

Humanistic Educational Philosophy as a Basis for Developing the Merdeka Curriculum

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Article Info

Article history:

Received December 28, 2025

Revised January 04, 2026

Accepted January 05, 2026

Keywords:

Humanism,
Merdeka Curriculum,
Pancasila Student Profile,
Differentiated Learning,
Teacher's Role.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze in depth the relationship between humanistic educational philosophy and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile. The research employs a literature review method using a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain a comprehensive conceptual and philosophical understanding. Data were collected through an extensive review of academic books, scholarly journals, research articles, educational policy documents, and other relevant academic sources, including official documents of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile. The data were analyzed thematically, focusing on learner-centered learning, the role of humanistic values in character and autonomy development, teachers' roles as learning facilitators, the implementation of differentiated instruction, and the function of a humanistic curriculum in strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile. The findings indicate that humanistic principles serve as the core philosophical foundation of the Merdeka Curriculum, supporting the development of learners' character, independence, and potential actualization. Teachers function as facilitators who create inclusive, participatory, and contextual learning environments. In conclusion, the integration of humanistic values within the Merdeka Curriculum significantly strengthens the Pancasila Student Profile and contributes to the development of learners who are independent, creative, critical thinkers, and of strong character, in line with national education goals.

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Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi,
Peran Guru.

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam keterkaitan antara filsafat pendidikan humanistik dan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam membentuk Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif untuk memperoleh pemahaman konseptual dan filosofis yang komprehensif. Data dikumpulkan melalui kajian literatur yang meliputi buku-buku akademik, jurnal ilmiah, artikel penelitian, dokumen kebijakan pendidikan, serta berbagai sumber akademik relevan, termasuk dokumen resmi Kurikulum Merdeka dan Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik dengan menitikberatkan pada pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik, penerapan nilai-nilai humanistik dalam pengembangan karakter dan kemandirian, peran guru sebagai fasilitator pembelajaran, penerapan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, serta peran kurikulum humanistik dalam memperkuat Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa prinsip-prinsip humanistik menjadi fondasi filosofis utama Kurikulum Merdeka yang mendukung pengembangan karakter, kemandirian, dan aktualisasi potensi

peserta didik. Guru berperan sebagai fasilitator yang menciptakan pembelajaran inklusif, partisipatif, dan kontekstual. Kesimpulannya, integrasi nilai humanistik dalam Kurikulum Merdeka secara signifikan memperkuat Profil Pelajar Pancasila dan menghasilkan peserta didik yang mandiri, kreatif, bernalar kritis, serta berkarakter sesuai tujuan pendidikan nasional.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect in shaping the character, abilities, and potential of individuals to face the dynamics of modern life. In the context of education in Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as an effort to provide flexibility in the learning process, enabling students to develop according to their interests, talents, and abilities (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, character development, independence, and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile (Nurhayati et al., 2022). Such a concept requires a strong philosophical foundation so that its implementation goes beyond mere administrative procedures and genuinely fosters holistic student development. The philosophy of humanistic education offers a relevant foundation, as it emphasizes the dignity, freedom, and self-actualization of students as the core of the learning process (Saleh et al., 2025).

The philosophy of humanistic education emerged as a response to traditional educational approaches that tend to be authoritarian and focused on the mechanistic transfer of knowledge. Humanism emphasizes that education should facilitate the comprehensive growth and development of students, including intellectual, emotional, social, and moral aspects (Rogers, 1969). From this

perspective, students are not merely objects receiving content but active subjects who participate in shaping their own learning process. The humanistic concept emphasizes meaningful learning experiences, respect for individuality, and learning environments that promote safety and freedom (Jauhari & Karyono, 2022). This aligns closely with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which provide space for students to explore their interests and potentials through flexible learning and contextual projects (Tarso et al., 2025).

Moreover, humanism highlights the development of character and independence as integral components of education. Education is not solely aimed at achieving academic competence but also at shaping students' attitudes, values, and personalities to enable them to function as responsible and ethical citizens (Suryani et al., 2024). According to Desmet & Fokkinga (2020), self-actualization can only be achieved when individuals' basic needs, including psychological and social needs, are fulfilled. The Merdeka Curriculum, through the reinforcement of the Pancasila Student Profile, emphasizes independence, critical reasoning, and noble character as core competencies to be developed, making the integration of humanistic values both relevant and urgent for implementation in the learning process.

