



# Progressivism in Education: Philosophical Foundations and Its Relevance to 21st-Century Skills Development

Dola Alfrida Puteri N<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammad Fauzan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> English Education Program, Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [dolaalfrida@gmail.com](mailto:dolaalfrida@gmail.com)

## Abstrak

Progressive education has long been recognized as a philosophical movement that emphasizes experiential learning, democratic participation, and learner autonomy. Rooted in pragmatist and humanist traditions, progressivism views education as a dynamic process oriented toward personal growth and social responsibility. In contemporary educational systems, particularly in developing societies, progressive principles face significant challenges due to standardization, technological disruption, and policy driven reforms. This study aims to examine the philosophical foundations of progressive education and analyze its relevance in contemporary learning contexts. Employing a qualitative library research method, this study analyzes major scholarly works on progressivism, democratic education, and learner centered pedagogy published after 2015. The findings indicate that progressive education remains a relevant framework for cultivating critical thinking, ethical awareness, and democratic citizenship. However, its implementation requires curricular flexibility, teacher professionalism, and institutional commitment. This study concludes that progressive education provides a sustainable philosophical foundation for humanizing learning and strengthening democratic culture in modern societies.

**Kata Kunci:** Progressivism, Educational Philosophy, 21 st Century Skills, Students Centered, Modern Education

## Abstract

*Progressive education has long been recognized as a philosophical movement that emphasizes experiential learning, democratic participation, and learner autonomy. Rooted in pragmatist and humanist traditions, progressivism views education as a dynamic process oriented toward personal growth and social responsibility. In contemporary educational systems, particularly in developing societies, progressive principles face significant challenges due to standardization, technological disruption, and policy driven reforms. This study aims to examine the philosophical foundations of progressive education and analyze its relevance in contemporary learning contexts. Employing a qualitative library research method, this study analyzes major scholarly works on progressivism, democratic education, and learner centered pedagogy published after 2015. The findings indicate that progressive education remains a relevant framework for cultivating critical thinking, ethical awareness, and democratic citizenship. However, its implementation requires curricular flexibility, teacher professionalism, and institutional commitment. This study concludes that progressive education provides a sustainable philosophical foundation for humanizing learning and strengthening democratic culture in modern societies.*

**Keywords:** Progressivism, Educational Philosophy, 21 st Century Skills, Students Centered, Modern Education

## 1. Introduction

According to Noddings (2013) and Biesta (2013), education plays a fundamental role in shaping individual character, ethical awareness, and democratic consciousness. Beyond the transmission of academic content, education functions as a moral and cultural practice that influences how learners perceive justice, responsibility, and social participation. Learners develop critical engagement through reflective interaction with social realities and cultural contexts (Apple, 2014; Giroux, 2020; Zeichner, 2016). These processes support the formation of responsible citizenship and moral reasoning. Education is therefore never value-neutral but embedded within political and ethical structures. Consequently, schools become arenas for negotiating democratic values and social responsibility (Biesta, 2015; Palmer, 2017; hooks, 2010).

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Ball (2012) and Peters (2018) argue that contemporary educational systems are increasingly shaped by market-driven reforms, performance indicators, and standardized assessments. These policies prioritize efficiency, competition, and measurable outcomes over meaningful learning experiences. In many contexts, teaching practices are reduced to test-oriented routines that marginalize critical inquiry (Biesta, 2015; Giroux, 2014; Apple, 2019). Teachers are often pressured to comply with accountability demands rather than cultivate intellectual curiosity. As a result, education risks becoming a technical enterprise rather than a transformative process. This condition weakens learners' democratic participation and independent thinking (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Au, 2016; Sahlberg, 2015).

Biesta (2017) emphasizes that technocratic education reshapes teacher–student relationships into procedural and hierarchical interactions. Learning is frequently reduced to information delivery and administrative compliance. Dialogical engagement and creativity are often replaced by standardized instructional routines (Giroux, 2018; Palmer, 2017; Apple, 2014). When education is treated as a mechanistic system, students are positioned as passive recipients of knowledge. This situation limits the development of intellectual autonomy and ethical agency. Consequently, schooling may fail to encourage learners to question injustice and social inequality (hooks, 2010; Zeichner, 2016; Apple, 2019).

