



## JÜRGEN HUBERMAS' SOCIAL CRITICISM OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

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### **Abstract:**

Education is social engineering that is regularly and measurably oriented towards the social changes in society. Therefore, educational practice cannot be separated from the process of social transformation that shapes and prepares individuals to become members of society. In reality, education is like an ivory tower that is alienated from the social reality of society and therefore cannot contribute to social change. This research criticizes educational practices based on Jürgen Habermas' theory of social criticism, which tends to view education as a conservative-formalistic process. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literary studies approach. The research findings explain that there are two discussions in the study namely; First, the critical theoretical reflection on Jürgen Habermas's pedagogical practice. That Habermas' communication theory can be understood in educational practice as a process of social transformation. In education, students are positioned as autonomous subjects who have a relationship between educators and students as subjects. Since education is fundamentally a process of constructive individual change, the educational practice paradigm is geared towards intersubjective-emanative relationship patterns. Second, related to the discussion about measuring the role of education in social reconstruction from the perspective of Jürgen Habermas, education is fundamentally a social instrument that plays a role in shaping changes in the social life of society. The role of education cannot be separated from the context of social change, therefore educational practice is part of social engineering regularly aimed at preparing students to become members of society.

**Keywords:** *Social engineering, educational practice, social criticism*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is an important benchmark for the world community to see whether a nation is progressing or not. Developed countries are busy building an education system that supports and is considered to be able to include a system that can not only be accessed by its people but other nations can also gain knowledge from the country (Uus & Muhammad, 2020). In distinguishing a country as a developed country or a developing country, it can be seen based on the state of the quality of the welfare of its population. The quality of this population is reflected in three main things, namely the level of health, the level of education and the level of income. All of these are benchmarks for the level of welfare of the population. (Rahmat, 2021). Education plays an important role in the

development of national and state life. The progress of people's lives in the nation and state, the spearhead lies in the quality of education provided.

In the third millennium, Indonesian society is faced with major changes in the fields of science and technology, economy, and socio-culture. Some people enter the information society, although some are in the industrial society, and some are still in the agrarian society. At the beginning of the third millennium, the Indonesian nation entered AFTA 2003 and APEC 2010 which demanded the readiness of human resources to compete and become winners in global competition. In facing increasingly tight competition and increasingly high environmental uncertainty in the future, quality human resources are needed, and therefore one of the efforts that must be prioritized in improving the quality of the nation in terms of the quality of human resources is through education (Wibawa & Agustina, 2019).

There are various approaches used by observers and observers of education in understanding the problems of education in Indonesia. For example, from the perspective of character education, what we want to build in facing the problems of globalization is through education. Educational studies and theories see that the source of today's educational problems lies in the problem of character development of students (Wardani et al., 2020) (Noer & Sarumpaet, 2017) (Albany, 2021) With education, the children who will continue the nation determine the direction of their lives in society. A strong character needs to be a root that is embedded in a child. In Indonesia itself, education is the center of human resource development. This can be seen from the development of education in Indonesia from time to time which continues to progress (Suwahyu, 2018). So related to education, the mission of Indonesia's birth is to educate the nation's life.

Education is something that is very essential for humans, through education humans can learn to face various increasingly complex life phenomena. The essence of education is very beneficial for the continuity and progress of the life of society itself. So to the successors of the nation must be passed on knowledge, skills, values, and other forms of behavioral rules. It is expected to be owned by each member so that society can continue its presence. Because every society strives to continue its culture with a certain adjustment process according to the image of each era to the younger generation through education, education can also be interpreted as a process of socialization specifically through social relations (Huda, 2015).

Social transformation as a form of innovation related to all aspects of human life that aims to increase prosperity influenced by education. Education in the view of social transformation in the future is widely described by several experts. Education is a process that can change a person's behavior in terms of theory. Social transformation will have an impact on change both at the individual level as an agent and at the institutional level that is able to change the social structure that exists in society. To face problems as part of the social transformation of today's society and beyond, education is expected to produce responsive and solution-oriented successors. Various concepts of social change directed by experts in analyzing the phenomena that occur, namely, the concept of cycle change, the concept of social progress, the concept of socialism, particularistic theory, historical theory, sociological theory and sociology and social change (Wahid, 2018).

