

Reconstructing Education through Progressivism: A Systematic Review of Recent Evidence

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Abstract: This study aims to examine how the principles of progressivist educational philosophy are implemented in contemporary learning practices and to analyze their influence on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. The review addresses a clear research gap, namely the lack of recent systematic syntheses that critically examine progressivism-based learning within the context of modern educational challenges and empirical classroom practices. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method by analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2024. Relevant studies were retrieved from reputable databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and ERIC, using predefined inclusion criteria (focus on progressivist learning, empirical or conceptual relevance to education) and exclusion criteria (non-educational focus, non-peer-reviewed sources, and incomplete data). The results indicate that progressivist approaches consistently enhance learning quality by fostering student activeness, creativity, critical thinking, and intrinsic motivation. The synthesis highlights the central role of teachers as facilitators and the effectiveness of experiential learning in connecting educational content with real-life contexts. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative synthesis of recent literature that positions progressivism not only as a philosophical foundation but also as a practical framework for addressing current educational demands. Practically, the findings imply that educators and policymakers can adopt progressivist principles to design more student-centered, adaptive, and future-oriented learning environments.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Progressivist Educational Philosophy, Student-Centered Learning, Systematic Literature Review, Teaching and Learning Effectiveness

A. Introduction

Philosophy of education is the basis for determining the direction, goals, and methods of learning at various levels of education. Philosophy of education is a philosophy that thinks about educational problems, Philosophy of education is

also interpreted as educational theory, Philosophy of education is a science that is essentially the answer to questions in the field of education and Philosophy of education is the application of a philosophical analysis to the field of education (Yasmansyah & Iswantir, 2022). One of the schools of philosophy that has a significant influence in the world of education is progressivism.

Progressivism is rooted in the idea that education should promote continuous growth and social improvement through active learner engagement. Central to this philosophy is the belief that learning occurs most effectively through experience, inquiry, and problem-solving rather than passive knowledge transmission (Dewey, 1938). Progressivist education seeks to develop learners holistically intellectually, socially, emotionally, and ethically while fostering critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability to societal change (Kleibard, 2004; Noddings, 2016). Progressivism emerged to reform traditional educational methods, what traditional education does, then the opposite is done by progressivism. Progressivism education emphasizes activity and informality in the classroom, and believes that students will learn better when they can move and work in their own way. In implementing the learning process, students are required to collect materials from several sources, not just from one textbook that has been determined, but solving the problem is carried out in groups with other students (Siswadi, 2023).

The progressivism school views education with the process of thinking and intelligence as the main foundation. This process of thinking and intelligence can be interpreted as a process in which students can construct themselves from the experiences gained so that they can anticipate unexpected things in the future (Rizqiyani, 2023). The progressivism school in its implications for learning emphasizes more on providing students with empirical experiences to build individuals who constantly explore knowledge, practice, and study, related to educational goals (Laily Navi'atul Farah, 2022). The philosophy of progressivism emphasizes the importance of direct experience in learning, critical thinking, and active involvement of students in the educational process, progressivism encourages a learning approach towards problems, exploration, and creativity. The core principles of this philosophy are: (1) children must be given the freedom to grow and develop naturally; (2) direct experience is considered the best means to arouse interest in learning; (3) teachers are expected to act as researchers and guides in the student learning process; and (4) schools must function as laboratories that allow for pedagogical experiments and educational reform (Laksana et al., 2023).

B. Methods

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency, rigor, and replicability in the review process (Laksana et al., 2023). The review process began with the formulation of research questions, which

guided the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis of relevant studies.

1. Databases and Search Strategy

To achieve comprehensive coverage of both high-impact and relevant educational literature, searches were conducted across multiple reputable databases, namely Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The inclusion of multiple databases was intended to enhance the quality control of retrieved studies while also capturing potentially relevant grey literature. The literature search was conducted using the following search string: (“progressivism” OR “progressive education”) AND (“learning” OR “teaching”) AND (“education”). The search was limited to articles published between 2021 and 2025.