Noddings (2013) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) explain that progressive education emerged as a response to rigid and authoritarian models of schooling. This approach emphasizes experiential learning, collaboration, and reflective inquiry. Students are encouraged to construct knowledge through interaction with their social and cultural environments (Schiro, 2013; Biesta, 2015; Apple, 2014). Learning is understood as a holistic process integrating cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Progressive pedagogy promotes democratic classroom practices and mutual respect. Through critical engagement, learners develop moral imagination and social responsibility (Palmer, 2017; Giroux, 2020; Zeichner, 2016).

Giroux (2020) argues that progressivism represents a humanistic vision of education that prioritizes personal growth and social transformation. Philosophically, this tradition draws upon constructivist and critical perspectives that value inquiry and reflection. Education is viewed as a process of empowering individuals to participate meaningfully in society (Biesta, 2013; Noddings, 2013; Apple, 2014). Teachers function as facilitators who guide learners in exploring ethical dilemmas and social realities. Learning becomes a pathway for developing civic awareness and self-understanding. In this sense, progressive education challenges instrumental and utilitarian conceptions of schooling (Palmer, 2017; Zeichner, 2016; Apple, 2019).

Suryadi (2018) and Widodo (2016) note that in Indonesia and similar developing contexts, progressive education faces significant structural and cultural constraints. Centralized curricula, bureaucratic supervision, and examination-oriented policies restrict pedagogical innovation. Many teachers remain bound by administrative obligations and rigid instructional frameworks (Rahmawati, 2020; Suherdi, 2017; Pratiwi, 2021). Traditional teacher-centered methods continue to dominate classroom practices. These conditions hinder the implementation of learner-centered and democratic pedagogy. As a result, progressive ideals are often adopted superficially rather than substantively (Fikri, 2023; Apple, 2019; Biesta, 2015).

Biesta (2017) and Giroux (2020) emphasize that educational research must critically examine the philosophical foundations of teaching and learning. This study aims to analyze the implications of progressive education for democratic learning in contemporary contexts. By integrating humanistic, critical, and pragmatic perspectives, the research promotes reflective and ethical educational practices (Noddings, 2013; Palmer, 2017; Apple, 2019). The study highlights the importance of cultivating critical consciousness and moral responsibility among learners. Through theoretical analysis, it contributes to the development of inclusive and participatory learning environments. Ultimately, this research supports education as a transformative and socially responsive practice (Zeichner, 2016; Giroux, 2020; Biesta, 2015).

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Progressive Education and Philosophical Foundations**

According to Biesta (2015) and Nussbaum (2016), progressive education is deeply rooted in pragmatist and humanist traditions that emphasize experience, reflection, and meaningful social interaction. This educational orientation views learning as an active and dynamic process in which students construct understanding through engagement with real-life situations. Rather than prioritizing rote memorization, progressive pedagogy encourages learners to interpret, analyze, and internalize knowledge based on personal and social experiences (Giroux, 2016; McLaren, 2015). Through reflective practices, students develop critical

awareness and ethical sensitivity. As a result, education becomes a transformative space for intellectual growth and moral development (Freire, 2018; Peters, 2017).

Biesta (2015) argues that progressive pedagogy prioritizes meaning-making over mechanical repetition and standardized performance. In this framework, learning is understood as a process of developing personal understanding and social responsibility. Students are encouraged to question assumptions, explore multiple perspectives, and engage in collaborative inquiry (Nussbaum, 2016; Giroux, 2016). Such practices foster intellectual autonomy and reflective thinking. Progressive education also recognizes the importance of emotional and ethical dimensions in learning. Consequently, it promotes holistic development that integrates cognition, character, and citizenship (McLaren, 2015; Freire, 2018).

McLaren (2015) emphasizes that progressive education possesses a strong emancipatory orientation aimed at empowering learners to challenge oppression and inequality. Through critical dialogue and participatory learning, students become aware of social structures that shape their lives. This approach encourages them to question dominant ideologies and resist intellectual conformity (Giroux, 2018; Kincheloe, 2016). Learning is therefore positioned as a form of social practice that connects personal experience with collective responsibility. By linking education to issues of justice and democracy, progressivism nurtures socially conscious individuals. This emancipatory dimension reinforces education as a tool for personal and societal transformation (Freire, 2018; Peters, 2017).