Education is seen as important for human beings in achieving constructive social change. Education is a process of social transformation that can act as an agent of change towards the formation of collective awareness in society. Education is not only a process of inheriting knowledge that is passive in nature towards environmental conditions. The transformative educational process should be able to build collective awareness in society. Awareness of the objective conditions that develop in society. A condition that is considered an obstacle and a fundamental problem in the social development of society. Education prepares critical and competitive students so that they can play an active role as members of society in realizing a conducive life. This has actually made education a process of social transformation towards change towards progress amidst the social problems faced by society.

The development of information and communication technology has an impact on the development of people's lives. Advances in science and technology should bring people to a better life. In reality, not all developments in science and technology can be accepted and are adaptive to the social development of society. Because education should be a social engineering process that requires interaction between individuals. While technology limits the space for interaction between educators and students, so that students do not have sensitivity to environmental conditions (Jamun, 1996). Although technology has a positive impact on the development of education and science, the readiness of society and students in using technology that has a negative impact needs to be considered. Because basically the development of technology and science depends on the attitude and use of each individual (Novi Yona Sidratul Munti & Dwi Asril Syaifuddin, 2020). However, this has become less attention in education in families, communities or educational institutions themselves.

Schools must educate the younger generation to be able to live and adapt to rapid changes due to the development of science and technology. Related to this problem, one of the important tasks of education is to conduct critical reflection on the dominant systems and ideologies that control society in general. This critical reflection is carried out in order to think of alternative systems towards social transformation towards a just society. Globally, education is an effort to train students' views of the world by focusing on the interconnectedness between humans and nature and the environment. This understanding provides an explanation to students that, in the natural system there is a mutual symbiosis between humans, nature and the environment. Therefore, how education prepares individuals in society who are able to maintain and preserve the harmony of life. This is what is a social criticism of educational practices in the digital era or called the disruption era. Education has been trapped in the inheritance of technology, not in the process of transformation and internalization of structural values of society, which basically are the foundation and defense for students from the negative influences of the disruption era.

Education must be returned to a social reality that is needed in facing global competition. Education cannot be separated from the noble values of the nation's culture, so the process must not be indifferent to the reality and problems of society. The advancement of information and communication technology has the potential to create gaps and produce apathetic and individualistic students or even make it the goal of education. Because basically education is a laboratory for participants to educate to achieve the goal of truly enlightening the nation's life. Creating an intelligent nation's life is by reinforcing the noble values of the nation's culture (Marsono, 2019) such as collective values, tolerance, justice, mutual cooperation, and friendliness. Cultural values in their broad sense must be present in the education process so that an appreciation and practice of the noble values of the nation's culture is created in order to appreciate, practice and preserve the values of Pancasila. As in the mandate of the 1945 Constitution Article 32 that the State advances Indonesian national culture in the midst of world civilization by guaranteeing the freedom of society to maintain and develop its cultural values (DPR-RI, 2023).

Discussions about education will never find a final point. There are many things that can be discussed, from the content of the material to the practices and paradigms of education that are developing. Likewise, the theories used, many theories can be used as analytical tools to explain educational problems. No exception to the Critical theory offered by Jürgen Habermas. Geral Moratua Siregar uses Habermas' theory in studying the independent learning policy. In his research, he provides an alternative to Habermas' theory for educators and institutional leaders to implement independent curriculum policy (Siregar, 2021). The next study is Asep Dahliana, that Habermas' theory can be used to analyze the implementation of character education in the context of general education. This analysis uses Habermas' critical theory. That the results of the study, the implementation of character education in Indonesia is less than pleasant. The problem starts from the lack of provision for educators and the overlap in the realm of general education disciplines (Dahliana et al., 2020). The last study is research on the

development of humanist learning theory from Habermas' perspective and its relevance to Islamic education. Syahrial Labaso's research sees learning more as a process of student humanism (Labaso, 2021).

