

Integration of Educational Psychology into National Policy to Optimize the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum and Student Welfare in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines in depth the relationship between educational psychology and education policy in Indonesia, emphasizing the role of psychological factors in determining the effectiveness of national policies such as Freedom to Learn and the Independent Curriculum. Using a descriptive qualitative method based on literature review, this study identified that learning motivation, teacher psychological readiness, policy perceptions, school culture, social support, and individual student development are key psychological elements contributing to successful policy implementation. The study's findings indicate that education policies that do not adequately consider psychological conditions in the field often lead to resistance, academic stress, low motivation, and disparities in teacher and student readiness, particularly in areas with limited access. Furthermore, public perception, which still focuses on numerical evaluations, contributes to increased psychological pressure on students and teachers. Conversely, integrating educational psychology into policy can create more humanistic, inclusive, and adaptive learning, while also addressing students' emotional well-being and character. Therefore, this study emphasizes that effective education policies must be designed based on a comprehensive understanding of the psychological dynamics of all education practitioners so that educational transformation in Indonesia can be more realistic, sustainable, and support the holistic development of students.

Keywords: Educational Psychology, Educational Policy, Independent Curriculum, Learning Motivation.

Introduction

Educational psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on understanding the learning process, student behavior, and psychological factors that can influence student success in education. In Indonesia, educational psychology plays a crucial role in assisting the government in formulating and implementing educational policies that focus on the holistic needs of students. Educational policies can be formulated to be more adaptive to the psychological development and character of the nation's children by understanding the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of students.

Indonesian education policy essentially aims to improve the nation's intellectual life, as stated in Article 31 of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution. However, the implementation of this policy is not without psychological challenges that often arise in the field. Educational

psychology aims to assist and ensure that policies such as Freedom to Learn and the Independent Curriculum always take into account individual differences, learning motivation, and students' mental readiness to accept changes in the learning system. In this way, the correlation between educational psychology and education policy is complementary in that theories and psychological findings from students serve as the basis for effective and relevant policy implementation.

On the other hand, the implementation of educational policies often faces various psychological challenges, such as resistance to policy change, low teacher and student motivation, and a gap between individual abilities and curriculum demands. In this context, the role of educational psychology is crucial in providing a more personalized and empathetic approach, so that policies can be implemented not merely normatively but also realistically in Indonesian society. This psychological approach can help develop strategies for more inclusive and equitable learning.

In conclusion, the combination of educational psychology and education policy in Indonesia is the right step toward a more relevant, adaptive, and sustainable education system. However, by consistently considering aspects of educational psychology, educational policy can be more targeted in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and socially mature. This relationship is a key factor in achieving quality education in the current era of globalization and digital transformation.

Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe, analyze, and interpret the relationship between educational psychology and education policy in Indonesia. This approach was chosen because the discussion focuses on an in-depth understanding of psychological phenomena that influence the successful implementation of education policies, such as learning motivation, teacher mental readiness, the school environment, and perceptions of new policies. Qualitative methods allow researchers to examine data comprehensively and contextually according to the characteristics of the world of education.

The research data was collected through library research, reviewing various scientific sources, including educational psychology textbooks, national research journals, policy reports, and literature related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the Independent Learning policy. These sources were selected based on their relevance, novelty, and contribution to explaining the psychological factors influencing education policy. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, which identify concepts, theories, and empirical findings to compile a comprehensive picture of the relationship between educational psychology and education policy.

The analysis process is carried out through several stages, namely: (1) data reduction, namely selecting and sorting important information related to aspects of educational psychology and policy; (2) data presentation, by organizing information into themes such as learning motivation, teacher welfare, school culture, and psychological challenges; and (3) drawing conclusions, by formulating the relationship between psychological variables and the effectiveness of Indonesian education policy. This methodology provides a scientific basis for producing systematic, structured, and accurate discussions in accordance with the research objectives.

Results

A. Optimization of government policies in the aspects of educational psychology.

Optimizing government policy on educational psychology is a strategic step to improve the quality of Indonesia's human resources. Educational psychology aims to provide the government with a scientific basis for understanding learning dynamics, student development, and the psychological factors that influence educational success. However, Indonesian education policy has often placed more emphasis on administrative and extracurricular aspects than on psychological ones. Therefore, a clear effort is needed to integrate the principles of educational psychology into all aspects of education policy, from planning and implementation to evaluation of national education.

