



Reorienting Generation Z's Political Perceptions: A John Dewey An Perspective On Democratic Political Education

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Abstract

The development of digital media has transformed the way Generation Z accesses and interprets political information, resulting in diverse political perceptions. Previous studies have generally examined Generation Z's political perceptions from the perspectives of social media, political literacy, and political participation. This study offers a different perspective by reconstructing John Dewey's concept of democratic political education as a conceptual framework for analyzing the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions within the context of Pancasila Democracy. This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research method and a hermeneutic approach through the analysis of John Dewey's major works and other relevant scholarly literature. The study aims to analyze the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions from the perspective of John Dewey's democratic political education. The findings reveal that democratic political education in John Dewey's thought is a conceptual construct based on four principal elements: the reconstruction of experience, education as a social process, democracy as a way of life, and reflective thinking. The findings further indicate that the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions can be achieved through the development of democratic political experiences, the strengthening of democratic social interactions, the cultivation of democratic values in everyday life, and the enhancement of reflective thinking in understanding and evaluating political information in accordance with the values of Pancasila Democracy. These findings suggest that reorienting Generation Z's political perceptions requires a political education process that places democratic experience at the center of developing critical, participatory, and responsible citizens

Keywords: *Democratic Political Education, Z Generation, John Dewey, Pancasila Democracy*

Abstrak

Perkembangan media digital telah mengubah cara Generasi Z memperoleh dan memaknai informasi politik sehingga membentuk persepsi politik yang beragam. Berbagai penelitian terdahulu umumnya membahas persepsi politik Generasi Z dari aspek media sosial, literasi politik, dan partisipasi politik. Penelitian ini menawarkan perspektif yang berbeda dengan merekonstruksi pendidikan politik demokratis dalam pemikiran John Dewey sebagai landasan konseptual untuk menganalisis reorientasi persepsi politik Generasi Z dalam konteks Demokrasi Pancasila. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan

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metode penelitian kepustakaan (library research) dan pendekatan hermeneutik melalui analisis terhadap karya-karya utama John Dewey serta berbagai literatur ilmiah yang relevan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis reorientasi persepsi politik Generasi Z dalam perspektif pendidikan politik demokratis John Dewey. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan politik demokratis dalam pemikiran John Dewey merupakan konstruksi konseptual yang dibangun atas empat unsur utama, yaitu rekonstruksi pengalaman, proses sosial, demokrasi sebagai cara hidup, dan berpikir reflektif. Hasil interpretasi juga menunjukkan bahwa reorientasi persepsi politik Generasi Z dilakukan melalui pembentukan pengalaman politik yang demokratis, penguatan interaksi sosial, pembiasaan nilai-nilai demokrasi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, serta pengembangan kemampuan berpikir reflektif dalam memahami dan mengevaluasi informasi politik sesuai dengan nilai-nilai Demokrasi Pancasila. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa reorientasi persepsi politik Generasi Z memerlukan proses pendidikan politik yang menempatkan pengalaman demokratis sebagai dasar pembentukan warga negara yang kritis, partisipatif, dan bertanggung jawab

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Politik Demokratis, John Dewey, Generasi Z, Demokrasi Pancasila

Introduction

The evolution of democracy in the digital era has fundamentally transformed the manner in which Generation Z acquires and comprehends political information. As a generation born and raised amidst the advancement of information technology, Generation Z has come to regard social media as the primary arena for obtaining political information, forming opinions, and enhancing political participation (Natalia et al., 2025). Social media not only provides extensive access to information but also plays a pivotal role in shaping the political perceptions of Generation Z in both positive and negative directions thereby potentially influencing their level of trust in the political process (Tarigan et al., 2024). This prevailing condition underscores the increasingly strategic role of digital media in the formation of political perceptions among the youth, thereby necessitating political education that is capable of cultivating critical thinking skills, enabling the information received to be comprehended and interpreted accurately.

