




The Importance of Applying Educational Philosophy by Elementary School Teachers

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DOI: 10.12928/cece.v2i2.1486

Received: May 24, 2025. Revised: June 6, 2025. Accepted: June 31, 2025

Available Online: July 31, 2025. Published Regularly: July 31, 2025

ABSTRACT

Philosophy of education plays a crucial role in shaping the foundation of thinking and action for elementary school educators. Teachers are not only instructors but also character builders, moral guides, and agents of social transformation. This study employs a literature review method by analyzing previous research on implementing educational philosophy in elementary education. The findings reveal that applying various philosophical perspectives—such as progressivism, idealism, essentialism, and perennialism provides clear direction for the learning process and supports the development of students' critical thinking, reflective abilities, and integrity. Therefore, mastering the philosophy of education is essential for teachers to create meaningful, value-based, and future-oriented learning experiences.

Keywords: Education, Elementary School, Philosophy, Student Character, Teacher Education



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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental instruments in building a civilized and advanced nation. The role of primary schools as the starting point for shaping children's character and intelligence is highly strategic, where teachers function not only as conveyors of information but also as guides of values and morals. Within this framework, philosophy of education plays a vital role as the foundation for educators to think and act. As stated by Hayati et al. [1], philosophy is a set of values that underpins and guides the achievement of educational goals. They further emphasize that the philosophy of education helps teachers understand *why* they carry out certain teaching practices, not just *how* to do them. This perspective highlights that the application of philosophy in education is not merely theoretical, but serves as a conceptual framework that guides real classroom practices.

The philosophy of education also serves as a medium for teachers to critically reflect on the approaches and methods used in the teaching and learning process. According to Devina

and Larasati [2], teachers can develop a reflective and critical attitude toward their teaching practices by understanding various schools of philosophy, such as pragmatism, idealism, and existentialism. This shows that teachers with a solid understanding of philosophy are more adaptive in responding to curriculum changes, student characteristics, and social dynamics. On the other hand, the importance of strengthening the philosophy of education is also emphasized in the context of changing times. For example, the progressive philosophy approach emphasizes freedom of thought, direct experience, and contextual learning and is highly relevant in the Merdeka Curriculum. Progressive philosophy asserts that education should be flexible, student-centered, and connected to real-life contexts [3]. This requires teachers not to be fixated on delivering content, but also to understand students' backgrounds and guide them to become critical and adaptive thinkers. Meanwhile, Yelfianita et al. [4] "Every science essentially begins with philosophy and ends as art." This implies that the mastery of philosophy is not merely an academic supplement, but a fundamental element in educational decision-making from planning to assessment.

However, the reality in the field shows that not all teachers possess philosophical awareness when carrying out their profession. Many educators still teach out of routine, without a deep understanding of the underlying values they are supposed to impart. In fact, philosophy encompasses a broad scope that includes the entirety of human knowledge, including education, which seeks to address fundamental issues in teaching practices [5]. Therefore, this article aims to elaborate on the importance of applying the philosophy of education by educators in primary schools. Through integrating philosophical values into educational practices, teachers are expected to become competent instructors and true educators capable of humanizing individuals and shaping a characterized, critical, and visionary generation.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review method. The researchers collected and synthesized scholarly articles, conference papers, and educational policy documents related to applying academic philosophy in elementary school contexts. The inclusion criteria were: (1) publications in peer-reviewed journals between 2016 and 2024, (2) studies focusing on primary education, and (3) articles written in Indonesian or English. The sources were selected using academic databases such as Google Scholar and Garuda Portal. The analysis involved four stages: (1) identification of relevant literature, (2) critical appraisal of the content, (3) thematic synthesis, and (4) interpretation based on philosophical constructs such as progressivism, essentialism, perennialism, and idealism. Each study was reviewed for how philosophical principles were embedded in learning strategies, curriculum design, teacher roles, and student character development. Thematic analysis allowed researchers to compare the application of philosophy across different studies and contexts [6]–[8].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first is a study titled *"Analysis of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Philosophy of Education as a Foundation in Elementary Schools to Achieve Joyful Learning"* by Nigrum Novita Rahayu and Dya Qurotal A'yun. The findings show that Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy, which emphasizes the principle of the *Tri-Center of Education* (family, school, and community) and the concept of *Tut Wuri Handayani*, is highly relevant and practical as a foundation for creating joyful learning in elementary schools. This approach places students at the center of the learning process. It highlights the importance of a stress-free, participative

learning environment that supports students' holistic, cognitive, emotional, social, and character development. By applying these principles, students become more motivated, better understand the material, and grow into confident individuals with strong character, prepared to face future challenges [9].

The second study, titled *"Reasoning the Policies of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia in the Perspective of Educational Philosophy"* by Gede Agus Siswadi, reveals that the minister's policies reflect key principles of educational philosophy, particularly pragmatism, humanism, and reconstructionism. These policies emphasize the importance of quality and inclusive education, improving teacher competence, equal access to educational facilities, and character development. Through a philosophical lens, the study concludes that these policies align with the vision of education as a tool for individual empowerment and social transformation, and recommends strengthening the sustainability and humanistic values of these programs [10].

The third study, conducted by Tria Anisa et al., titled *"The Role of Educational Philosophy in the Character Development of Elementary School Students"*, found that educational philosophy, especially one grounded in the values of Pancasila, plays a strategic role in shaping the character of elementary students. Integrating values such as divinity, humanity, unity, deliberation, and justice can foster morality, empathy, and social awareness from an early age through holistic and contextual learning approaches. The study also emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role as a character educator and the need for a deep understanding of educational philosophy among educators. Addressing the challenges of globalization and technological advancement through value-based education is expected to help young generations uphold the nation's dignity and grow into individuals with integrity [11].