Giroux (2016) views progressivism as a form of democratic education that promotes participation, dialogue, and shared decision-making. In progressive classrooms, teachers and students collaborate in constructing knowledge and negotiating meaning. Authority is distributed rather than centralized, allowing learners to develop confidence and agency (Biesta, 2015; Nussbaum, 2016). Such environments cultivate respect for diversity and encourage open intellectual exchange. Democracy is not merely taught as a concept but practiced through everyday interactions. As a result, education becomes a training ground for civic engagement and responsible citizenship (McLaren, 2015; Giroux, 2018).

Modern scholars such as Peters (2017) and Kincheloe (2016) emphasize that progressivism rejects authoritarianism, rigid curricula, and intellectual conformity. Instead, it promotes epistemological awareness and critical inquiry that enable learners to evaluate knowledge claims critically. Students are encouraged to reflect on how knowledge is produced, whose voices are represented, and whose are marginalized (Giroux, 2018; Freire, 2018). This reflective stance strengthens their analytical skills and moral judgment. Through continuous questioning and dialogue, progressive education nurtures independent thinkers and socially responsible citizens. Ultimately, these perspectives demonstrate the philosophical depth and contemporary relevance of progressive educational thought (Biesta, 2015; Nussbaum, 2016)..

## **2.2 Experiential Learning and Learner Autonomy**

Biesta (2015) and Freire (2018) emphasize that experiential learning constitutes a central principle of progressive education, in which knowledge emerges through continuous interaction with social reality. Learning is understood not as passive reception of information but as an active process shaped by personal experience and contextual engagement. Through participation in authentic activities, students develop deeper understanding and practical competence (McLaren, 2015; Peters, 2017). Experience enables learners to connect theoretical concepts with lived realities. As a result, education becomes a meaningful and transformative practice that integrates reflection and action (Nussbaum, 2016; Giroux, 2016).

According to McLaren (2015), experience plays a crucial role in strengthening learners' political awareness and social consciousness. By engaging with real-world problems, students learn to recognize power relations and structural inequalities. This process encourages them to develop critical perspectives toward social institutions and dominant ideologies (Giroux, 2016; Kincheloe, 2016). Experiential learning also promotes ethical sensitivity and civic responsibility. Through reflective dialogue, learners internalize democratic values and social commitments. Consequently, experience becomes a foundation for developing active and responsible citizenship (Freire, 2018; Nussbaum, 2016).

Nussbaum (2016) argues that learner autonomy is closely connected to ethical responsibility and moral reasoning. In progressive education, autonomy is cultivated through reflective engagement and participatory learning practices. Students are encouraged to make informed decisions, evaluate consequences, and take

responsibility for their learning processes (Biesta, 2015; Giroux, 2016). Such practices strengthen self-regulation and critical awareness. Autonomy is therefore not understood as individual freedom alone but as socially embedded responsibility. This perspective reinforces the importance of ethical reflection in learner-centered pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2016; Peters, 2017).

Peters (2017) and Livingstone (2018) highlight that experiential learning is increasingly linked to digital literacy and responsible media engagement. In contemporary learning environments, students interact with digital platforms, online resources, and multimedia content as part of their educational experiences. Through guided practice, they develop skills in evaluating information, managing digital identities, and participating ethically in online communities (Giroux, 2016; Biesta, 2015). Reflective use of technology enhances critical thinking and social awareness. Thus, experiential learning extends beyond physical classrooms into digital and virtual spaces (Kincheloe, 2016; Nussbaum, 2016).

Freire (2018) conceptualizes experiential learning as praxis, integrating reflection and action in the pursuit of social transformation. Through continuous cycles of experience, dialogue, and critical analysis, learners develop intellectual independence and moral commitment. Participatory learning environments enable students to voice their perspectives and collaborate in problem-solving activities (Giroux, 2016; McLaren, 2015). These practices strengthen learner agency and democratic engagement. Empirical and theoretical studies consistently confirm the relevance of learner-centered pedagogy in fostering autonomy and responsibility. Ultimately, experiential learning remains a cornerstone of progressive education in contemporary contexts (Biesta, 2015; Peters, 2017; Livingstone, 2018).

