



Historical Basis of Education: Development of Education from Time to Time

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Abstract

This study examines the historical foundations of education by tracing its development across different periods of human civilization. Education has continuously evolved in response to social, cultural, political, and technological transformations. In early societies, education was informal and centered on survival skills and cultural transmission within families and communities. During the classical period, education became more structured, emphasizing philosophy, ethics, and intellectual inquiry. In the medieval era, religious institutions played a dominant role in shaping educational systems and curricula. The modern period marked a significant shift with the emergence of formal schooling, standardized curricula, and the influence of scientific and industrial advancements. In contemporary times, education has become more inclusive, technology-driven, and oriented toward global competencies. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method using literature review to analyze educational transformations across historical periods. The findings highlight that understanding the historical foundations of education is essential for addressing current educational challenges and shaping future educational practices.

Keywords: history of education; educational development; educational transformation; educational foundations.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji landasan sejarah pendidikan dengan menelusuri perkembangan pendidikan dari berbagai periode peradaban manusia. Pendidikan terus mengalami perkembangan seiring dengan perubahan sosial, budaya, politik, dan teknologi. Pada masa awal, pendidikan bersifat informal dan berfokus pada keterampilan bertahan hidup serta pewarisan budaya dalam keluarga dan masyarakat. Pada periode klasik, pendidikan mulai terstruktur dengan penekanan pada filsafat, etika, dan pemikiran intelektual. Pada masa pertengahan, lembaga keagamaan memegang peranan penting dalam membentuk sistem dan kurikulum pendidikan. Memasuki periode modern, terjadi perubahan besar dengan munculnya sistem pendidikan formal, kurikulum terstandar, serta pengaruh perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan dan industri. Pada era kontemporer, pendidikan menjadi lebih inklusif, berbasis teknologi, dan berorientasi pada kompetensi global. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka untuk menganalisis transformasi pendidikan dari masa ke masa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman terhadap landasan sejarah pendidikan sangat penting dalam menjawab tantangan pendidikan masa kini dan merancang praktik pendidikan di masa depan.

Katakunci: sejarah pendidikan; perkembangan pendidikan; transformasi pendidikan; landasan pendidikan.



Introduction

The term "foundation" literally means "foundation." In other words, a foundation is a support or reference point that has meaning. A foundation is like an airplane, which has a runway as a place to land and take off safely. The historical foundation of education is the historical foundation of how education has been conducted over time, which can serve as a reference or basis for the development of the educational process (Farid, 2023).

A thorough understanding of the foundations of education is key to optimizing the teaching and learning process. These foundations encompass fundamental principles that guide all stakeholders in education, including students, educators, and related parties. A thorough understanding of these foundations is key to optimizing the teaching and learning process. These foundations encompass fundamental principles that guide all stakeholders in education, including students, educators, and related parties. (Disma et al., 2023). A good understanding of these foundations positively impacts the abilities of prospective teachers in designing learning. Prospective teachers who understand the philosophical and psychological foundations of education tend to be able to develop learning objectives that align with student characteristics. Learning planning is not only oriented towards material achievement but also towards the development of attitudes and values. This demonstrates that these foundations play a crucial role in shaping the quality of comprehensive teaching planning. (Rahmah et al., 2025)

There are many factors behind the various educational change movements that the Indonesian nation has experienced from time to time, such as national demands, the entry of religious influences, more flexible foreign world cultures, diverse forms of leadership to the interests of certain groups for their personal needs. (al-habsyi, et al., 2024) There are many factors behind the various educational change movements that the Indonesian nation has experienced from time to time, such as national demands, the entry of religious influences, more flexible foreign



world cultures, diverse forms of leadership to the interests of certain groups for their personal needs. (al-habsyi, et al;, 2024). These factors are able to become extraordinary influential supporters to make educational teachings until now. Where in terms of development and change, religious teachings have been a strong foundation in the Indonesian education system since pre-colonial times.

During the Dutch colonial period, education in Indonesia was designed for colonial interests, with only a small elite of indigenous people having access to formal education. Education was primarily geared toward producing a workforce suited to the needs of the colonial government, without considering the needs and interests of the indigenous population in general. This limited access created a significant educational gap between indigenous people and colonialists, as well as between the upper classes and the general public (Subair, 2024).

After Indonesia's independence in 1945, education became a top priority in the development of the newly independent nation. The spirit of educating the nation, as enshrined in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, became the foundation of the national education system. During this era, the government attempted to expand access to education by introducing elementary schools in various regions of Indonesia. However, despite these efforts to expand access, other challenges arose in terms of educational quality. Limited teaching staff, minimal infrastructure, and unequal distribution of education between urban and rural areas were ongoing issues.

