

Political Betrayal of Education

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Abstract

The deteriorating practice of scientific elaboration in education is often associated with the increasing information overload in the digital social space. This condition not only impacts the quality of knowledge production but also weakens individuals' reflective capacity to interpret their roles and the educational ecosystem. In this context, educational actors tend to be mired in ambivalence, on the one hand as actors, but on the other as victims of malpractice, related information, and increasingly problematic educational political policies. Hence, the author conceived the research title "Political Betrayal of Education. Furthermore, excessive administrative pressure also reflects the intellectual space available for educators and students to elaborate on fundamental issues in education. Consequently, the orientation of education has shifted from strengthening critical reasoning to fulfilling procedural administrative indicators. This phenomenon is reflected in the rise in various forms of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, bribery in exams, grade-buying, cheating, sexual violence in educational settings, and the prevalence of practicums in scientific publications involving various academic levels, from students to professors. Furthermore, actions against criticism are often legitimized by authoritative institutions through various forms of intimidation, both symbolic and physical. This further emphasizes the dysfunction of education as a space for developing critical thinking. In this development, education has experienced a reduction in function, from its original role as a locomotive of knowledge-based social transformation. Now, it has become a commodified entity vulnerable to domination practices resembling intellectual thuggery. Based on this background, this research aims to deeply examine the empirical dynamics in educational practices and analyze their implications for national education policy. Furthermore, this research seeks to reconstruct the function of education as a "brahmana," namely, as an entity possessing moral and intellectual authority in establishing independent and sovereign social control mechanisms, both at the institutional level and in society at large.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is normatively positioned as an intellectual space that upholds truth, academic freedom, and moral responsibility to society. As an institution producing knowledge, education plays a strategic role in fostering critical awareness, maintaining autonomous thought, and serving as a counterweight to political power. However, in practice, this ideal function is often distorted by the intervention of political interests that influence policies, curricula, and academic culture.

This phenomenon can be understood as the political treason of higher education, a condition where educational institutions shift from guardians of intellectual independence to instruments of legitimacy of power. The closeness between educational institutions and political actors has the potential to give rise to various deviations, such as the silencing of criticism, the co-optation of research, the commodification of academic positions, and the normalization of political interests in educational governance. The impact not only reduces academic freedom but also weakens education's role as an agent of social change and social control.

Furthermore, this situation has implications for the degradation of academic ethics and the decline of public trust. Knowledge production imbued with powerful interests obscures scientific objectivity and diminishes the credibility of academic institutions. In the long term, this situation has the potential to produce a generation of pragmatic and apathetic intellectuals, worsening the quality of democracy and social justice.

From a sociohistorical perspective, education is a process inseparable from the dynamics of relations between individuals, society, and the state. Therefore, education should encourage critical exploration of human nature and social reality. Paulo Freire emphasized that inequality in education is a consequence of unequal power relations, where educational policies and practices are often exploited to serve the interests of particular groups.

Philosophically, education aims to develop human potential holistically, reflected in the strengthening of curiosity, imagination, and appreciation for diversity. Thus, education should be a driving force for social change, contributing to the improvement of social structures. However, in reality, education is trapped in indoctrination, symbolic orientation, and structural compliance without critical reflection, thus significantly diminishing its humanistic function.

Against this backdrop, it is crucial to reexamine the dynamics of education in relation to political intervention and to reformulate its position as an autonomous space that plays a role in shaping and fostering critical awareness and social justice.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (library research). This is conducted through the process of collecting, selecting, and analyzing various relevant sources, such as books, scientific articles, research reports, and education policy documents. The data obtained is then classified based on key themes, such as education policy, academic ethics, and power relations in education. Data analysis is conducted using content analysis techniques, interpreting, comparing, and synthesizing various literature findings to identify patterns and conceptual relationships. The results of the analysis are then critically interpreted to understand the political implications of education and its impact on education's function as an intellectual and social space, before conclusions are drawn as a contribution to strengthening the critique of national education policy.

- Visual Diagram of the Research Flow
- Problem Identification
- Literature Search (Books, journals, documents)
- Data Selection & Classification (Based on themes & categories)
- Content Analysis (Interpretation, comparison, synthesis)
- Critical Interpretation (Power Relations & Implications for Education)
- Research Conclusion (Contribution, critique, education policy)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education today exhibits increasingly complex institutional burdens, particularly in efforts to maintain its ideal as a space for developing critical thinking. This condition is reflected in the various ongoing inequalities in educational practices, both at the policy and implementation levels. As part of social control, society needs to re-examine the reality of education to avoid becoming trapped in idealized stereotypes that do not fully align with actual conditions. Several admissions from education officials also indicate that the teaching and administrative burden in Indonesia is relatively high, which has implications for the decline in learning quality.