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- a. Articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals.
- b. Articles available in full text.
- c. Articles published between 2021 and 2025.
- d. Articles focusing on progressivism, philosophy of education, and learning or teaching
- e. Articles published in English and Indonesian

Exclusion criteria:

- a. Articles published in conference proceedings, book reviews, or non-academic sources.
- b. Articles with inaccessible or incomplete full texts.
- c. Articles published outside the specified time range.
- d. Articles not related to progressivism or educational philosophy.

Although English-language articles were prioritized to enhance international relevance, Indonesian-language studies were also included to capture context-specific insights. This contextual focus is acknowledged as a limitation of the study

3. Quality Assessment

Following the initial screening, eligible articles underwent a quality appraisal process using a structured checklist adapted for qualitative and conceptual educational research. The assessment criteria included:

4. Clarity of research objectives

- a. Theoretical grounding in progressivist philosophy
- b. Methodological rigor

- c. Relevance to educational practice, and
- d. Transparency of findings and conclusions

Only studies that met the minimum quality threshold across these criteria were included in the final synthesis.

5. PRISMA Flow Diagram

The selection process is summarized using a PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1), which illustrates the number of records identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review. From an initial total of 64 articles, 25 articles met the inclusion and quality assessment criteria and were included in the final analysis.

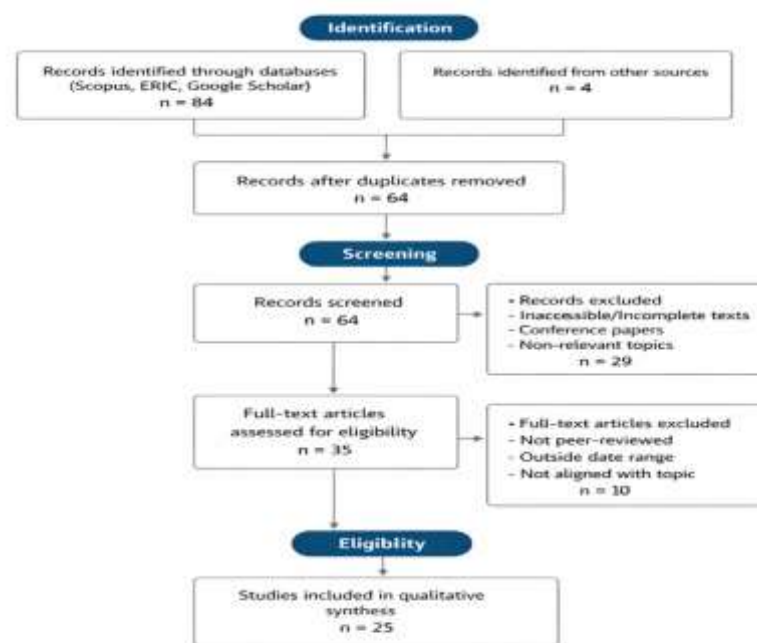


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

C. Results and Discussion

The synthesis of the selected studies demonstrates that progressivist educational philosophy exerts a multifaceted influence on contemporary educational practices, extending beyond claims of general effectiveness. Rather than functioning as a uniform pedagogical approach, progressivism operates through several interrelated themes that shape how learning is designed, experienced, and evaluated.