The explanation above shows that the journey of education in Indonesia has undergone many changes and developments, from the Hindu-Buddhist era to the Reformation era, from traditional forms of education to education that can collaborate with technology in the learning process. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic several years ago, the Indonesian education system was required to adapt to a complex situation, but education must continue regardless. This suggests that transformations in education in Indonesia will continue to occur, along with global changes that must be followed and adapted to the nation's own



culture.

Based on the problems outlined, it is important to conduct an in-depth study of the historical foundations of education in the development of education over time. This study aims to understand the historical foundations of education by tracing the development of education throughout various periods of human civilization. Furthermore, this study also seeks to identify education that continues to develop in line with social, cultural, political, and technological changes. The research questions include: (1) how the historical foundation of education in the development of education from time to time, (2) how education is transformed in the history of education, and (3) how education can develop from time to time. This problem formulation is expected to be a guide in analyzing various phenomena that occur in the world of education, especially those related to aspects of educational development. Through this study, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding can be obtained regarding the importance of integrating aspects of educational development. With this understanding, it is hoped that the education system can be developed in a more contextual, relevant, and sustainable manner. Ideal education is education that is not only able to keep up with the times, but also remains rooted in the cultural values of society.

Research Methods

This research method uses library research, which is research conducted by analyzing and utilizing written literature in the form of books, scientific journals, and documents (both printed and electronic) as its primary sources. This research is qualitative, namely research that emphasizes the analysis of previously available data (Wulansari & Maunah, 2024).

The descriptive qualitative research method was chosen because it is relevant to the need to understand phenomena occurring in the context of educational development over time. This method can be used to explain the patterns and meaning of educational development over time. (Nazira et al., 2025)



According to Creswell, a literature review is a crucial part of the scientific research process. It serves to review previous literature related to the research topic, identify key trends and themes, and support the formulation of hypotheses or research questions. A literature review helps researchers understand what has been done in the field and which areas require further research. This research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical foundations of education in its development over time. (Fajarwati & Ahid, 2024)

Results and Discussion

The Structure of Indonesian Education in Prehistoric Times

Indonesia is one of the countries in the world with a unique history compared to other nations, one of which is the focus of discussions on the history of education. Education is often interpreted as a tool to humanize humans according to their true nature. In this regard, education plays a crucial role in shaping a person's character, both in behavior and in thinking. Education also teaches various knowledge that is useful for human life. (Firmansyah & Ramdhan, 2023)

Seeing the educational aspect in prehistoric times cannot be separated from human life at that time, prehistoric education can be said to be very simple. They learned about how to maintain life, how to obtain shelter, food, and so on. Therefore, the educational structure applied was also different from the period after. The structure of education in prehistoric times can be seen as follows: Prehistoric education was oriented towards nature through religious, economic, and cultural systems, The purpose of education was used to shape character in accordance with prevailing values, Having skills such as hunting, gathering, managing a household, and having a nature of obedience to customs and polite elders, Being individual and free.

From the points above on the structure of prehistoric education, it can be explained that, first, education in prehistoric times was oriented toward nature as the primary subject. This is based on the fact that in prehistoric times, human



activities and actions were always connected to nature, and nature became an inseparable entity from human life. Therefore, nature became the primary focus of the educational structure at that time. Then, from nature, humans were taught to behave according to custom, through religious, economic, and cultural systems.

Colonial Period

Understanding the History of Volkschool, Back to 1907, which was the year when a new school was created after the establishment of the Number One School and the Number Two School in Indonesia. This school became the spread of light in improving the history of the population in Indonesia. This school was also called Volkschool. From the implementation of the Ethical Policy policy, namely Irrigation, Education, and Emigration, which brought the most important educational facilities to be established according to the opinion of Governor General Van Heutz and Minister of Colonies Fock. However, viewed from the two figures, there are differences as found in what and how the most efficient and effective schools were during the Colonial Era. Governor General Van Heutz preferred an education system with a simpler nuance and cheaper, but from the perspective of Minister of Colonies Fock himself, he preferred an education system with the development of the Number Two School (Second Class). (Tanti et al, 2022)

Minister of Colonial Affairs Fock himself relied more on the direct development of existing Second-Class Schools and was prepared to allocate a budget of 656,000 Rupiah to establish 186 new schools in Indonesia. Due to limitations in project work and educators, only 50-60 schools could be established in Indonesia within a year. Establishing Second-Class Schools as public schools required funding of approximately 417 million Rupiah, or approximately the amount requested by the Governor of the Dutch East Indies for the management of these Second-Class Schools. Governor General Van Heutz saw that in pursuing a broader expansion in education, a search for schools was necessary that were cheaper and simpler than those previously available. Coincidentally, Governor General Van Heutz was related to the experiments of De Bruyn Prince, who, as an



assistant resident of Ambarawa (1890-1894), had established 100 schools in various villages. In addition to learning in the form of writing, reading and arithmetic in Javanese, there is also learning about learning that uses manual work such as making baskets, pots, roof tiles, etc.