### **2.3 Progressive Education and Democracy**

Giroux (2016) and McLaren (2015) argue that progressive education is closely connected to democratic ideals that position schools as spaces for civic formation and social engagement. In this perspective, education functions not only as a means of academic instruction but also as a process of developing political awareness and public responsibility. Through participatory learning experiences, students learn to engage with social issues and democratic practices. These processes strengthen learners' capacity for critical citizenship and collective action (Nussbaum, 2016; Peters, 2017). As a result, schools become arenas where democratic values are cultivated and sustained through everyday interactions (Freire, 2018; Biesta, 2015).

According to Nussbaum (2016), democratic education promotes global citizenship by encouraging learners to respect cultural diversity and human dignity. Progressive pedagogy supports this goal by fostering empathy, ethical reasoning, and intercultural understanding. Students are encouraged to view themselves as members of both local and global communities. Through reflective discussion and collaborative inquiry, learners develop sensitivity to global challenges such as inequality, environmental sustainability, and social justice (Giroux, 2016; McLaren, 2015). This orientation strengthens moral responsibility and civic engagement in pluralistic societies (Peters, 2017; Freire, 2018).

Biesta (2015) emphasizes that democratic learning requires ethical participation, dialogue, and shared responsibility between teachers and students. In progressive classrooms, authority is distributed rather than imposed, allowing learners to develop agency and confidence. Collaborative activities promote mutual respect and collective problem-solving. These practices cultivate habits of listening, negotiation, and critical reflection (Jenkins et al., 2016; Giroux, 2016). Through sustained interaction, students internalize democratic norms and values. Consequently, education becomes a lived experience of democracy rather than a theoretical concept (McLaren, 2015; Peters, 2017).

Jenkins et al. (2016) and Fuchs (2018) highlight the importance of participatory culture and media critique in strengthening democratic education. In contemporary digital environments, learners actively produce, share, and evaluate information across multiple platforms. Progressive pedagogy encourages critical engagement with media content and communication technologies. Students learn to recognize misinformation, ideological bias, and commercial manipulation (Biesta, 2015; Peters, 2017). Such competencies are essential for responsible citizenship in networked societies. Therefore, democratic learning extends beyond classroom discourse into digital public spaces (Nussbaum, 2016; Giroux, 2016).

Freire (2018) conceptualizes democratic education as a process of developing historical agency through critical reflection and collective action. Learners are encouraged to understand their social conditions and participate in transforming unjust structures. Progressive classrooms provide opportunities for dialogue, activism, and community engagement (McLaren, 2015; Giroux, 2016). These practices strengthen students' sense of empowerment and social responsibility. Empirical and theoretical perspectives consistently support the relevance of progressive principles in democratic education. Ultimately, progressive pedagogy contributes to the formation of reflective, engaged, and socially responsive citizens (Biesta, 2015; Fuchs, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2016).

## **2.4 Research Gap**

Giroux (2018) argues that although progressivism has been widely discussed in educational research, many studies tend to emphasize classroom techniques rather than philosophical foundations. In numerous empirical investigations, attention is often directed toward instructional strategies, assessment methods, and classroom management practices. While these aspects are important, they frequently overshadow deeper theoretical and ethical considerations (Peters, 2017; Biesta, 2015). As a result, the philosophical dimensions of progressive education remain underexplored. This imbalance limits the development of comprehensive theoretical frameworks that can guide long-term educational reform (Apple, 2019; Nussbaum, 2016).

According to Peters (2017), one major limitation in contemporary research on progressivism is the lack of systematic contextual analysis. Many studies adopt universal models without adequately considering social, cultural, and political conditions. Educational practices are often examined in isolation from their historical and institutional settings (Giroux, 2018; Biesta, 2017). This tendency reduces the explanatory power of research findings. Without contextual sensitivity, theoretical interpretations may become overly abstract or disconnected from practical realities. Consequently, philosophical inquiry must be grounded in specific educational environments (McLaren, 2015; Apple, 2019).