Table 1. Review Results of Journal Article Data Mapping with Related Research

No.	Title	Author	Research Objective	Research Method	Research Findings	Conclusion
1.	Exploring the Role of Philosophy of Education in Shaping Critical Thinking in the Technological Era	(AR & Ismail, 2024)	Reviewing the Significance of Philosophy of Education in the Context of 21st-Century Learning	Literature review	To optimize the integration of the philosophy of education in educational practice, efforts should include teacher training, curriculum development, improved access to resources, and the development of open learning spaces.	Developing teacher training, refining the curriculum, and creating open learning environments for critical thinking and reflection on ethical values can strengthen the integration of the philosophy of education in shaping students who are critical, creative, and responsible in the 21st century.
2.	The Role of Philosophy of Education in Shaping Students' Morality	(Fahira et al., 2023)	To examine the role of philosophy of education in shaping students' morality.	Literatur review	For the success of educational outcomes, it is necessary to create morally upright individuals. Therefore, moral education is essential for human life, as through education, moral development is expected to progress properly, harmoniously, and in accordance with norms, human dignity, and human values themselves.	Philosophy is closely related to education and morality, and the roles of parents and teachers are essential in shaping morality and addressing moral crises among students.
3.	The Relevance of the Progressivism Philosophy Perspective to Slow Learners in the Learning Process	(Fauziya & Aziz, 2022)	To explore the relevance of the progressivism philosophy perspective to slow	Library Research	There are five connections between slow learners and the philosophy of progressivism in education, namely: time, providing problems related to everyday	Slow learners are students who progress more slowly in the learning process, with an average IQ score of around 70-90. Therefore, teachers need to give greater attention

			learners in the learning process.		life, giving recognition to slow learners, learning through audio and visual media, and repetition or review.	to slow learners in order to maximize their learning abilities and help them explore their potential.
4.	Differentiated Learning in the Perspective of Progressivism in Science Subjects (Fitra, 2022)	To describe John Dewey's progressivism perspective on differentiated learning, as well as the implementation of differentiated learning in science subjects.	Library research based on books and academic journals.	Based on the journal analysis, references to the implementation of differentiated learning in science subjects at the junior high school level are still limited. In science learning, the dependent variables that have been measured so far are mostly limited to learning outcomes and academic achievement, making them less varied.	One of the learning strategies that aligns with progressivism is differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is an effort to accommodate the learning process according to students' learning needs. However, based on the literature review, references to the implementation of differentiated learning in science subjects at the junior high school level are very limited, and most studies only examine it from the aspect of students' learning outcomes.	
5.	The Importance of 21st-Century Curriculum Development Based on the Philosophy of Progressivism in Education (Juwan & Siswadi, 2023)	To explore and illustrate the importance of 21st-century curriculum development based on the philosophy of progressivism in education in order to understand how this approach can	Qualitative with literature study and content analysis	This study highlights the importance of a 21st-century curriculum based on progressivism. Key findings include project-based learning, learner empowerment, skills integration, student-centered learning, holistic character	Progressivism in curriculum development fosters a generation capable of facing future challenges and changes by laying the foundation for education that is relevant, meaningful, and student-centered.	

			enhance the relevance of education to contemporary needs and demands.		development, and future readiness.
6.	Progressivism Philosophy in Education: A Systematic Literature Review	(Laksana et al., 2023)	To present a systematic literature review using the PRISMA method on research regarding progressivism philosophy in Indonesia, from its concepts and review to its application.	Systematic Literature Review using the PRISMA Method	The philosophy of progressivism has a considerable influence on education in Indonesia. This influence ranges from curriculum development to the application of progressivism philosophy principles.
7.	Progressivism Philosophy of Education and Its Implications for History Learning	(Maulidan & Yulifar, 2025)	To describe the progressivism philosophy of education in history learning.	Literature Review	The influence of the progressivism philosophy on history teaching includes student-centered learning, contextual learning, collaborative learning, the development of critical thinking skills, emphasis on personal experiences, curriculum flexibility, and the use of technology and instructional media.
					Progressivism has a fairly significant positive impact on various aspects of education, ranging from principles of innovation that foster the use of technology to curricula that emphasize the development of individuals who are active, creative, and ethical within society. With progressivism implemented through differentiated learning, history instruction becomes more contextual, meaningful, and fosters intellectual curiosity as well as the skills needed to face future challenges. Consequently, history learning is no longer limited to memorizing facts and events, but emphasizes the development of critical and analytical thinking skills, as well as the ability to draw lessons from the past to address present and future challenges.