The role of teachers in humanistic education has shifted from controlling the



learning process to acting as facilitators who guide and accompany students. Teachers are tasked with creating democratic, inclusive, and participatory learning environments in which students feel valued, motivated, and have control over their learning experiences (Suryadi & Tilaar, 2019). The Merdeka Curriculum supports this concept by promoting differentiated learning, in which teachers adjust methods, content, and learning outcomes to meet students' needs, abilities, and interests (Siswanto, 2025). This approach ensures that each student receives learning experiences that are relevant, meaningful, and conducive to optimal individual potential development.

The integration of humanistic educational philosophy into the Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes experiential learning. Learning that focuses on exploration, reflection, and contextual projects allows students to internalize moral, social, and academic values simultaneously. This is consistent with the goals of the national education system to develop students who are not only intellectually capable but also mature in character, creative, and capable of critical thinking (Fitriana et al., 2025; Hanama et al., 2024).

Thus, the implementation of humanistic values serves as a philosophical foundation that bridges educational theory and the practice of the Merdeka Curriculum. It ensures that learning experiences are holistic, meaningful, and supportive of students' personal growth and self-actualization. By embedding humanistic principles, the curriculum fosters an educational environment in which students can develop as Merdeka, ethical, and critically thinking individuals prepared to contribute positively to society.

METHOD

This study employed a library research method with a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the relationship between the philosophy of

humanistic education and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile. Data were collected through a literature review of books, scholarly journals, articles, educational policy documents, and other relevant academic sources, including Rogers (1969) work on humanism, Maslow (1970) theory of self-actualization, Tomlinson (2014) study on differentiated instruction, as well as official documents of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

The analysis was conducted thematically, grouping information into five main focuses: (1) humanism and student-centered learning; (2) humanistic values in character and independence development; (3) the teacher's role as a learning facilitator; (4) differentiated instruction as a manifestation of humanistic principles; (5) a humanistic curriculum as a reinforcement of the Pancasila Student Profile. This study emphasizes conceptual understanding and theoretical relationships between variables, resulting in the conclusion that humanistic principles serve as an essential philosophical foundation for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. These principles support a holistic student-centered approach while fostering optimal character development and independence among students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Humanism and the Merdeka Curriculum Are Both Learner-Centered

The humanistic approach in the philosophy of education emphasizes that learners are the center of the entire educational process. Education is not understood merely as a process of knowledge transfer, but rather as an effort to facilitate holistic human growth and



development, encompassing intellectual, emotional, social, and moral dimensions. Humanistic figures such as Carl Rogers emphasize that learning becomes meaningful when learners are actively involved, have freedom in learning, and exist within an environment that respects their experiences and feelings (Rogers, 1969). Therefore, humanistic educational philosophy rejects authoritarian and uniform instructional approaches, as they tend to overlook the uniqueness and individual potential of learners.

These humanistic principles strongly align with the developmental direction of the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to provide learners with autonomy to develop their potential, interests, and talents through flexible and contextual learning (Putri, 2024). This curriculum positions learners as active subjects in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge delivered by teachers. Merdeka Curriculum policies also emphasize the importance of learning that considers learners' needs, developmental stages, and individual characteristics (Suryani et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2025), which is consistent with the humanistic view of education as being individually oriented.

The similarity in orientation between humanism and the Merdeka Curriculum is also evident in their emphasis on self-development and learner self-actualization. From a humanistic perspective, the goal of education is to help individuals achieve self-actualization, a condition in which a person can optimally develop their best abilities. Maslow (1970) states that self-actualization can only be achieved when learners' basic needs are fulfilled and the learning environment supports freedom, security, and self-respect. The Merdeka Curriculum accommodates this principle through differentiated learning, projects to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, and the provision of opportunities for reflection and learner choice.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Curriculum has a strong philosophical foundation in humanistic educational philosophy, particularly in its learner-centered learning principles. This alignment requires a paradigm shift in educators' roles, from controllers of learning to facilitators and learning companions (Aprilia et al., 2025). Teachers are expected to create a democratic, dialogical, and inclusive learning climate that respects learner diversity so that the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum can be optimally achieved (Pande et al., 2000). Thus, the application of humanistic values is a key factor in realizing meaningful learning oriented toward holistic learner development.