Fikri (2024) highlights that significant gaps frequently exist between progressive educational ideals and their practical implementation. Although policies and curricula may promote learner-centered approaches, classroom practices often remain traditional and teacher-centered. This discrepancy reflects institutional constraints, limited professional development, and administrative pressures (Suryadi, 2018; Rahmawati, 2020). Researchers have noted that progressive concepts are sometimes adopted symbolically rather than substantively. Such superficial adoption weakens the transformative potential of progressivism. Therefore, implementation challenges must be analyzed through philosophical as well as empirical perspectives (Biesta, 2015; Giroux, 2016).

Biesta (2017) emphasizes that the neglect of philosophical foundations contributes to theoretical fragmentation in progressive education studies. Different scholars often employ diverse conceptual frameworks without sufficient dialogue or integration. This situation results in inconsistent interpretations of key concepts such as autonomy, democracy, and experiential learning (Giroux, 2018; Peters, 2017). Without coherent theoretical grounding, research findings remain fragmented and difficult to synthesize. Philosophical reflection is therefore essential for clarifying fundamental assumptions and values. Such reflection strengthens the intellectual coherence of progressive educational theory (Nussbaum, 2016; Apple, 2019).

For this reason, comprehensive philosophical studies on progressivism remain urgently necessary in contemporary educational scholarship. By examining ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions, researchers can deepen understanding of progressive principles and their social implications (Biesta, 2015; Giroux, 2018). Integrating theoretical analysis with contextual research enhances the relevance and rigor of educational inquiry. Moreover, philosophical perspectives help bridge the gap between ideals and practice. Through systematic reflection, progressivism can be developed as a coherent and transformative educational paradigm. Ultimately, such studies contribute to the advancement of democratic and humanistic education (Peters, 2017; Fikri, 2024; McLaren, 2015).

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative library research design to explore the philosophical foundations of progressive education and its implications for democratic learning. Qualitative library research is particularly appropriate for studies that focus on theoretical interpretation, conceptual analysis, and critical reflection (Creswell, 2018). Through systematic examination of written sources, this approach enables researchers to investigate underlying meanings, values, and assumptions embedded in educational discourse. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that interpretative analysis allows scholars to construct in-depth understanding of complex social and philosophical phenomena. In addition, Giroux (2016) highlights the importance of critical reflection in educational research, while Freire (2018) stresses the role of praxis-oriented inquiry in linking theory with social transformation. Therefore, this design supports comprehensive and reflective analysis of progressive educational thought.

#### **3.2 Data Sources**

The primary data sources of this study consist of scholarly books and academic articles that discuss progressive education, democratic pedagogy, and critical educational theory. These sources were selected to ensure theoretical depth and conceptual relevance. Secondary data include peer-reviewed journal articles published after 2015, which provide updated perspectives and contemporary interpretations of progressive education. The selection process was guided by criteria such as academic credibility, relevance to the research focus, methodological rigor, and thematic consistency. By applying these criteria, the study ensures that the collected data represent authoritative and reliable academic contributions. This systematic selection enhances the validity and scholarly quality of the research findings..

#### **3.3 Data Collection**

Data were collected through systematic documentation and structured literature mapping. This process involved identifying, categorizing, and organizing relevant academic sources based on thematic relevance and theoretical orientation. Peters (2017) emphasizes that literature mapping is essential for understanding conceptual relationships and research trends within a specific field. Furthermore, Kincheloe (2016) highlights the importance of critical source evaluation to ensure analytical rigor and intellectual integrity. In addition, Fuchs (2018) stresses interdisciplinary integration as a means of enriching theoretical perspectives. Through these procedures, the study establishes a comprehensive and balanced foundation for subsequent analysis..

#### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using critical content analysis, which focuses on examining meanings, arguments, and ideological orientations within textual materials. The analytical process involved four main stages: description, interpretation, synthesis, and evaluation. During the descriptive stage, key concepts and themes were identified and categorized. The interpretative stage involved analyzing underlying assumptions and theoretical positions. Synthesis was employed to integrate diverse perspectives into coherent analytical frameworks, while evaluation assessed the relevance and implications of the findings. Creswell (2018) emphasizes that qualitative analysis requires iterative and reflective procedures, and Giroux (2018) highlights the importance of reflective synthesis in critical educational research. This systematic approach ensures analytical depth and theoretical coherence.