8.	The Philosophy of Progressivism and Its Perspective on Science Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum	(Meliniasari et al., 2023)	To discuss the perspective of the progressivism philosophy on science learning in the Merdeka Curriculum.	Library Research	The progressivism philosophy advocates for the advancement of education, making it high-quality and providing tangible benefits for students in facing the developments of the times. One of the distinctive features of the Merdeka Curriculum is the implementation of project-based learning. Through project-based learning, students can maximize their creativity in solving real-life problems.	Progressivism strongly emphasizes problem-solving in the educational process; for progressivism, everything is viewed with a forward-looking perspective. This can be practiced through project-based learning, which is a hallmark of the Merdeka Curriculum implemented in Indonesia. By engaging in project-based learning, students can maximize their creativity in solving real-life problems.
9.	Implementation of the Progressivism Philosophy in Learning According to Educational Philosophy and Curriculum Development in Indonesia	(Rahma et al., 2022)	So that readers can understand the implementation of the progressivism philosophy and examples of its curriculum, which are explained in detail within the education curriculum in Indonesia.	Qualitative method using a library research approach.	Educators act only as motivators, guides, or facilitators for students. The progressivism philosophy employs non-authoritarian and non-indoctrinating learning approaches. The curriculum used is flexible, free, and open, and does not indoctrinate students. Indonesia is one of the countries that develops its curriculum to keep pace with the times and to compete with international education standards.	The progressivism philosophy employs non-authoritarian and non-indoctrinating learning approaches. The curriculum used is flexible, adaptive to the times, dynamic, open, and free, as exemplified by Indonesia's curriculum, which has undergone changes to develop education for its people and remain competitive with international education. According to progressivism, a good educator is one who provides instruction and

10.	The Role of Progressivism in Enhancing Students' Morality in the Industry 4.0 Era	(Ramdani et al., 2024)	To analyze the role of progressivism philosophy in enhancing students' morality in the Industry 4.0 era.	Literature Review	Philosophy is used to address human life problems, particularly progressivism, which is viewed from the perspective of human life. The intended outcome of the educational process is the development of morally upright individuals. Therefore, moral education is essential for human life, as it is expected to guide moral development in a proper, harmonious manner, aligned with norms, human dignity, and fundamental human values.	motivation to students without forcing them in any way From the perspective of human life, progressivism in education not only delivers knowledge to students but also applies moral values and universal human values. The family serves as the primary environment for a child's growth and development, while teachers play a strategic role in fostering and shaping students' character and morality.
11.	The Implementation of Educational Philosophy through Innovation in Indonesian Language Learning Materials	(Rusli & Zaim, 2022)	To clarify the role of educational philosophy in education and the relationship between philosophy and innovation in Indonesian language learning materials.	Qualitative	Learning innovations can enhance instructional approaches, teaching methods, the use of learning media, the development of teaching materials, improvement of learning achievement, assessment systems, and overall learning processes.	The development of technology greatly influences the learning process, as nowadays most activities are conducted using available technologies, including enhancing learning innovations so that education does not fall behind the times. High-quality education contributes to a brighter future. Therefore, the application of educational

12.	The Implementation of Progressivism Theory to Improve Student Learning at SD Negeri Tegallega 1 Cipanas	(Suherman et al., 2024)	To determine the extent to which progressivism theory has been implemented in the learning process at elementary schools.	Qualitative research with data collection techniques through observation and interviews.	The research results indicate that student activities increased, learning motivation improved, critical thinking skills were developed, student character was strengthened, learning materials became more relevant to students' daily lives, teacher-student relationships were reinforced, and social skills were enhanced.	philosophy through innovative Indonesian language learning materials is necessary today. The implementation of progressivism theory at SDN Tegallega 1 has had a positive impact on improving the quality of learning. Through experience-based learning, the teacher's role as a facilitator, and holistic evaluation, students become more active, creative, and critical, as well as motivated in the learning process. This approach also enhances the relevance of learning to daily life. Students are more enthusiastic, happy, and engaged in classroom activities.
13.	The Importance of Implementing Progressivism Philosophy in Elementary Schools	(Amelia, 2023)	To examine the importance of implementing progressivism philosophy in elementary schools.	Literature Review	The importance of implementing progressivism philosophy in education, including its application in elementary schools. The progressivism philosophy is highly effective in education because it aims to shape students into individuals eager for change, with the goal of progress.	The progressivism philosophy should be implemented from an early age, namely in elementary schools. Teachers must be able to guide elementary students effectively. Progressivism recognizes that students possess the potential for reasoning and intelligence to develop, and it

