

# The Concept of Independent Learning to Stimulate Creativity of Early Children: A Study of Ki Hajar Dewantara's Philosophy

*By Marwany*

## The Concept of Independent Learning to Stimulate Creativity of Early Children: A Study of Ki Hajar Dewantara's Philosophy

Marwany<sup>1</sup>, Besse Nirmala<sup>2</sup>, Suyitno Muslim<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> State Islamic University; marwahmarwany04@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Tadulako University; bessenirmala@rocketmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Jakarta State University; bessenirmala@rocketmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

Indonesia is ranked 85th out of 129 countries according to the Global Innovation Index regarding people's creativity. The low index of creativity of the Indonesian people greatly affects the quality of education starting from the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level to the tertiary level. The purpose of this study is to describe the concept of independent learning to stimulate early childhood creativity in the study of Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy. This study uses library research to explore the concept of independent learning that is relevant according to the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara. This research method is qualitative using a descriptive approach. The data collection technique used is content analysis with deductive and comparative thinking methods. The results showed that the concept of independent learning according to Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy was very supportive in stimulating the creativity of early childhood. The concept of independent learning is very suitable to stimulate children's creativity based on the principles of forging, loving, honing, and fostering as well as the tri-N idea (niteni, nirokke, and *nambahi*). The concept of the Among system education is that the nature of nature is a condition for reviving and achieving progress as quickly as possible and independence as a condition for reviving and making children's inner and outer strength so that they can live independently.

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### Corresponding Author:

Marwany

State Islamic University; marwahmarwany04@gmail.com

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Children are a mandate given by God to parents who must be cared for, guarded and educated from an early age. When children are given proper care and education, they will grow and develop optimally, physically, psychologically, and cognitively. Therefore, educators need to know about various knowledge and experiences to educate, stimulate, and care for children from an early age. Early childhood is known

as the golden age, where children experience very rapid growth and development. Learning in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is related to what and how children learn, what curriculum to choose and what experiences children get through the education they have taken (Morisson, 2012).

Learning activities in ECE must always provide freedom for children to play. When children do play activities, it is necessary to develop abilities and skills, one of which is the ability to creativity (Fakhriyani, 2016; Andayani et al., 2021). However, in practice this creative ability is still far from being abandoned due to various reasons and obstacles. This is evidenced by the creativity index of the Indonesian people which is ranked 115th out of 139 countries (Florida et al., 2015). In addition, Indonesia is also ranked 85th out of 129 countries according to the Global Innovation Index in 2019 (Androschuk, 2021). The low index of creativity of the Indonesian people greatly affects the quality of education starting from the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level to the tertiary level.

In connection with the low creativity of the Indonesian people, there are also problems that arise in the community that children who enter ECE institutions will later be required to be able to read, write, and count. Learning is set in a formal form without paying attention to the needs and characteristics of early childhood. Children cannot freely choose activities according to their interests and talents and do not explore their environment. In addition, ECE institutions make every child feel pressured by the demands of tasks in the form of child work sheets that must be completed both at ECE institutions and at home. Whereas early childhood is a period of great potential in providing stimulation by giving children the widest possible independence or opportunity to express themselves, imagine, conduct simple experiments, explore their environment, so as to bring out creativity in children and be able to solve their own problems.

There are many research results with various methods, strategies, models and approaches that can stimulate and develop creativity (Byrge & Tang, 2015; Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2018; Glăveanu, 2018; Nurfuady et al., 2019; Windasari et al., 2016). One of them is the concept of independent learning which provides freedom and independence for students to explore, freedom to express ideas or ideas in a work, and do other things that are creative and innovative. The concept of independent learning is a concept that has a great opportunity in order to improve the quality of education in Indonesia if it is prepared carefully and carefully (Baro'ah, 2020). <sup>9</sup> Though this concept, it is hoped that students will be directed to have 21st century competencies, namely: **creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, and collaboration** (Daulay & Sani, 2021).

The concept of independent learning is also in line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's thought that he is able to stimulate the <sup>12</sup> creativity of early childhood. The concept of independent learning provides freedom and independence for **children to grow and develop according to their** expectations and abilities. Therefore, educators design learning according to the needs, interests, talents, and learning styles of children. Ki Hajar Dewantara's rationale according to *Conscience* (2012:124-127) are: 1) humans have mental power (creativity, initiative, and work), 2) education as an effort to advance one's character, mind, and physicality, 3) Education must be carried out through three environments, namely: family, school, and social environment.