### **4. Result and Discussion**

#### **Persistence of Traditional Pedagogy**

The findings of this study indicate that traditional pedagogy remains dominant in many contemporary educational contexts, despite ongoing discourse on learner-centered and progressive approaches. Classroom practices continue to prioritize teacher authority, content transmission, and standardized assessment. Instructional activities are often structured around rigid lesson plans that leave little room for student initiative. This pattern reflects limited pedagogical innovation and resistance to transformative change. Fikri (2024) observes that teacher-centered instruction still shapes most learning activities, particularly in formal institutional

settings. Such dominance suggests that progressive ideals have not yet been fully internalized within everyday educational practices. Furthermore, this condition indicates a persistent gap between educational policy discourse and classroom reality.

The persistence of traditional pedagogy is closely related to structural and ideological factors within educational systems. Administrative regulations and curriculum standards frequently reinforce hierarchical teaching models. Giroux (2016) argues that conventional teaching methods often function as mechanisms of ideological control that reproduce dominant social norms and power relations. Through rigid curricula and hierarchical classroom structures, students are conditioned to accept established knowledge without critical examination. This process limits opportunities for democratic dialogue and intellectual autonomy. Consequently, schooling becomes a means of maintaining social conformity rather than fostering critical citizenship. Such practices ultimately weaken students' capacity to participate actively in social transformation.

McLaren (2015) associates traditional pedagogy with the cultivation of conformity and passive learning attitudes. When instruction is dominated by lecture-based delivery and rigid evaluation systems, students tend to prioritize compliance over creativity. Assessment practices frequently reward memorization rather than critical understanding. Such learning environments discourage questioning, experimentation, and independent thinking. As a result, learners are less likely to develop problem-solving skills and moral courage. This condition undermines the emancipatory potential of education and weakens its role in promoting social transformation. Moreover, it restricts students' opportunities to explore diverse perspectives and alternative solutions.

From a critical perspective, Freire (2018) emphasizes that authoritarian educational practices contribute to the dehumanization of learners. In teacher-centered classrooms, students are treated as objects of instruction rather than active subjects of learning. Communication is often one-directional, limiting meaningful interaction between teachers and students. Knowledge is deposited rather than constructed through dialogue and reflection. This banking model of education reduces learners' sense of agency and self-worth. Consequently, education loses its capacity to empower individuals and nurture human dignity. Over time, such conditions may lead to student disengagement and declining motivation.

The findings of this study therefore reveal a significant gap between progressive educational theory and actual classroom practice. Although policies and academic discourse promote democratic and learner-centered pedagogy, traditional methods continue to dominate instructional processes. This gap reflects institutional constraints, limited professional development, and persistent ideological influences. Teachers often receive insufficient training in critical and reflective pedagogy. Addressing this issue requires systematic efforts to strengthen teachers' philosophical understanding of progressive education. Through reflective training and critical engagement, educational practices can gradually shift toward more humanistic and democratic models of learning. Such transformation is essential for realizing the emancipatory goals of contemporary education.

### **Progressive Education as an Alternative**

And another findings indicate that progressive education promotes active learning and meaningful dialogue in classroom practices. Learning activities are designed to encourage student participation, collaborative problem-solving, and reflective discussion. Biesta (2015) highlights that meaningful learning occurs when students are actively involved in constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving information. Through interactive engagement, learners develop deeper conceptual understanding and critical awareness. This approach strengthens students' motivation and intellectual curiosity. Consequently, active learning becomes a key indicator of educational quality in progressive pedagogy.

Dialogue functions as a central component of progressive education by facilitating mutual understanding and shared meaning-making. In dialogical classrooms, teachers and students engage in open communication that values diverse perspectives. Nussbaum (2016) stresses that ethical reflection is strengthened through continuous dialogue and critical conversation. Such interactions enable learners to examine moral dilemmas, social issues, and personal values. Through respectful discussion, students learn to appreciate differences and develop empathy. As a result, dialogue contributes to both cognitive development and moral growth.