The focus of Habermas' critical study is on communication theory. Basically, Habermas' theory has a focus in the field of social science disciplines. However, in analyzing educational problems, this theory is very suitable for explaining developing educational practices. In this study, it will specifically criticize educational practices and learning paradigms that tend to be conservative-formalistic. The weaknesses of educational practices can be seen from how society and educators view education. In this study, Habermas' theory is used as an analytical tool that basically education is not a teaching process that has no meaning and purpose, but rather as a social instrument in reconstructing the social life of society. Through social instruments (education), students are prepared to become members of society who are able to play an autonomous role in shaping social reality. How is education in global challenges, amidst the onslaught of technological advances, information and communication can remain on the track of the real educational goals, thus the key is in the educational process.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method (Moleong, 2021), namely studying a phenomenon of educational practice using communication theory from Jürgen Habermas's critical sociological thinking (Habermas, 1984) (Habermas, 1972). The researcher intends to explain how current educational practices are when viewed from Habermas's sociological theory. Researchers use theory as an analytical tool in presenting facts in academic practice. Therefore, researchers, in carrying out their study activities, collect references related to Habermas' theories through books and journals. Then, the researcher collects facts about the problems in educational practice so that researchers can discuss them in the discussion. Thus, the stages carried out in this study use the stages (Miles & Huberman, 1992). After data collection, the researcher will carry out the stages of data reduction and data presentation and draw conclusions from the study of the problems studied. This technique is, of course, used because, in this study, the data is in the form of descriptions or raises issues related to social phenomena in educational practice. A study that examines human behavior and things that numbers cannot measure.

Thus, this research is included in the category of library research (Mahanum, 2021), which is a research effort to explore information through library data such as books, journals, articles or other texts that have the same discussion accuracy as the problem studied in the research. The research activities in this library study are: 1). Recording all findings regarding the "research problem" in each research discussion obtained in the literature and sources and/or the latest findings regarding the "research problem," 2). Integrating all findings, both theories or new findings, 3). Analyzing all findings from various readings related to the shortcomings of each source, the advantages or relationships of each regarding the discourse discussed in it, and 4). Criticizing and providing critical ideas in research results against previous discourses by presenting new findings in collaborating different thoughts on the "research problem" (Sari & Asmendri, 2020).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Reflections on Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory of Educational Practice**

Reflection on educational practices can basically be done with various approaches or perspectives. One effort that can be made in reflecting on educational practices is through critical theoretical studies of developing educational practices. One perspective that can be used in criticizing educational practices is through Jürgen Habermas' Social Criticism. Habermas is a second generation figure from the Frankfurt School, who has views in the fields of philosophy and critical sociology (Iwan, 2016). His views can be

used to see social reality as a result of educational practices (Wisarja & Sudarsana, 2017). That social reality is inseparable from how educational practices are applied in society. The actual reality today is marked by the development of information and communication technology that has entered all lines of community life. Like it or not, this changes the way people view and interact. Therefore, through Habermas' critical theory, it will provide a paradigmatic argument for educational practices.

This view begins with the colonization of the system paradigm towards the life-world paradigm that has directed the awareness of living together towards manipulative behavior. The logical consequence is that educational discourse tends to direct itself into the logic of the industrial system that is being implemented, thus education inevitably links itself to the movement of modernization (Wisarja & Sudarsana, 2017). In the first generation period, the Frankfurt critical school criticized modernization for the development of community life. However, in the second generation, Habermas complemented his views with the theory of interactionist - subjective communication (Supraja, 2018) (Habermas, 1972). Educational practices must be based on communication patterns that are built in the educational process. The communication pattern between educators and students is as subjects - subjects of education. In the educational process, students should not be considered as objects of education, which are considered as passive object targets or limited to the transfer of knowledge. In the educational process, both parties must be involved in learning communication. This means that in learning there is a dialogic-participatory, namely two-way communication in the learning process.

In Habermas's view, through his critical theory, he adds a theory of communication (interaction) that needs to be built. The communication in question is an act of mutual understanding. The characteristic of his critical philosophy is that it is always closely related to criticism of actual social relations (Muslih, 2023). This means that education is different from an ivory tower that is far from social reality. Because in the principle of action Habermas mentions two types, namely instrumental ratio and communicative ratio (Adiwijaya, 2010). The educational process is in an active communication space between educators and students. Education does not consider students as passive objects, who do not have the opportunity to participate. However, in the educational process between educators and students, they are active subjects who stand independently. Subjects involved in education have complete autonomy over themselves and their environment. The educational process is not just a pragmatic transformation of knowledge because education is a form of appreciation and providing space for expression for the development of individual potential that is varied in the form of an emancipatory learning process—providing space for students to develop themselves subjectively and independently without elements of interest.