Ki Hajar Dewantara is of the view that teaching must provide useful knowledge both physically and mentally and can liberate children. Independence should be applied to the child's way of thinking, namely so that the child is not always ordered by the thoughts of others, but the child must be accustomed to seeking and discovering the various values of knowledge, attitudes, and skills by using his own mind and abilities. The research question that can be discussed in this literature is about how the concept of <sup>4</sup> independent learning is viewed from Ki Hajar Dewantara's study to stimulate early childhood creativity. **The purpose of this literature is to analyze the concept of independent learning** that can be used to stimulate early childhood creativity in terms of Ki Hajar Dewantara's study. The contribution of the results of this literature is as an effort to stimulate children's creativity from an early age, especially in welcoming the 5.0 era. <sup>2</sup> In addition, to disseminate ideas or ideas of Ki Hajar Dewantara while preserving cultural heritage as a **manifestation of the learning process based on local wisdom of Indonesian** culture.

The results of this literature are also expected to contribute to future researchers who can be used as a reference regarding the concept of independent learning to stimulate early childhood creativity.

## 2. METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with the type of library research. Literature study is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, recording and processing research results to examine the basic theories relevant to the problems discussed. Literature research is research using data collection techniques, namely reading various literatures related to information and relevance to research topics (Sukardi, 2021). This study has characteristics, namely ready-to-use library data, researchers dealing directly with the text, researchers receiving second-hand material, and the condition of library data is not limited by space and time. According to Moleong (Ahmad, 2015), literature research with field research uses a qualitative approach, namely research whose procedures produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the people and actors observed.

The research approach used in this study uses a study of character thinking. Harahap (2006) categorizes two forms of character studies, namely: 1) as part of the historical approach, related to various explanations of writing methods in the form of history, and 2) grouped in the field discussed by the character concerned. The character studied in this research is Ki Hajar Dewantara regarding the concept of independent learning through the idea of tri-N (niteni, nirokke, nambahi). The criteria in the study of literature in this literature are: 1) the types of articles used are articles published in international journals and accredited national journals sinta 1-6; 2) articles to be reviewed in the last 10 years starting from 2011-2021; 3) searching for keywords using free learning, Ki Hajar Dewantara, the concept of Tri-N (niteni, nirokke, and nambahi), creativity, and early childhood; 4) type of library using books and scientific articles.

Primary data collection in this study is related to the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara. All data sources will be reduced according to the topic of discussion. In this study, the researcher explores and provides arguments related to the concept of independent learning as a stimulation of creativity in terms of Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Free Learning Concept

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Freedom to learn was first launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture which aims to answer Indonesia's educational needs which are always changing according to the progress of the times, both internally and externally. It is hoped that education in Indonesia can prepare students who are competitive in the future (Suhartoyo et al., 2020).

Freedom of learning is a period where teachers, students, and parents have the freedom or independence in thinking and designing learning in order to be able to develop their potential in achieving educational goals (Izza et al., 2020). Teachers as the main component in education have the freedom to translate the curriculum according to the needs of their students during the learning process (Bahar & Sundi, 2020). Through this independent learning, it is hoped that teachers will be able to develop the potential and creativity of their students in designing and implementing learning that is fun, interesting, and meaningful.

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The concept of independent learning is in line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy which emphasizes the importance of the principle of independence and freedom of learning in children. Teachers must provide the widest opportunity for children to develop all their potential, interests and talents as well as their needs. The teacher does not act as an all-knowing person, but acts as a facilitator who is ready to facilitate children's growth and development so that children can be

more independent in finding the meaning of what they have learned (Mualifah, 2013). Independent learning in the concept of independent learning can also be identified by the presence of several indicators, such as quality, transformative, effective, expressive, varied, actual, factual, and progressive (Abidah et al., 2020).

The concept of independent learning as proposed by Nadiem Makarim is also in line with the concept of learning in ECE which is to give freedom to children to choose their own learning activities that they want and fulfill children's rights, namely free play. Every child has interests, talents, and potential to develop and is given wider opportunities to seek and find more optimal knowledge (Djafri et al., 2020). Therefore, as educators, they should provide meaningful learning for children, not only about teaching children to be able to read, write, and count. Preferably, educators present meaningful learning and are adapted to the environment closest to the child, using concrete media, and carried out in a pleasant atmosphere.

### **3.2. Stimulation of Early Childhood Creativity**

Ward William, C. (2015) suggests that children are naturally creative individuals. This is because children have the nature of always exploring their world with bright ideas by using the senses in natural and original ways (Beghetto et al., 28 C.E.). According to Cheng (Cheng, 2019) also suggests that creativity as self-actualization can develop individual competence and motivation from within a person.

According to Ardhyantama (Ardhyantama, 2018) which states that creativity is the ability to add, change, or create a new idea from previously existing ones and then given innovation or never existed at all. This is in accordance with the concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara through three stages, namely Tri-N: *niteni* (observing), *nirokke* (imitating), and *nambahi* (adding).

It is very important to develop creativity from an early age. This is because through creativity, a person can actualize himself in social life, be able to see opportunities, be able to solve a problem, provide individual satisfaction and can improve the quality of life (Munandar, 2021).