Progressive education also supports the integration of ethical reflection into everyday learning processes. Ethical reasoning is not treated as a separate subject but embedded within academic activities and social

interactions. Students are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their actions and decisions. This reflective practice strengthens moral responsibility and civic awareness (Nussbaum, 2016; Biesta, 2015). By linking knowledge with ethical considerations, learning becomes more meaningful and socially relevant. Such integration enhances students' capacity for responsible citizenship.

In contemporary learning environments, progressive pedagogy is closely connected to digital awareness and media literacy. Peters (2017) links active learning with students' ability to engage critically with digital technologies and online information. Through experiential and inquiry-based activities, learners develop skills in evaluating sources, managing digital identities, and participating ethically in online communities. These competencies are essential in navigating complex digital landscapes. Progressive education therefore prepares students to become responsible digital citizens. This dimension expands the relevance of progressive principles in modern society.

Overall, the findings confirm the continuing relevance of progressive education in promoting holistic and democratic learning. Active learning, dialogue, ethical reflection, and digital awareness collectively contribute to students' intellectual and moral development. These elements strengthen learner autonomy and social responsibility. By fostering critical engagement and meaningful participation, progressive pedagogy supports long-term educational transformation. Therefore, progressive education remains a viable framework for addressing contemporary educational challenges. Its principles provide valuable guidance for developing inclusive and humanistic learning environments.

### **Democratic Learning Outcomes**

progressive classrooms foster active student participation and a strong sense of individual and collective responsibility. Learning activities are structured to encourage learners to express opinions, engage in discussion, and contribute to group problem-solving. Giroux (2018) emphasizes that such participatory practices are essential for developing civic engagement and democratic awareness. Through continuous involvement in classroom decision-making, students learn to value cooperation and shared accountability. This environment nurtures confidence and social sensitivity. Consequently, participation becomes a foundation for responsible citizenship.

Participation in progressive classrooms is closely linked to the development of collaborative learning cultures. Students are encouraged to work in groups, share perspectives, and negotiate meaning. Jenkins et al. (2016) highlight that collaboration strengthens learners' communication skills and collective intelligence. Through cooperative projects, students develop respect for diverse viewpoints and learn to manage interpersonal differences. These interactions enhance social competence and emotional maturity. As a result, collaboration supports both academic achievement and moral development.

Dialogue plays a central role in strengthening participation and responsibility in progressive learning environments. Open discussion enables students to explore ideas, question assumptions, and reflect on social issues. Laila et al. (2024) connect dialogical practices with the development of civic reasoning and ethical judgment. Through guided conversations, learners learn to articulate arguments and evaluate evidence critically. This process enhances their capacity for democratic deliberation. Consequently, dialogue becomes a medium for cultivating intellectual integrity and social responsibility.

Progressive classrooms also promote shared responsibility between teachers and students in managing learning processes. Authority is distributed through participatory decision-making and mutual respect. Students are involved in setting learning goals, establishing classroom norms, and evaluating progress. Such practices strengthen their sense of ownership and commitment to collective success (Giroux, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2016). By experiencing democratic leadership at the classroom level, learners internalize values of fairness and accountability. This structure supports sustainable learning communities.

Overall, the findings confirm that progressive classrooms provide meaningful opportunities for developing participatory competence and civic responsibility. Through collaboration, dialogue, and shared leadership, students acquire skills essential for democratic life. These practices nurture reflective, engaged, and

socially responsive individuals. By integrating civic values into everyday learning activities, progressive education strengthens its transformative potential. Therefore, participation and responsibility remain central pillars of contemporary progressive pedagogy. Such principles offer practical guidance for fostering inclusive and democratic educational environments

### **Implementation Challenges**

The last findings of this research reveal that institutional constraints, curriculum rigidity, and limited professional training significantly hinder the implementation of progressive education. Many schools operate under strict administrative regulations that prioritize compliance over pedagogical innovation. Teachers are often required to follow standardized lesson plans and assessment formats. This situation restricts opportunities for creative and student-centered instruction. As a result, progressive principles are difficult to translate into everyday classroom practices. These structural limitations weaken the transformative potential of educational reform.