In Habermas's view, humans as *homo educandum* are placed in the most central position. Anthropocentrism dominates Habermas's thinking when associated with educational practices. In this understanding, humans are genuinely glorified in their position and personality (Supraja, 2018). The center of education is in humans themselves as the main actors. In principle, education prepares students to become adaptive members of society, productive for their development and life. In this context, seeing educational practices should be emancipatory (Hambali & Hidayat, 2020), namely progressive education, which is free from external human domination and interests. Education is no longer directed at pragmatic interests, which only prioritize social status or are pragmatic.

The Frankfurt School criticized the positivism of science (which at that time was developing rapidly in the world of science), especially in relation to the social sciences of humanity. According to them, the social sciences of humanity cannot use a positivist approach, because positivism is full of theory, whereas the social sciences of humanity are not natural sciences with a binary thought pattern. Positivism has co-opted human freedom in developing the social sciences of humanity. In this context, education cannot leave the objective reality of social society, because of the modernization of advances in information and communication technology so that education is blind to the progress of

scientific development. Therefore, the Frankfurt School recommends a more emancipatory or liberating approach, namely self-reflection. Thus, this self-reflection aims to correct things that are not quite right from modernism, specifically about the positivist thinking expressed by modernist thinkers, as well as the social disintegration caused by modernism (Siregar, 2021).

In the social sciences of humanity, Habermas tries to find the relevance between theory and social practice. The first generation of the Frankfurt School places the world of work (another term: "purposeful rational action") as social practice, whereas according to Habermas the world of work must be distinguished from social interaction activities. For Habermas, communication can be the door to social practice. The practice of the world of work, according to Habermas, is dominant, while social communication is liberating (Habermas, 1972). Humans in the scheme of communicative action play an important role in determining the extent to which social change can be carried out. The human connection that exists in communicative action is not passive but proactive. Therefore, in Habermas's view, the perpetrators of communicative action are oriented towards achieving understanding between the two parties. Communicative action like this is two-way or dialogical. Dialogue is a characteristic of Habermas's social practice, where both parties are emancipatory and do not dominate each other (Muttaqien, 2023). In educational practice, a participatory dialogic model should be developed so that students are able to express themselves in their environment. Every individual has the opportunity to express themselves as a form of liberating and humanistic education.

Habermas in social communication theory, the target is understanding between the two parties, mutual understanding. In an effort to understand, rationalization is emancipatory, so that humans are not co-opted by the system and are liberated (Siregar, 2021). There is no domination in educational practice. Moreover, the world of education is directed at the world of work, not directed at human awareness of social beings who have a collective role in building community life. Collective awareness that assumes that individual humans as members of society cannot be separated in their roles. This means that education must create students who are tolerant and humanist. In Habermas's view, education prepares students to become members of society according to the needs of the role of social life. This is called Intersubjective - emancipatory. Individuals in society who are able to understand and understand each other so that they can build a harmonious social life. Therefore, education creates the character of students needed according to the conditions of society. Not education that creates a workforce that is ready to use in companies.

The term emancipation is not only to free from social problems such as slavery, colonialism and oppression in the name of power, but also from internal problems such as mental disorders and ignorance. The characteristic of emancipation is that a person has changed from a state of ignorance to knowledge. Emancipation here is interpreted as liberation from confinement, dogmatism and constraints to strengthen the existence of humanity. Emancipation for Habermas is education that provides progressive changes to individual life (Nugraheni & Firmansyah, 2020) (Habermas, 1984). However, the next challenge is the development of Western-style information and communication technology which is very oriented towards capital, thus making humans objects of the virtual world market (internet society) and making them independent from the community in the real world (Muslih, 2023). The development of information and communication technology that occurs is a real challenge in the world of education. Communication patterns in educational social interactions will be alienated by the internet society. The helplessness of individual humans when faced with communication technology is a reflection of the failure of the development process and social change that is centered on humans. Society is often powerless to stem the hegemony of communication technology. Therefore, empowerment communication becomes a new perspective in educational practice (Setyowati, 2019).