The Dutch government established formal schools, such as the *Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS)*, for indigenous children, who were expected to become administrative workers. However, this curriculum excluded Islamic religious elements, thus marginalizing Islamic education. This policy also limited the influence of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and *madrasas* (Islamic schools) with strict regulations prohibiting religious instruction outside their supervised scope. (Ridhotullah et al., 2024).

Era of Independence

In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, character education is becoming increasingly important. Advances in science and technology are not always accompanied by an increase in morality, and often give rise to new challenges such as individualism, hedonism, and the degradation of social values. (Mahbubi, 2025) Therefore, character education serves as a bulwark and guide so that the younger generation does not lose its identity, but is able to utilize developments of the times for the good of themselves and society. More broadly, character education also functions to build a national civilization rooted in cultural and religious values. It serves as a means to strengthen national identity, shape democratic citizens, and foster a sense of love for the homeland. With a strong character, students are expected to be able to face various life challenges with a wise, resilient, and responsible attitude.

Comprehensively, the development of Islamic education during the Indonesian independence era is divided into three phases: the Old Order, the New Order, and the Reformation era. Islamic education certainly developed in line with the development of the Indonesian independence phase. If we look back at the pre-



independence period, the state of Islamic education was still very concerning under pressure from the Dutch and Japanese colonialists. Before Indonesia's independence, Islamic education in Indonesia was dominated by Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Pesantren are traditional Islamic educational institutions that focus on teaching religion, Arabic, and Islamic sciences. Formal education at that time was still limited, and pesantren became the main learning centers for the Muslim community. The Islamic education system during the colonial period was also influenced by Dutch government policies (Ariatman, 2024). Although there were Islamic schools, they were generally limited and received little support. In the early 20th century, several Islamic organizations began establishing modern schools to balance the Western education introduced by the colonial government. During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia (1942-1945), Islamic education underwent several changes. Japan promoted nationalist education that included Japanese elements, but also provided space for religious education, including Islam. However, Japanese control remained, and educational policy was largely determined by Japanese military and political interests. Islamic education at that time tended to be centered in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and traditional institutions, with limited access to modern formal education. This changed with the development of the nationalist movement and the struggle for independence, where education became a crucial focus in building Indonesian national identity. Indonesian independence significantly impacted the development of Islamic education.

Old Order

Education during the Old Order era played a significant role in creating a generation that was not only intellectually educated but also possessed a strong sense of nationalism and loyalty to the state and the ideology that underpinned the nation's life. Despite numerous challenges, education during the Old Order era succeeded in shaping a national character that adhered to Pancasila and strengthened



Indonesia's unity as an independent and sovereign nation. (Lukman & Bahri, 2025)

There were two important aspects related to Islamic education during the Old Order: the development and guidance of madrasas and Islamic education in public schools. The development of madrasas was inseparable from the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as an institution that politically elevated the position of madrasas, thus receiving continuous attention from policymakers. This was inseparable from the hard work pioneered by a number of religious figures such as Ahmad Dahlan, Hasyim Asy'ari, and Mahmud Yunus.

With political and modern developments, the Ministry of Religion has gradually continued to develop programs to improve and expand access and improve the quality of madrasas. Madrasas as educational institutions were formally recognized by the state in 1950. Law No. 4 of 1950 concerning the basics of education and teaching in schools, in article 10 states that to obtain recognition from the Ministry of Religion, madrasas must provide religious lessons as a core subject for at least 6 hours a week regularly in addition to general lessons. (Pitriani, 2023)

With these requirements, registration of eligible madrasas was held. The educational level in the madrasa system at that time consisted of three levels. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah with a duration of 6 years of education, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pertama education 4 years, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Atas education 4 years. The Old Order education took place from 1945-1966, when Indonesia was under the leadership of President Soekarno. Education during the Old Order period experienced several changes, both in terms of objectives, curriculum, and organization. Education during the Old Order period was based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, which are the foundation and philosophy of the Indonesian state. Education during the Old Order period was influenced by the NASAKOM ideology adopted by President Soekarno. This ideology reflects President Soekarno's political stance who wanted to establish cooperative relations between various social and political groups in Indonesia.