McLaren (2015) warns that managerialism in education promotes efficiency, accountability, and performance measurement at the expense of critical pedagogy. Under managerial systems, teachers are increasingly treated as technical operators rather than reflective professionals. Instruction is evaluated based on quantifiable outcomes rather than meaningful learning experiences. This managerial orientation discourages experimentation and risk-taking in teaching. Consequently, educators become more concerned with meeting administrative targets than fostering democratic learning. Such conditions undermine the humanistic foundations of progressive education.

Policy pressure also plays a crucial role in reducing teacher autonomy and professional independence. Peters (2017) links policy-driven accountability mechanisms with declining pedagogical freedom. Teachers are often constrained by high-stakes testing, curriculum mandates, and reporting requirements. These demands limit their ability to adapt instruction to students' needs and interests. Over time, excessive regulation weakens teachers' sense of professional agency. This environment discourages reflective practice and innovative pedagogy.

Limited access to continuous professional development further complicates the implementation of progressive approaches. Many educators receive insufficient training in critical pedagogy, experiential learning, and democratic classroom management. Professional development programs often focus on administrative compliance rather than philosophical understanding. Without adequate theoretical grounding, teachers struggle to apply progressive principles effectively. This gap contributes to superficial adoption of learner-centered methods. Consequently, professional learning systems require significant reform to support pedagogical transformation.

Overall, the findings indicate that institutional, managerial, and policy-related barriers collectively constrain the realization of progressive education. Curriculum rigidity, performance-driven management, and restricted autonomy create unfavorable conditions for democratic pedagogy. Addressing these challenges requires systemic change at policy, institutional, and professional levels. Strengthening teacher autonomy, revising curriculum frameworks, and enhancing professional training are essential steps. Through coordinated reform efforts, progressive education can be more effectively implemented. Such improvements are necessary for sustaining humanistic and democratic learning environments..

### **5. Conclusion**

This study confirms that progressive education provides a strong philosophical foundation for democratic and humanistic learning. By emphasizing critical reflection, experiential engagement, and ethical responsibility, progressive pedagogy supports the holistic development of learners. Unlike traditional instructional models that prioritize content transmission, progressive education encourages active participation and intellectual autonomy. These principles enable students to develop deeper understanding of social realities and moral values. Consequently, progressive education strengthens the role of schools as spaces for democratic formation and personal growth.

The findings further demonstrate that traditional instruction continues to limit students' critical development and reflective capacity. Teacher-centered practices and rigid curricula often restrict opportunities

for dialogue and independent inquiry. As a result, learners tend to focus on memorization rather than meaningful understanding. This condition weakens their ability to analyze social problems and engage in ethical reasoning. In contrast, progressive pedagogy promotes autonomy, creativity, and moral awareness through participatory learning environments. Such differences highlight the transformative potential of learner-centered education.

Experiential learning and dialogical interaction emerge as central mechanisms for cultivating reflective and responsible citizens. Through engagement with real-life issues and collaborative problem-solving, students learn to connect theory with practice. Dialogue encourages learners to articulate ideas, evaluate perspectives, and negotiate meaning respectfully. These processes strengthen critical consciousness and civic engagement. By integrating experience and reflection, progressive education prepares learners to participate actively in democratic societies.

Integrating progressive principles into contemporary curricula represents both a moral obligation and a pedagogical necessity. Education must function not merely as a system of knowledge transmission but as a space for creativity, ethical reflection, and social responsibility. Curriculum frameworks should therefore emphasize inquiry-based learning, interdisciplinary perspectives, and democratic participation. Such integration enables schools to respond effectively to complex social and technological challenges. Through progressive reform, education can better serve the needs of diverse learners and communities.

Future educational reforms should prioritize sustained philosophical reflection and comprehensive teacher empowerment. Professional development programs must strengthen educators' understanding of progressive theory and critical pedagogy. In addition, institutional policies should support teacher autonomy and innovative practice. By fostering reflective professionalism and collaborative leadership, educational systems can enhance pedagogical quality. Ultimately, the advancement of progressive education depends on continuous commitment to humanistic values, democratic ideals, and social transformation.

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