Habermas's criticism in educational practice can basically be realized in the type of human relations (Habermas, 1984). The logic of the pattern of human communication relations used by Habermas is subject to subject, but in practice the education that occurs

is a pattern of human relations as subject - object. Namely, educational practices that display the relationship between educators as subjects and students as objects. In fact, according to Habermas's view, the subject meets the object in a one-way communication relationship pattern, there is no communication between one and the other, or is called the term instrumental ratio. This relationship is more appropriately used in the context of humans and nature, which then gave birth to the development of science and technology. In the pattern of communication between subjects and subjects, it means establishing a communication relationship between fellow subjects called humans. With the assumption that society is essentially communicative, Habermas then replaced the production paradigm of historical materialism with the communication paradigm. So instead of the role of the methods of production, he prioritizes the role of social communication structures in social change (Muslih, 2023).

## **2. Assessing the Role of Education in Social Reconstruction from Jürgen Habermas' Perspective**

The situation of social pathology that is rooted in the wrong way or pattern of thinking, myths that have developed in society, the results of the education process for example, certainly requires social engineering of the education sector to solve the problem. In addition to a clear agenda setting, of course, agents are needed who are able to carry out the role and work of reformers, who consistently encourage the success of the planned social engineering stage by stage. Social engineering of education can be said to be a never-ending process of solving social education problems, especially when the ideals or interests of citizens in fulfilling educational needs have not been achieved. Ideally, social engineering is based on the social potential of society and must be in accordance with the social context that can be formed and developed to solve educational problems. The point of social engineering of education is to manage problems and carry out a series of efforts to solve educational problems within the framework of norms, values and ideologies that develop in society (Ali, 2020).

Engineering is a process of changing something into something new based on a certain desired design. Natural engineering with technical knowledge/technology, while individual engineering through education (Rizal, 2017). The terminology of social engineering in sociology is understood as a planned social change for the purpose of developing an ideal society. In the scope of social engineering, social problems that occur in all areas of life are also related. In a positive sense, social engineering starts from the need for solutions to social problems that exist in people's lives. Improving the social system that leads to an ideal community life. Social engineering contains systematic concrete steps, with a clear vision, goals and objectives. So that plans to change people's mindsets and behavior can run based on goals (Ali, 2020)

With various educational problems, constructive criticism is needed in assessing the role of education in social reality. How education does not get trapped in a pragmatic paradigm that will produce mechanical graduates. One breakthrough to overcome this problem is the emancipatory model of education pioneered by Habermas. In the critical theory and communicative action theory formulated by Habermas for the sociology of education, it uses a benchmark of how social theory influences the formation of thoughts (thought) then moves on to speech (words) so that it gives birth to actions (action) and becomes a habit (habit) so that it becomes a character (character) in order to realize the ideals and goals (destiny) of transformative, emancipatory and democratic social. This benchmark is a necessity to see that being human means being a thinker, speaker and actor in its social context. The direction of becoming human will form habits so that they become inherent characters. The ideals of emancipation should not release the human entity in its social perspective. This is a reference for the basic question of how the theory of communicative action offers education (Nugraheni & Firmansyah, 2020).

Departing from the philosophical study of humans, it is known that in essence humans are creatures that develop qualitatively. In qualitative development, humans need a process towards becoming truly human. Therefore, in practice, education plays a

major role in changing the existence or life of humans (Khasinah, 2013) towards a socially constructive direction. Every human being has a balanced relationship and has a sense of responsibility and works together to care for the earth. Harmonizing human life so that it is in harmony with nature and all creatures on earth. The essence of education is a continuous and never-ending process, so that it can produce continuous quality, which is aimed at the realization of the figure of a future human being (Sujana, 2019). Humans who are able to harmonize and prepare for a better and more sustainable life. Its relation to Habermas' theory that the sociology of education studies the relationship between humans and their environment, society and the interactions within it. Education as a social laboratory can prepare students to become ideal members of society.