At the higher education level, the demands of implementing the Tri Dharma of Higher Education in a relatively short time, coupled with administrative burdens and professional pressures, create significant academic stress. This situation is exacerbated by unequal welfare among lecturers and various academic ethics issues such as cheating, sexual violence, and abuse of power that are often inadequately addressed. Furthermore, national education policy is often caught up in political dynamics and reputational orientations that change with leadership cycles, thereby reducing the continuity of policies based on quality improvement.

Compared with education systems in other, more developed countries, educators there are more focused on research activities and long-term knowledge development, resulting in higher-quality scientific output that can serve as the basis for evidence-based public policy. In this context, researchers act as agents of social change, making significant contributions to data-driven decision-making and scientific analysis.

The state of education in Indonesia still exhibits various anomalies, including a tendency toward "academic involution," which signals a shift away from its substantive function. The learning process in schools is still dominated by conventional approaches that focus on core subjects over long learning periods, but do not provide enough space for creativity, exploration, and the optimal development of student potential. This is exacerbated by limited access to professional development for educators and low welfare, which impacts pedagogical innovation.

The unbalanced teacher-student ratio, coupled with high administrative burdens, also hinders effective learning. Literacy, a fundamental aspect of education, has also not developed optimally, although various innovations such as strengthening speaking skills and self-reflection from an early age have been very limited in their implementation. As a result, the space for dialogue in learning tends to shrink, while a culture of critical thinking has not developed consistently.

This situation indicates that the existing education system still tends to be homogenous and oriented toward the reproduction of knowledge, rather than the development of critical thinking. Reading and discussion activities are often reduced to memorization, rather than in-depth understanding. This is also related to the limited capacity of some educators to develop teaching materials reflectively and contextually.

Structurally, the education sector's contribution to macroeconomic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remains relatively low, while the distribution of education budgets has not been fully effective in improving quality and equitable access. Inequality in educational facilities and infrastructure, particularly in remote areas, demonstrates that educational problems are not only pedagogical but also structural and policy-based.

Conceptually, education should ideally be built on three main pillars: curiosity, imagination, and diversity, which form the basis for developing critical and dialogical thinking skills. Education functions not only as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a means of raising human awareness of their personal and socio-historical realities.

In line with Paulo Freire's view, relations in education should not be oppressive hierarchical, but rather liberating, dialogical. Education that limits space for criticism and dialogue has the potential to give rise to dehumanization, as it ignores the historical and social dimensions of humans as subjects of knowledge.

In a broader context, education should ideally provide a space that supports the exploration of individual interests and potential through a more participatory and flexible approach, including through intracurricular and extracurricular activities. However, the still-dominantly conventional system tends to produce graduates who are more generalists than specialists capable of in-depth analysis and critical problem-solving. Furthermore, academic autonomy in many cases remains underdeveloped.

4. CONCLUSION

Various contextual issues within the increasingly complex education system indicate that the current approach is losing relevance to the dynamics of contemporary educational needs. Numerous empirical findings and academic facts indicating a breakdown in the educational model have not yet been fully evaluated comprehensively, making fundamental and revolutionary educational transformation difficult to achieve.

Conceptually, education should be oriented toward strengthening self-identity and a broader understanding of individual realities in their interconnectedness with the ever-changing social context. However, in practice, the relationship between the subject and object of education tends to be unequal, with students often positioned as passive objects, while space for dialogue and criticism is increasingly limited.

Furthermore, education cannot be understood as the sole and primary pillar of national development, but must be placed within the framework of a broader, humanistic, and integrated national system across sectors. Therefore, improving the quality of human resources cannot be solely the responsibility of the education sector but requires strengthening moral values, critical thinking, and a dialogical culture across all social institutions.

In the context of technological development and the challenges of the demographic dividend, easy, instantaneous access to information has the potential to diminish the depth of thought processes and weaken the dialogical space in education. Therefore, progressive education needs to be directed to remain centered on the development of the whole person, encompassing intellectual, spiritual, and emotional aspects, in order to be able to answer the needs of society more comprehensively.

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