### **3.3. The Concept of Freedom to Learn to Stimulate Early Childhood Creativity in View from Ki Hajar Dewantara's Philosophy**

The Among system, according to Ki Hajar Dewantara, contains two basic principles, namely: 1) independence as a condition for revitalizing and mobilizing physical and spiritual strength so that humans can live independently; and 2) the nature of nature as a condition to revive and achieve progress as well as possible (Mujito, 2014). Based on this, the among system is an education system based on family principles and based on the nature of nature, independence, and freedom. The concept of independent learning based on Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy can provide space and opportunities for students to develop all their potential, especially in stimulating early childhood creativity.

Freedom to learn is a creative process in terms of learning methods using any media as a learning resource (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020). Ki Hajar Dewantara's idea contains a basic value, namely respecting the natural ability of children to overcome problems by providing freedom of thought, solving problems, and finding their own solutions (Suparlan, 2015).

The concept of an independent learning policy is very relevant to the concept of education according to the progressivism philosophy of John Dewey. This concept emphasizes the flexibility of educational units to explore as much as possible the abilities and potentials of students who naturally have diverse abilities, interests, talents and potentials. This concept also wants students to have the freedom to develop naturally, without coercion and rules, and to have direct experience in everyday life (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Freedom to learn implies giving children the

freedom to choose their own interests and talents, so parents must realize that every child has their own characteristics and uniqueness. Through the concept of independent learning, it is hoped that children can develop their creativity according to their ideas, interests, and talents so that children are free to express and determine their own type of play.

Loris Malaguzzi (Nuraeni & Westisi, 2020), co-founder of Reggio Emilia believes that all children have natural creative abilities and opportunities to develop these abilities to the fullest. Children will have creativity if they are often properly stimulated and given the freedom and flexibility in their activities. Creative children have high curiosity, have fantasy, and imagination in forming concepts that are similar to the real world (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1993). A child can be said to be creative if the child has fulfilled the requirements for fluency and flexibility in solving a problem. Children will consider various things to choose the best solution. When children want something, they will need fluency as preparation or brainstorming. As for flexibility because the child has started talking. If the child succeeds in solving the problem, then the child is called creative. The final solution could be due to the directives of adults. In terms of originality, it is not a major factor in early childhood creativity.

Stimulation of early childhood creativity development needs support or scaffolding from all parties including: parents, teachers, and the community. People around children should provide stimulation so that there is a child-centered learning so that children are more active in exploring their environment with all their potential. Stimulation is provided by providing opportunities for children to play freely, pouring their imagination on a piece of paper, observing and asking about what they see, making works according to their ideas, shaping by utilizing various sources in the environment, and so on.

There are various strategies that can be done to develop creativity, especially early childhood. Munandar (Munandar, 2021) has a strategy known as the 4P's, namely: personal, pusher, process, and product. In the personal aspect, creativity is a self-expression of the uniqueness of each individual in interacting with their environment. Encouragement has a meaning, namely the interests, talents, and potential of children will be realized if there is encouragement from themselves and from the environment so as to produce something. Aspects of related processes provide opportunities for children to do things creatively. Finally, the product is the final result that gives children the opportunity to create and produce a creative product.

Stimulation of creativity as the results of research from Yong, Mannucci, and Lander (2020) suggests that culture can be used to stimulate children's creativity. The moderate influence of culture on creativity is better understood by looking at the collection of these cultural dimensions. In line with the research results, Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy has four strategies that are applied in the world of education. The strategies are: 1) that education is a cultural process to encourage students to have an independent and independent spirit; 2) shaping the character of students so that they have a national spirit but still open themselves to international developments; 3) personal development of students so that they are pioneering pioneers, and 4) educating means developing potential or talents that are the natural nature of each individual (Wiryopranoto, Herlina, Marihandono, Tangkilisan, & National Awakening Museum Team, 2017). In essence, the development of creativity can be formed through a pattern of habituation or habituation. Creativity is usually formed because of the pressing need to solve a problem. Problem solving activities provide opportunities for children to use their imaginations to try, realize ideas or ideas, and think about various possibilities (Yusuf, 2013).

Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational concept is an effort to advance the development of character (inner strength), mind (intellectual), and physical (birth) for students (Marzuki & Khanifah, 2016). Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy has similarities in the concepts of constructivism and progressivism in the world of education. The constructivism approach emphasizes that individuals actively build knowledge and understanding of children (to construct). This is also in accordance with the view of Ki Hajar Dewantara (Dewantara, 1977) who

argues that education should always provide independence or freedom which has three kinds of characteristics, namely: standing alone (*zelfstanding*), not depending on others (*onafhankelijk*) and self-regulating (*vrijheld, zelfbeschikking*). Therefore, students should develop when they get an education without coercion.

