and is then driven to shape enlightened communities without realizing the importance of addressing all realities that are increasingly perfect (Wahyudin, 2016).

As a cultural entity, education itself cannot be separated from the need to embrace ideas based on secularism, individualism, and pragmatism. The influence on education in the West can be seen from the emergence of the progressive education paradigm that views each individual as an informed party. Schools do not have the right to decide what values students are allowed or not allowed to accept. Individualism is also reflected in the individual autonomy to decide whether they want a particular religion or belief.

Education also relinquishes responsibility for the continuity of religious values and traditions because each individual is given the opportunity to determine their own values. Education is understood as a flexible, non-rigid, resistant to change, and not bound to certain teachings. In practice, progressive education rejects all forms of authoritarianism and absolutism, including those based on religion, politics, ethics,

and certain epistemological paradigms. The progressive view of education assumes that humans can understand, master, and overcome nature without relying on supernatural reality.

The implications of this view on education are certainly very broad, ranging from aspects such as the goals of education, the material and content that need to be taught, methods and learning approaches, and the necessary ways in the education process. The goal of education is no longer in line with the interests of the organizers to spread their mission in society. On the other hand, education must consider its position in the midst of society in achieving goals and meeting the needs of society for self-development. Education is needed to meet the "logic of the market," which does not ask what the market should distribute to society but what the market needs. What should be given to society (students) is not the needs of the institution providing it.

This means that the content of education institutions based on progressivism must be adjusted to the needs of society. The orientation of education that focuses on the intellectual autonomy of individuals requires a progressive pedagogical pedagogy that fully respects the personal authority of students. The quality of education is mainly determined by the organizer's capital and 4. This provides an opportunity to improve the competitiveness of educational institutions and the quality of their outputs, on the one hand, but on the other hand, education and the distribution of capital can and will be more enjoyed by those who have material resources. The same thing also applies in reverse.

In this situation, the competitiveness demanded in Western social dynamics is mainly determined by the existence of individuals. Ensuring our future no longer depends on our community, but once again on each individual. This situation itself affects changes in work ethos and societal mindset. Liberal towards a more pragmatic direction. Therefore, although the influence of liberalism is basically widespread in various aspects of humanity, its influence is not limited to changes in the management systems of social and political institutions. Education in a liberal atmosphere faces the choice of adapting to the ever-changing preferences of society or remaining true to its own idealism.

The dominance initially manifested as colonialism and imperialism, which means the control of one country over another. The end of colonialism does not signify the end of this position because imperialism refers to the influence of one nation over another in the political, economic, and even intellectual fields. With the development and progress of Western countries, especially since the end of the colonial era in 1994, and the emergence of global issues in the era of communication and information, Western countries are increasingly becoming the focal point for new nations.

We are talking about former colonial nations, both in terms of ideological choices, education systems, lifestyles, arts, social-political systems, and broader aspects of life. The strong structure of Western values expressed in various contemporary issues makes any society find it difficult not to respond to these values, both in governance practices and in managing various aspects of community life. This change creates a cultural dichotomy where adopting Western customs is considered modern, while following one's own culture is seen as traditional.

This also applies to the field of education, where education following Western models and paradigms is considered modern, while education following unique traditions is viewed as traditional. Characteristics of modern education include the formalization of education through various formal qualifications, educational levels and stages, and management systems, as well as school structures that use classical mechanisms with Western-style buildings and equipment. The need for professionals and scientists challenges educational institutions to produce individuals with specific skills and knowledge through educational experiences that can be transformed into formal certifications or verified through degrees.

Educational content no longer emphasizes only ethical and moral aspects but is increasingly replaced by topics related to the needs of society and the interests of life development. Thanks to modern education, many previously neglected aspects have become dominant directions. Due to the high interest of society in science and technology, scientific knowledge has a much greater impact than interest in religion. In the field of education itself, the advancement of science and technology has provided opportunities for humanity to develop education models, making formal education a necessity for entire communities, nations, and peoples.

D. Conclusion

As a paradigm of thought and society, the influence of liberalism on education is evident in significant changes in educational paradigms and models, ranging from orientation, learning domains, and learning patterns. These changes fundamentally represent shifts in how people think about themselves and their environment. Changing needs imply a transformation in education, no longer focused on societal needs but on individual needs. Certainly, for the field of education, this situation has both positive and negative impacts from within, affecting education itself and society at large. The positive aspects of these dynamics are reflected in lifestyle changes, mindset shifts, and human abilities to meet living needs and enhance well-being. However, in certain situations, due to the increasing dynamism of humanity, human dignity is often no longer seen as the mastery of knowledge and technology but the opposite. Liberalism, originally aimed at humanizing people, has, through its own works, changed direction and increasingly dehumanized humanity.

E. Acknowledgement

We acknowledge all stakeholders who help us in this paper.

References

- Alsubaie. (2016). Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 106-107.
- Arliman. (2020). Tantangan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Pada Revolusi 4.0. *Ensiklopedia Sosial Review*, 333-339.
- Azmi, A. (2013). Individualisme Dan Liberalisme Dalam Sekularisme Media Amerika. *Jurnal Humanas*.
- Batubara, U. (2021). *Liberalisme John Locke Dan Pengaruhnya Dalam Tatanan Kehidupan*.
- Darmadi. (2019). *Pengantar Pendidikan di Era Globalisasi*.
- Latif. (2020). *Pendidikan yang Berkebudayaan*. Gramedia Pustaka.
- Nemiroff, G. H. (2003). Reconstructing education: toward a pedagogy of critical humanism.
- O'Neil, W. F. (2008). *Ideologi-Ideologi Pendidikan*.
- Rachmahana, R. S. (2011). Psikologi Humanistik dan Aplikasinya dalam Pendidikan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*.
- Sudjana, N. (2001). *Metode & Teknik Pembelajaran Partisipatif*.
- Suryaman. (2020). Kurikulum dalam Perspektif Inovasi Pembelajaran. *Jurnal Kependidikan*, 165-176.
- Tilaar, H. D. (2009). Kebijakan Pendidikan: Pengantar untuk Memahami Kebijakan Pendidikan dan Kebijakan Pendidikan sebagai Kebijakan Publik.
- Wahyudin. (2016). Manajemen kurikulum dalam pendidikan profesi guru: studi kasus di universitas pendidikan indonesia. *Jurnal Kependidikan*, 259-270.
- Y, K. (2013). Cross Border Higher Education In China In The Globalized World. *Journal of Educational Policy*.
- Zulaeha. (2020). Prinsip Liberalisme dalam Metodologi Tafsir Feminis. *Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora*, 25-48.