14.	The Relevance of Progressivism Philosophy in Differentiated Learning within the Merdeka Curriculum	(Simarona et al., 2024)	To examine the relevance of progressivism philosophy to differentiated learning in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.	Descriptive qualitative	Progressivism philosophy and differentiated learning go hand in hand in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. Both emphasize the development of students' abilities through experience and independence. This approach allows students to learn according to their abilities and interests, with teachers acting as facilitators who adapt instruction to the individual characteristics of each student. Progressivism philosophy and differentiated learning support the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia, creating an inclusive and effective learning environment.	acknowledges that individuals, or students, are inherently active, creative, and dynamic in responding to their environment. Progressivism philosophy, which emphasizes student experience and independence, aligns with differentiated learning and the Merdeka Curriculum. Progressivist principles such as active, contextual, and collaborative learning, as well as appreciation for creativity, are consistent with differentiated learning strategies that accommodate individual learning needs.
15.	The Significance of 21st-Century Curriculum Development Based on Progressivism Philosophy in Education	(Yusuf, 2025)	To examine and highlight the importance of developing a 21st-century curriculum	Qualitative study through literature review and content analysis.	Progressivism is essential in developing a modern curriculum. This includes implementing project-based learning, student	Progressivism's perspective on education and curriculum offers a relevant and engaging approach to developing a 21st-century

based on
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education to
contemporary
demands.

empowerment, skills
integration, student-centered
instruction, holistic character
development, and future
readiness. Furthermore, it
can serve as a guide for
educators and policymakers
in designing meaningful
learning experiences and
preparing students to face
the challenges of an ever-
evolving world.

curriculum. A progressive
21st-century curriculum
design should emphasize
active learning, collaboration,
smart technology, 21st-
century skills, as well as
critical and creative thinking.

Thematic Synthesis of Findings

Experiential Learning and Individual Experience

Across the reviewed studies, experiential learning emerges as the central mechanism through which progressivist principles are enacted. Learning activities grounded in real-life contexts such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, and inquiry-based instruction consistently promote student engagement, critical thinking, and creativity. This finding aligns directly with Dewey's principle that education must be rooted in learners' lived experiences and that knowledge is constructed through interaction with the environment. Differentiated learning approaches were found to be particularly effective when they acknowledged individual differences in students' interests, abilities, and social contexts, reinforcing Dewey's emphasis on education as a process of individual growth rather than standardized transmission of content (Amiri, 2025)

The Role of Teachers as Facilitators

The reviewed literature consistently positions teachers as facilitators rather than authoritative transmitters of knowledge. Teachers design learning environments that encourage exploration, dialogue, and reflection, enabling students to actively construct meaning. However, several studies note that this shift in teacher roles requires substantial pedagogical competence and philosophical understanding. Where teachers lacked adequate training or institutional support, the implementation of progressivist practices tended to be superficial, reducing experiential learning to procedural activities rather than meaningful inquiry (Hadar, & Brody, 2021).

Curriculum Innovation and Technological Integration

Progressivism is closely associated with curriculum models that prioritize flexibility, interdisciplinary learning, and the integration of educational technology (Kahdim et al., 2023). Digital tools were reported to enhance experiential learning by enabling collaboration, simulation, and access to authentic problem contexts. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of technology-supported progressivist learning was contingent upon resource availability and instructional design. In resource-constrained settings, technological integration often remained limited, highlighting a tension between progressivist ideals and structural realities.