One way to optimize educational policy using a psychological approach is to consistently consider individual student differences. Every child has different learning styles, interests, and levels of cognitive development. The government needs to ensure that policies like the Independent Curriculum truly provide flexibility for teachers to adapt learning to suit each student's characteristics.

Furthermore, the aspect of learning motivation requires special attention in implementing national education policies. Motivation is a crucial psychological factor in determining the extent to which students engage in the learning process. The government can optimize policies by providing a conducive learning environment, fair academic reward programs, and support for students' emotional well-being. Education policies also need to strengthen the psychological well-being of teachers. Teachers play a key role in implementing education policies; however, they often experience stress due to administrative burdens and rapid policy changes. The government can optimize policies by providing educational psychology training, counseling support, and mental well-being programs for teachers. Policies such as the Teacher Leader program should be further developed so that teacher leaders focus not only on pedagogical competence but also on the emotional balance and psychological readiness of educators.

Government policies need to strengthen inclusive education policies through a humanistic psychology approach. This approach emphasizes respect for diversity and the unique potential of each individual. Inclusive education goes beyond providing access for children with special needs; it also creates a learning environment that embraces differences in social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Educational psychology can help teachers and government policymakers understand the importance of empathy, acceptance, and emotional support for all students.

When discussing evaluation, optimizing education policies must also consider the psychological aspects of students. Evaluation systems that emphasize numbers and rankings often neglect affective aspects, creativity, and the student learning process. The government can improve this by implementing authentic (real-world) assessments that assess students' critical thinking skills, collaboration, and character.

Therefore, optimizing government policies focused on educational psychology in Indonesia must be comprehensive and sustainable. The government needs to involve various educational psychology experts in policy formulation, strengthen empirical research in the field of education, and increase psychological awareness among all educators.

B. Educational psychology factors in the successful implementation of educational policies in Indonesia.

The success of implementing education policies in Indonesia depends not only on clear regulations and fundamental support, but also on factors related to educational psychology. Psychology, as the study of human learning behavior, plays a crucial role in ensuring policies are aligned with the characteristics, needs, and potential of students and educators. Understanding aspects of educational psychology, such as motivation, perception, emotion, and cognitive development, is key to ensuring that educational policies are not only implemented administratively but also accepted and implemented effectively within education.

1. Motivation to Learn

Motivation for learning is an internal and external drive that directs each individual to learn and achieve goals. Educational policies such as Independent Learning will be effective if students possess a strong intrinsic motivation, interest, and talent for independent learning. The government can foster student motivation through policies that provide space for independence, realistic challenges, and recognition for achievement.

2. Teacher Psychological Readiness

Teachers are the spearheads in implementing educational policies, so their psychological well-being significantly impacts their effectiveness in school education. If teachers experience stress at work, burnout, and low teacher empowerment, it can hinder the implementation of new policies, especially those that require innovation and adaptation to curriculum changes. Therefore, the government needs to emphasize the aspect of teacher well-being (a state in which teachers feel happy, satisfied, physically and mentally healthy, and have a good quality of life in carrying out their profession) in every educational policy. Training based on educational psychology can help teachers understand student characteristics, manage classes empathetically, and adapt learning strategies to the needs of each individual student.

3. School environment conditions

Schools that maintain a positive culture of education can be characterized by open communication. This open communication allows all parties to understand each other's needs, constraints, and expectations in the educational process. In the context of implementing education policy, open communication serves as a bridge between policymakers and implementers on the ground. When all parties feel heard and valued, acceptance of new policies is higher, allowing for smoother and more effective implementation.

Recognition of student achievement. This recognition extends beyond academic grades to recognition of skills, creativity, hard work, and good character. This type of positive reinforcement demonstrates the application of educational psychology principles, which emphasize the importance of reinforcement in fostering adaptive learning behavior. When students feel valued, they are intrinsically motivated to continue developing. In the long term, recognition of achievement helps build a psychological climate conducive to successful policy implementation, as students become active participants in educational change.

Social support within the school environment, both among students, between teachers, and between teachers and students, fosters a sense of security, mutual trust, and solidarity in facing new challenges. In educational psychology, social support serves as a protective factor against stress and resistance to change. When new policies such as the Independent Curriculum are implemented, school environments with strong social support are better prepared to adapt, as each individual feels less alone in the process of change. Conversely, educational environments that remain stressful and lack emotional support often foster resistance to new policies.