The concept of independent learning in terms of Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophical study places an independent spirit as a natural trait that must be fulfilled for the growth and development of children through stimulation in three educational centers, namely family, school, and community. Ki Hajar Dewantara recommends educators to implement their learning through fun play. Through playing in the Among system can touch the free spirit in children at all ages and levels of education. This concept aims to help children become independent and independent human beings. Being an independent human being means: not living under orders, standing tall because of one's own strength, and being able to manage his life in an orderly manner. Education in this case makes children easy to manage but cannot be driven according to the wishes of adults. The concept of independent learning is viewed from Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, namely Tri-N (*niteni, nirokke, nambahi*) as shown in the image below.

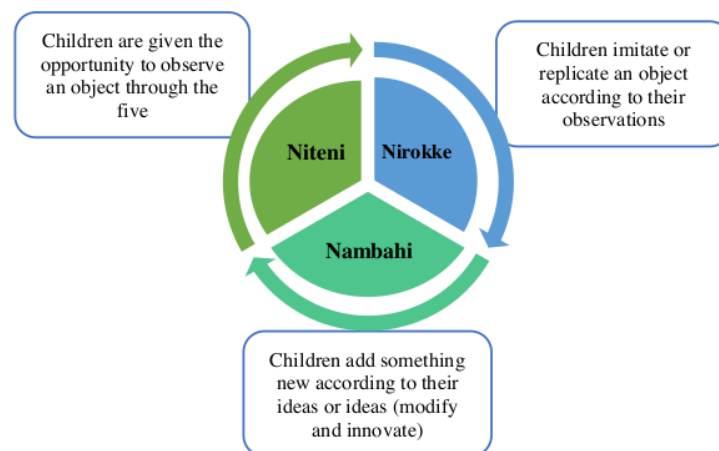


Fig. 1. The Concept of Freedom to Learn from the Philosophy of KHD.

The concept of independent learning through Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, namely Tri-N (*niteni, nirokke, nambahi*) can foster a creative spirit in children, build an honest, independent, curious, and honest attitude (Andayani et al., 2021). The concept of "niteni" which gives freedom to children to observe an object that is around the child through the five senses (Ermawati & Rochmiyati, 2020). The teacher gives freedom to children to observe everything that is in the environment to stimulate creativity, get new information, and connect existing concepts with the results of their observations. The best niteni concept is through a contextual approach (Ardhyantama, 2020).

The next stage is "*nirokke*" or imitation (Rozak, 2014). At this stage, children imitate or replicate an object according to their observations. Children can imitate through models/examples/objects from learning resources (Damayanti & Rochmiyati, 2019). In learning, the concept of *nirokke* can be done through modeling or imitating the behavior of teachers, friends, the community, and so on to develop knowledge, creativity, and learning experiences (Andayani et al., 2021).

Then "*nambahi*" that is adding something new according to the idea or ideas. Teachers should give children the freedom to modify an existing object and innovate according to their creativity. This process trains children to be able to process creatively to give new nuances to the model being imitated (Rozak, 2014). Children can be creative and modify from existing examples by adjusting

to their needs (Ardhyantama, 2020). Creativity usually appears after a person is in this "nambahi" phase. In this phase, a person is considered to have succeeded in producing a product of thinking and being creative. This product is not necessarily accepted in society. There is still the possibility of trial and error at this stage. In order for the creativity and innovation given in the "nambahi" phase to have value, testing is carried out.

Stimulation of creativity in early childhood can be done through 3 stages of Tri-N in accordance with the concept of independent learning from Ki Hajar Dewantara. The stages are *niteni*, *nirokke*, and *nambahi* into a chain that can shape a person into a creative and innovative person. The results of research from Yuniarto (2014) that the Tri-N concept is a creative method used by Jogjaforce to carry out the creative process and problem solving that translates into digital artwork. The results of research from Ardhyantama (2017) state that creativity can be trained through habits. This habit can be designed in a structured manner by following the patterns in the Tri-N phase according to the concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The concept of independent learning can stimulate early childhood creativity through the implementation of Tri-N based on the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara. Based on the research data found various theories that can stimulate children's creativity. The Tri-N concept, namely *niteni*, *nirokke*, and *nambahi* contains values that can stimulate creativity in early childhood. The concept is still relevant and can continue to be applied in order to become a good habit for children. The implication of the results of this study is as an effort to stimulate children's creativity from an early age. In addition, to preserve the cultural heritage of Ki Hajar Dewantara as a manifestation of the learning process based on local wisdom of Indonesian culture.

Based on the conclusions in this study, the researchers suggest that the concept of independent learning according to the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara needs to be applied in the world of education, especially to stimulate early childhood creativity. The support of teachers, parents, and the community in forming creative children is very much needed. Therefore, it is hoped that all parties can collaborate and work together in providing positive stimulation for children's growth and development.

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