Contradictions and Implementation Challenges

While the majority of studies report positive outcomes, the synthesis also reveals several challenges and contradictions. Teacher resistance, rigid curriculum standards,

large class sizes, and limited institutional support were identified as significant barriers to effective implementation. These constraints suggest that progressivism is not inherently effective in all contexts; rather, its success depends on supportive policies, adequate resources, and sustained professional development. These findings challenge overly idealistic interpretations of progressivism and underscore the need for contextual adaptation (Sims et al., 2023).

Theoretical Reflection: Revisiting Dewey's Progressivism

The findings largely reaffirm Dewey's foundational principles, particularly the centrality of experience, democracy in learning, and reflective inquiry. However, the review also indicates that contemporary applications of progressivism sometimes diverge from Dewey's original vision when experiential activities are implemented without critical reflection or social purpose. This tension highlights the risk of reducing progressivism to a set of teaching techniques rather than maintaining it as a coherent educational philosophy (Zai et al., 2023).

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest the need for curriculum frameworks that allow flexibility, contextual learning, and interdisciplinary integration. In terms of practice, teacher professional development should prioritize not only instructional strategies but also philosophical understanding of progressivism to ensure meaningful implementation. For future research, further empirical studies are needed to examine long-term outcomes of progressivist learning and to explore its applicability across diverse educational contexts, particularly in under-resourced settings.

The systematic review reveals that progressivist educational philosophy is predominantly implemented through student-centered and experiential learning approaches. Across the analyzed studies, progressivism consistently contributes to increased student activeness, creativity, critical thinking, and intrinsic motivation. These outcomes are primarily achieved through learning activities that emphasize real-life problem solving, project-based learning, and reflective inquiry.

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of progressivist learning is strongly influenced by contextual conditions. Studies report that progressivism functions optimally when supported by flexible curricula, adequate learning resources, and teachers who are prepared to assume a facilitative role. In line with Dewey's principle of learning through experience, differentiated and inquiry-based learning practices allow students to construct knowledge based on their individual experiences, thereby enhancing learning relevance and depth.

However, the review also identifies several implementation challenges. Some studies note constraints such as limited teacher readiness, insufficient professional development, and institutional resistance to shifting from teacher-centered instruction. These challenges suggest that progressivism should not be viewed as universally effective, but rather as a pedagogical approach whose success depends on systemic support and contextual alignment.

Overall, this synthesis demonstrates that progressivism extends beyond a philosophical ideal and operates as a practical framework for addressing contemporary educational demands. By integrating experiential learning with student autonomy and reflective practice, progressivist education offers a coherent response to the need for adaptive, future-oriented learning environments.

D. Conclusions

This systematic review demonstrates that progressivist educational philosophy, when implemented through experiential and student-centered learning approaches, effectively enhances students' critical thinking, creativity, motivation, and adaptability to social change. The findings confirm that progressivism contributes not only to cognitive development but also to the cultivation of ethical awareness and democratic values, provided that learning is grounded in meaningful experiences and reflective inquiry. Contribution of the Study, this review provides a consolidated and critical evidence base on the implementation of progressivist philosophy in contemporary educational contexts, particularly within Indonesian education. Unlike fragmented or descriptive studies, this review clarifies the core mechanisms of progressivist learning such as experiential learning, teacher facilitation, and curriculum flexibility and identifies the contextual prerequisites required for its effective application. Limitations, despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the review predominantly includes studies conducted in the Indonesian context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational systems. Second, most of the reviewed studies employ qualitative or conceptual designs, with limited longitudinal or experimental evidence on long-term learning outcomes. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to examine the sustained impact of progressivist approaches on student achievement and character development. There is also a need to investigate the specific professional development needs of teachers transitioning from traditional instructional roles to facilitative and reflective pedagogical practices. Additionally, comparative studies across different educational contexts would further strengthen understanding of how progressivism can be adapted to diverse institutional and cultural settings.

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