2. Humanistic Values Support Character Development and Learner Autonomy

Humanistic values in the philosophy of education emphasize the importance of developing learners' character as whole human beings. Humanistic education is not solely oriented toward cognitive achievement but also toward the formation of attitudes, values, and personalities that reflect respect for human dignity. Humanism views learners as individuals who possess freedom, responsibility, and the capacity to determine the direction of their own development. From this perspective, education serves as a means to cultivate positive character traits such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and self-confidence through meaningful learning experiences (Peters, 1966).

In addition to character development, humanistic values play an important role in fostering learner autonomy. Humanism believes that learners should be trusted and given opportunities to make decisions in their learning processes so that they can develop self-control and personal responsibility. Maslow (1970) argues that education should help individuals fulfill their psychological needs in order to



achieve self-actualization, one indicator of which is independence in thinking and acting. A humanistic learning environment encourages learners to engage in reflective learning, recognize their own potential, and take initiative in addressing learning challenges.

These values are highly relevant to the direction of national education policy through the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes strengthening learners' character and autonomy as core educational goals (Novantoro et al., 2025; Rochmat et al., 2025). This emphasis is reflected in the Pancasila Student Profile, which prioritizes independence, moral integrity, and critical reasoning as key competencies to be developed through the learning process (Wahyuni et al., 2024). Thus, humanistic values serve as a philosophical foundation that supports the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in shaping learners who are not only academically competent but also mature in character and attitude.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that humanistic values significantly contribute to the development of learner character and autonomy in the context of modern education. The application of these values requires a shift toward more democratic, dialogical, and learner-respecting instructional approaches. Teachers act as guides who provide space for learners to grow independently, while schools function as environments that cultivate humanistic values in everyday educational practice (Dewey, 1933). Therefore, the integration of humanistic values into the curriculum is a crucial element in creating education that sustainably fosters learner character and autonomy.

3. Teachers Serve as Learning Facilitators

From the perspective of humanistic educational philosophy, the role of the teacher undergoes a fundamental shift from an authoritative figure who transmits

knowledge to a facilitator who supports learners' learning processes (Hanama et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2025). Humanism emphasizes that learning is a personal process that occurs when learners are actively engaged and have control over their learning experiences. Carl Rogers asserts that teachers should create learning conditions that allow learners to feel safe, respected, and motivated to learn independently, rather than unilaterally controlling the entire learning process (Rogers, 1983). Thus, the teacher's role as a facilitator is central to creating meaningful learning experiences.

The facilitator role within a humanistic approach requires teachers to understand learners' needs, interests, and individual characteristics. Teachers do not merely deliver content but also guide, provide feedback, and facilitate learners in discovering knowledge through learning experiences. Maslow (1970) emphasizes that a learning environment that supports self-actualization must be built through positive, empathetic relationships that respect learners' potential. In this context, teachers act as companions who help learners develop self-confidence, responsibility, and autonomy in learning.

This concept of teachers as facilitators aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes learner-centered learning. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages teachers to design flexible, contextual, and differentiated learning experiences based on learners' needs (Maba et al., 2025; Shigematsu et al., 2025). Teachers are expected to create learning situations that provide opportunities for learners to explore, discuss, and reflect on their learning experiences. This policy affirms that teachers are no longer the sole source of knowledge but rather guides and supporters of learners' learning processes.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that the role of teachers as learning facilitators is a direct implication



of implementing humanistic educational philosophy within the Merdeka Curriculum. This role requires teachers to possess strong pedagogical, social, and reflective competencies to create democratic and participatory learning environments (Astuti et al., 2025; Setianingrum & Kintoko, 2025). Teachers are also expected to continuously develop their professionalism to facilitate meaningful learning oriented toward holistic learner development (Noddings, 2012). Therefore, the success of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation largely depends on teachers' ability to fulfill their role as learning facilitators.

4. Differentiated Learning Reflects Humanistic Principles

Differentiated learning is an educational strategy that adapts learning content, processes, and products to accommodate learners' diverse needs, abilities, and interests. This principle is highly aligned with humanistic educational philosophy, which emphasizes that each individual possesses unique potential and distinct ways of learning. Humanism positions learners at the center of the learning process; therefore, uniform and rigid approaches are inconsistent with individual learner needs (Rogers, 1969). Through differentiated learning, teachers can provide more personalized and meaningful learning experiences, enabling each learner to develop according to their capacity and characteristics (Rambe et al., 2025).