4. Perceptions on education policy

Negative perceptions of new policies from both teachers and students can lead to resistance. The government needs to pay attention to policy communication to ensure it is more transparent, participatory, and contextualized to the conditions in schools. In social psychology, attitudes toward policies are shaped by an individual's experiences, beliefs, and values. Therefore, an educational psychology approach can be used to understand and shape positive perceptions of policies through education, training, and providing meaning to policy changes.

5. Development of individual differences in students

Educational policies must be designed based on an understanding of students' cognitive, emotional, and social developmental stages. For example, the differentiated learning policy in the Independent Curriculum (Curriculum Merdeka) is one way to apply the principles of educational psychology, which respects differences in student abilities and learning styles. By addressing these aspects, educational policies can be implemented effectively because they align with students' learning readiness and do not create excessive psychological burden on them.

Thus, the success of implementing education policy in Indonesia depends heavily on the extent to which psychological factors in education are integrated into every stage of its implementation. The government, teachers, and policymakers need to work together to build psychological awareness in the school environment. An approach that prioritizes psychological well-being, motivation, empathy, and adaptation to individual differences will create an education system that is not only structurally effective but also emotionally and socially healthy.

C. **Psychological challenges of education in the implementation of Indonesian education policies.**

The implementation of education policy in Indonesia faces not only structural challenges such as limited resources and gaps in facilities, but also psychological challenges stemming from individuals and the educational environment. These challenges arise because every policy implemented interacts with the psychological well-being of teachers, students, parents, and the diverse school culture.

1. Resistance to new policies

When new policies like the Independent Curriculum are implemented, many teachers and educators experience confusion, anxiety, and even resistance. This occurs

because the changes require mental and behavioral adaptations that are challenging. From an educational psychology perspective, this resistance arises from cognitive and emotional factors, such as uncertainty about learning outcomes, fear of failure, and a lack of competence. Therefore, successful implementation of new policies requires a psychological approach that will foster mental readiness and self-confidence among educators.

2. Student psychology towards new policies

The shift in the learning system from rote-based learning to creative and collaborative learning within the Independent Curriculum demands students' mental readiness. In this regard, not all students possess intrinsic learning motivation, self-regulation skills, and strong self-confidence. This problem can lead to students experiencing academic stress, especially those who struggle to adjust to the demands of independent learning. This highlights the importance of applying the principles of educational psychology to help students develop adaptive skills, self-confidence, and learning resilience.

3. Geographical psychological gap.

Students and teachers in remote areas often face limited access to learning resources, psychological training, and inadequate educational facilities. These conditions can lead to a lack of self-confidence, social isolation, and low motivation to learn. Simultaneous national education policies sometimes fail to account for differences in social backgrounds and psychological inequalities, resulting in uneven implementation. The government needs to adopt a contextual approach to educational psychology that adapts learning strategies to local conditions.

4. Lack of public understanding of new policies

Many people still judge learning success based on exam scores, rather than on student character development or critical thinking skills, as emphasized in the new education policy. This misperception can create psychological stress for both children and teachers, as the new policy shifts the focus from process to outcomes. The government must provide public education on educational psychology and strengthen the objectives of the policy so that the public can positively support its implementation.

The implementation of existing education policies in Indonesia requires serious attention to the various psychological challenges that accompany them. Successful implementation depends not only on the design of the education policy, but also on the mental readiness, emotional well-being, and psychological understanding of all education implementers. An approach based on educational psychology needs to be an integral part of every stage of education policy, from planning, implementation, and evaluation, so that the education system in Indonesia not only fosters intellectual intelligence but also fosters psychological well-being and a strong national character.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Educational psychology plays a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of education policy in Indonesia. By understanding the psychological aspects of students, such as motivation, emotions, and cognitive development, educational policies can be designed more precisely and in line with students' learning needs. This educational psychology approach helps create an education system that emphasizes not only academic aspects but also fosters emotional and social balance in students.

Integrating educational psychology and education policy will strengthen the effectiveness of government programs in education. By considering psychological factors, implemented policies will be more adaptive to real-world conditions in the educational field, thereby improving the quality of learning and the psychological well-being of students.

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