The fourth study by Eka Fitriyani Achmad, titled *"Implementation of Educational Philosophy in Elementary Schools,"* shows that implementing educational philosophy in elementary schools is crucial for shaping character and guiding students through life stages. It was found that values such as Pancasila, human rights, local wisdom, and general character education have been implemented through various approaches, including thematic learning, the Merdeka Curriculum, and the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) program. These approaches aim to develop students' potential comprehensively, physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually in line with educational philosophy principles [12].

The fifth study by Aprilia Dista Lutvitasari et al., titled *"Implementation of Essentialism in Educational Philosophy and Its Challenges in Elementary Schools"*, shows that applying essentialist philosophy in elementary schools focuses on developing students' intellectual and moral capacities through core subjects such as mathematics, science, social studies, and language. However, its implementation faces several challenges, including teacher-centered learning dominance, low student literacy interest, and negative impacts from digital technology and information. To address these challenges, the researchers propose collaborative efforts among the government, educational institutions, and parents to develop a study center-based learning model, promote literacy culture, and implement a culturally adaptive curriculum that still upholds essential educational values [13].

The sixth study, conducted by Taufik Nurrochman and Endang Fauziati, titled *"A Study of Perennialist Educational Philosophy: Robert Maynard Hutchins' Thought in Character Education in Elementary Schools"*, shows that the perennialist approach developed by Hutchins can address moral crises in students through character education in elementary schools. This approach emphasizes instilling universal and timeless values such as honesty, responsibility, diligence, and patriotism, applied consistently from an early age. Character education based on this approach positively impacts students' moral, spiritual, and personality development in facing modern challenges [14].

The seventh study by Elsa Chaeratunnisa et al., titled "*The Conception of Philosophy in Learning Implementation in Elementary Schools*", shows that the idealist philosophy is reflected in learning approaches emphasizing moral value development, creativity, and understanding of abstract concepts. In elementary school learning, teachers act as facilitators who deliver content and guide students to think critically and reflectively on life values. Idealist philosophy provides a vital foundation for holistic education by directing the learning process beyond cognitive development to character and spiritual formation. Furthermore, while integrating abstract philosophical concepts into curricula that still heavily emphasize factual and empirical content remains challenging, the idealist approach creates opportunities to support students' moral and personal development [15].

From these seven studies, it can be concluded that educators play a crucial role in implementing the philosophy of education in elementary schools. Teachers serve as instructors and facilitators of enjoyable and holistic learning by applying principles such as the *Tri-Center of Education* and *Tut Wuri Handayani* to foster joyful learning environments. Moreover, they act as character educators who internalize Pancasila values, moral principles, and humanity through holistic and contextual approaches. On a broader scale, teachers also function as agents of social transformation by applying pragmatism, humanism, and reconstructionism to promote inclusive and empowering education. At the same time, teachers are expected to integrate essentialist values with character education while overcoming challenges such as technological dependency and low literacy through innovative learning. Teachers guide students to think critically and reflect on life values within the idealist philosophical framework. To reinforce all these roles, collaboration with parents, the government, and the community is a key factor in success. Thus, improving teachers' competencies in understanding educational philosophy, pedagogy, and character development is crucial for creating a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also strong and ready to face future challenges.

In the educational discourse, teachers hold several key roles, including as educators, instructors, mentors, leaders, learning managers, models, and role models [1]. Philosophy plays a fundamental role in education, especially in determining curricula, teaching methods, educational goals, and the role and position of teachers. Essentially, education embodies philosophical thought, particularly value philosophy, which relates to human nature as beings continuously seeking meaning in life, ethical dimensions, and pragmatic reality. Education loses its direction without philosophical foundations because it lacks clear guidance on what should be done. Conversely, without education, philosophy remains a utopian concept without implementation. Therefore, teachers must master and deeply understand philosophy, especially the philosophy of education, to grasp the true essence of education. Teachers can develop more structured and meaningful educational practices through ontology, epistemology, and axiology, ensuring that learning is not merely technical but grounded in strong philosophical foundations. Hence, educational philosophy becomes the foundation that ensures teaching practice is not simply routine, but a meaningful, purposeful process aligned with fundamental life values [16].

Understanding why a teacher teaches and their vision for the best student education is essential. Without this understanding, teachers risk losing direction, merely becoming executors of others' policies without consistency, and constantly changing with the flow without a clear foundation. The philosophical framework in education serves as a foundation that centers learning on core principles, including the origin and development of knowledge. Philosophy of education allows teachers to explore the true purpose of education, whether to actualize students' potential, shape contributing members of society, or prepare students for the workforce. A deep understanding of these educational goals becomes the foundation for teachers in designing curricula, selecting teaching strategies, and developing effective assessment instruments to realize those goals.

Thus, the philosophy of education provides direction and serves as a compass that ensures consistency in a teacher's instructional practices. Without a strong philosophical foundation, the educational process can lose meaning and become trapped in routines that have little significant impact on student development.

CONCLUSION

The application of educational philosophy by educators in elementary schools holds significant urgency in shaping a meaningful, character-based educational process oriented toward the holistic development of human beings. Academic philosophy is a theoretical foundation and a practical guide in designing, implementing, and evaluating the learning process. Through understanding various philosophical streams such as progressivism, essentialism, idealism, and perennialism, teachers can play a strategic role as educators, mentors, and reflective, adaptive, and visionary agents of social change. Strengthening the role of teachers in this context requires collaboration among educational institutions, the government, and the community, as well as enhancing teachers' competencies in both pedagogical and philosophical domains. Thus, implementing educational philosophy becomes a vital foundation in shaping a generation that is intellectually capable, morally strong, and prepared to face the challenges of the times with critical thinking and wisdom.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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