Within a humanistic framework, differentiated learning also aims to foster learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Maslow (1970) emphasizes that individuals achieve self-actualization when their psychological needs are fulfilled and they have the freedom to direct their learning processes according to their interests and talents. Differentiation allows learners to choose learning paths, materials, and methods that suit them, making them feel valued and more

motivated. This aligns with the humanistic principle of prioritizing relevant and meaningful learning experiences that nurture self-confidence and personal responsibility.

Furthermore, differentiated learning in modern educational practice requires teachers to act as facilitators and mentors. Teachers must be able to recognize individual differences, design varied learning activities, and adapt assessments to learners' abilities (Tomlinson, 2014). This approach not only increases learner engagement but also supports character formation and social competence through guided and empathetic interactions. Thus, differentiation represents a concrete manifestation of humanistic principles that respect the dignity, potential, and uniqueness of every learner.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that differentiated learning is one of the most tangible implementations of humanistic educational philosophy. This strategy not only addresses the diversity of learners' abilities and interests but also builds a democratic, inclusive learning environment that supports holistic individual development. The success of differentiated learning implementation depends greatly on teachers' ability to deeply understand learners and create relevant, meaningful, and motivating learning experiences (Kintoko & Siswanto, 2024). Therefore, differentiation serves as a bridge between humanistic theory and the learner-centered practice of the Merdeka Curriculum.

5. A Humanistic Curriculum Strengthens the Pancasila Student Profile

A humanistic-based curriculum places learners at the center of the learning process, directing every curricular aspect toward the development of individual potential, character, and autonomy (Siswanto & Fatimah, 2024). This approach aligns with humanistic educational philosophy, which emphasizes



respect for learners' dignity, freedom, and responsibility (Rogers, 1969). In the context of national education, these humanistic principles are realized through the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritizes strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (Siswanto et al., 2025). A humanistic curriculum provides space for learners to develop character values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, discipline, and critical thinking, all of which are integral components of the ideal student profile.

Humanistic values within the curriculum encourage inclusive, participatory, and experiential learning, enabling learners not only to acquire knowledge but also to apply moral, social, and cultural values in their daily lives. Maslow (1970) emphasizes the importance of self-actualization, which is achieved when individuals develop holistically within a learning environment that respects differences, interests, and abilities. Through a humanistic approach, learners are encouraged to make Merdeka decisions, respect others' perspectives, and take responsibility for their actions, directly strengthening the character dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile (Astiwi et al., 2024; Saputra & Siswanto, 2025).

The implementation of a humanistic curriculum also requires teachers to serve as facilitators who accompany the learning process, provide guidance, and adapt learning strategies to learners' needs. Tomlinson (2014) highlights differentiated instruction as a concrete expression of humanistic principles, allowing learners to develop according to their potential and interests. Consequently, a humanistic curriculum not only supports academic competence but also shapes learners who are Merdeka, creative, critically minded, and of strong character, in accordance with the goals of the Pancasila Student Profile.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Curriculum, which adopts humanistic

principles, makes a significant contribution to strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile. The application of humanistic values in planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning enables learners to internalize moral, social, and academic values simultaneously. The success of this curriculum depends greatly on the ability of teachers and schools to create democratic, inclusive learning environments that support holistic learner development (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Thus, a humanistic curriculum serves as a strong philosophical foundation for achieving the vision of education that produces excellent and character-driven Pancasila students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that humanistic educational philosophy serves as a highly relevant foundation for the development of the Merdeka Curriculum, as both place learners at the center of the learning process and emphasize character development, autonomy, and the actualization of individual potential. Humanism requires teachers to assume the role of facilitators who guide, support, and provide differentiated learning in accordance with learners' needs and interests, thereby ensuring that learning experiences are meaningful and relevant. The implementation of humanistic values within the Merdeka Curriculum also supports the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile through inclusive, participatory, and experiential learning that fosters learners' character, creativity, and critical reasoning skills. Therefore, it is recommended that

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