Education is a process of humanization to make humans have a sense of humanity, become mature humans, and whole humans so that they are able to carry out their main tasks and functions fully and develop culture. Education without cultural values is like clapping one hand. Education without value orientation is impossible nonsense. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration if Ary H. Gunawan defines education as a process of socialization, namely the socialization of values, knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Marsono, 2019). In the context of social society, these values are related to the aspect of education. Many social problems are not touched on in the process of human learning in education. However, education is trapped in a system framework that restricts every dimension of human life. Thus, there is a conflict between the ideality to be achieved and the systemization carried out in education. The occurrence of systemization of the management of the teaching and learning process gives the impression of rigidity and closedness. This systemization is contrary to the spirit of community participation in fostering critical awareness which is the basis for the existence of education in community life (Nugraheni & Firmansyah, 2020).

With critical awareness, it is expected to be able to direct students to be wise in their speech and behavior. He speaks based on careful observation of social reality. He acts based on an open worldview so that he is able to criticize the crisis that occurs in social life. He is able to see clearly the root of the problem that underlies the crisis that occurs and at the same time provide solutions to overcome the crisis. In educational interactions, students are not merely objects in the process of knowledge formation. Communication and dialogue should occur in the learning process by positioning students as subjects in the educational interaction. Therefore, by communicating between educational subjects, it will create an attitude of mutual understanding, very high tolerance, not judging each other and not blaming each other. With the assumption that according to Habermas, society is essentially communicative. (Sudrajat, 1988).

The concept of social construction of reality is defined as a social process through actions and interactions where individuals continuously create a reality that is owned and experienced together subjectively (Setyowati, 2019). From this view, it can be emphasized that the role of education in reconstructing society is very real, so education should not be directed at pragmatic goals. Because education is part of social engineering that can change, organize and at the same time direct life in the desired direction. From here, Habermas's view can be used as a critique of educational practices. Education can train intersubjective communication between educational subjects in social interactions. Because through this kind of pattern, it will produce students who have a sense of mutuality and a sense of responsibility for social life.

In relation to social processes, communication becomes a way to make social change. Communication plays a role in bridging differences in society because it is able to re-glue the social system of society in its efforts to make changes. In this case, communication will not be separated from its social context, meaning that the communication process will be colored by attitudes, behaviors, patterns, norms, and institutions of society (Setyowati, 2019). Education prepares students for social participation in the same communication channels. Because in society diversity is a necessity, through interaction and communication, human individuals will find a point of view on the common social goals in building community civilization. In the process of



social communication, each individual can become a subject for themselves and their environment. Each individual freely interprets the results of their communication actions so that each individual has the ability to reconstruct their social reality.

Education is life, therefore learning activities must be able to equip students with life skills (life skills or life competencies) that are in accordance with the living environment and needs. Educational development cannot be separated from the aspect of educational communication as an initial step to the success of sustainable educational programs (Koswara, 2018). An educational development strategy is needed through a critical, creative, educative, and innovative educational communicative approach, so that it can encourage the participation of educational actors (subjects) to organize dialogic-participatory education. In the Social Construction theory, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman explain that social reality is a social construction created by individuals. Individuals are humans who are free to engage in interpersonal relationships and become determinants in the social world that is constructed based on their will, not victims of social facts, but as a creative production and reproduction medium in constructing their social world (Setyowati, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Education is part of a social engineering that is formed systematically and organized. Education is needed in order to build a collective society, and is able to harmonize itself with nature and its environment. The task of education is not only as a transfer of knowledge, but more importantly, is to make humans into real humans. As in the sense that humans are social beings who have a role in social life and nature as a whole. The challenge then is in the era of the development of information and communication technology today, education tends to be alienated from social reality. In fact, education should not be separated from the social reality of society. Because in the view of educational sociology, the formation of social reality is a result of educational practices. Therefore, educational practices must be based on communication patterns that are built in the educational process, so that a social life order is created that is in accordance with what is aspired to. The educational communication pattern that is needed is how education creates two-way communication (dialogical-participatory). Namely, positioning educators and students as subjects so that a pattern of communication between subjects is created in education. This is based on Habermas' communication theory in building a paradigm of thought in educational practice. Habermas provides a theoretical basis for Intersubjective-emanative communication, that the educational process is by establishing communication between subjects so as to provide changes in progress for educational actors and the social life of society.

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