During the Old Order era, the curriculum underwent three changes, namely in 1947, 1952, and 1960. The curriculum during this period aimed to establish a goal of education in Indonesia in a more advanced and clear direction. The curriculum during this period included materials such as Pancasila, Manipol/USDEK (1945 Constitution, Indonesian Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy, and Indonesian Culture), and also Tubapi (Seven Basic Materials of Indoctrination). Educational institutions during President Soekarno's leadership played a role in disseminating the Nasakom ideology, or other Soekarno doctrines. These educational institutions could be formal schools, universities, and so on. (Hutabarat et al, 2024).

The new order

During the New Order era in Indonesia (1966-1998), the government under President Soeharto implemented various educational policies designed in accordance with the regime's vision and ideology. One of the main policies was the establishment of National Education, regulated by Law Number 2 of 1989, which emphasized the importance of education as a means of building national character based on Pancasila and the spirit of nationalism. The government also launched a 9-year compulsory education program in 1984, covering 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education, to increase the participation and completion rates of basic education for all Indonesian children. (Muhajirin et al, 2024)

In addition, the New Order government harmonized the curriculum at all levels of education to ensure it aligned with the values of Pancasila and the needs of national development. This effort included teaching subjects that supported New Order ideology. Education management was also strictly controlled by the central government to ensure uniformity across Indonesia and to control the content of the curriculum and the messages conveyed to students. Furthermore, the physical development of schools was a major focus, with substantial budget allocations for



educational infrastructure, such as new buildings and supporting facilities, to improve the accessibility and quality of education.

The Indonesian education policy, created and implemented by the New Order government, had the primary goal of educating Indonesia's sons and daughters to the highest possible level, fostering good moral character. This goal applied to all regions under the control of the Republic of Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke. (Ramadhan et al., 2024)

The New Order government also emphasized vocational education to prepare a workforce that met the needs of industry and national development. Furthermore, scholarships were launched to support higher education for high-achieving students from poor families, such as the New Order Government Scholarship Program (POB), which provided broader opportunities for young Indonesians to pursue higher education. Strict controls on educational activities and content, including the appointment of principals loyal to the regime and the censorship of textbooks, were implemented to ensure that teaching materials aligned with government ideology.

Reformation Era

The advent of the reform era, marked by democratization, has brought a breath of fresh air to Islamic education and Islamic educational institutions. The issuance of Government Regulation (PP) No. 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Studies is expected to bring about changes in the management and processes of Islamic education. This Government Regulation (PP) explicitly regulates how Islamic and Religious Education should be implemented. (Marzuenda & Usman, 2022)

Technological developments are continuous and cannot be avoided or eliminated from everyday life. Technological advancements will always go hand in hand with the times, so humans must also be able to adapt and keep up with current technological developments. Developments in every aspect will undoubtedly have an impact in the form of drastic changes for improvements in the present and future.



These changes are known as reforms.

The meaning of reform is drastic change. Meanwhile, according to experts, reform is a process of reshaping a way of life (the old way of life is replaced with a new way of life). Reform in the field of education is intended to ensure that education can continue to develop and change for the better in accordance with the demands of changing times. Reform can also be called an effort of renewal (modernization), thus educational reform can be interpreted as an effort to address and improve various deficiencies. The common thread of the above understanding is that reform is an effort of renewal carried out comprehensively across all systems of social, political, economic, and even educational life. (Prastiwi et al, 2025)

Educational reform is a crucial component of sustainable educational development. It can be concluded that educational reform is a drastic change that occurs in a process where individuals acquire knowledge, values, abilities, and skills. This enables individuals to possess both intellectual capabilities and the ability to adapt to changing times and technology. The Indonesian government, as policymaker, continues to pursue educational reform efforts. Various efforts are being made to achieve Indonesia's national ideals in education, as enshrined in the 1945 Constitution, namely to improve the lives of the nation. Indonesia itself has implemented educational reforms with various changes to its primary objectives and improvements in educational quality.

Conclusion

Education has always evolved to reflect changing times and human needs. In the early (traditional) era, education was simpler, centered on family and cultural and religious values. Entering the colonial era, education began to be structured but tended to be discriminatory and solely for the benefit of the colonizers. After independence, education in Indonesia began to be directed towards building national identity, expanding access, and improving the quality of human resources. During the New Order era, the education system became more centralized, with a



focus on equity through school development and compulsory education programs.

Entering the reform era until now, education has experienced major changes with decentralization, a more flexible curriculum, and the use of digital technology in learning. In essence, the historical foundation of education shows that education is not fixed, but continues to change and develop according to social, political, cultural, and technological conditions. These changes aim to create an education system that is more relevant, equitable, and able to answer the challenges of the times.

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171



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Al-Murabbi Journal of Islamic Education, Vol. 4, no. 1, Year
2026E-ISSN: 2986-4658
DOI:10.62086/al-murabbi.v4i1.1162