The urgency of political education has intensified in tandem with the strategic position occupied by Generation Z within Indonesia's democratic landscape. The General Elections Commission (KPU) projects that Generation Z will constitute the majority of voters in the 2029 General Election, meaning that the quality of this generation's political perceptions will exert a significant influence on the trajectory of Indonesia's democratic development (Mellaz, 2025). However, this substantial number of young voters has not been accompanied by positive political perceptions. A survey conducted by the *Katadata Insight Center* (2023) reveals that 40.5% of Generation Z perceive politics as negative, while a further 8.1% regard it as highly negative. These perceptions are influenced by the prevalence of news coverage concerning corruption, conflicts of interest among political elites, and money politics. These

findings indicate that politics continues to be understood as an arena for the contestation of power, rather than as a vehicle for realising the common good within a democratic society.

Such problems demonstrate that increased access to political information has not, in itself, sufficed to engender constructive political perceptions. On the contrary, the abundance of political information carries the potential to generate cognitive biases when not accompanied by the capacity to selectively filter, comprehend, and critically evaluate information. Political education assumes a pivotal role as a process of cultivating citizens' political knowledge, attitudes, and skills, thereby enabling them to participate consciously in democratic life (Rizki et al., 2024). Political education is not oriented solely towards the mastery of knowledge concerning the political system, but also towards the formation of democratic character capable of prioritising dialogue, participation, responsibility, and respect for diversity.

The philosophical framework articulated by John Dewey offers a relevant theoretical foundation for addressing the challenges inherent in shaping Generation Z's political perceptions. Dewey (1930: 34-37) posits that education constitutes a social process that unfolds through interaction, communication, and shared experience, thereby shaping individual ways of thinking, attitudes, and behaviour. Dewey (1930: 520-521) conceives of democracy not merely as a form of government, but as a way of life realised through communication, social experience, and the active participation of citizens. This perspective suggests that political education should not be confined to the transmission of political knowledge, but should also encompass the cultivation of democratic experiences capable of reorienting Generation Z's political perceptions. This conceptual framework bears relevance to the values of Pancasila Democracy, which enshrines deliberation (Read on Indonesian Language: *musyawarah*), participation, and collective responsibility as the foundational principles of democratic life.

Research by Mutmainna and Taibe (2025) demonstrates the relationship between political perceptions and political participation among Generation Z. Hardian et al. (2021) affirm the importance of political education in fostering democratic character. Meanwhile, Al Hafis et al. (2024) examine the challenges of implementing Pancasila Democratic values in the digital era, while Lichandra and Sobarna (2022), as well as Tusriyanto and Karsiwan (2021), explore the relevance of John Dewey's thought to education and democracy. These various studies indicate that scholarship concerning John Dewey's philosophy, political education, Generation Z's political perceptions, and Pancasila Democracy has developed

from multiple perspectives. The divergent foci of these inquiries suggest that a research gap persists for integrating John Dewey's thought, democratic political education, Generation Z's political perceptions, and Pancasila Democratic values within a single analytical framework.

Previous studies have examined the aforementioned four aspects separately, in accordance with their respective focal points. No study has been found that specifically analyses the relevance of John Dewey's democratic political education to the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions through the lens of Pancasila Democracy. John Dewey's thought was selected because it offers a concept of democratic education that emphasises experience, communication, active participation, and the cultivation of critical thinking skills as integral to the process of forming democratic citizens. These characteristics are deemed relevant to the challenges of shaping Generation Z's political perceptions in the digital era, which demands a dialogical and participatory approach to political education. In this study, John Dewey's thought is not intended to supplant Pancasila Democracy; rather, it is employed as a theoretical foundation for analysing political education, which is subsequently contextualised within the values of Pancasila Democracy as the foundational basis of democratic life in Indonesia. Accordingly, this study offers novelty by analysing the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions through the perspective of John Dewey's democratic political education, contextualised within the values of Pancasila Democracy.

In light of the foregoing elaboration, this study focuses on analysing the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions from the perspective of John Dewey's democratic political education, through the contextualisation of Pancasila Democratic values.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach utilising the library research method in conjunction with a hermeneutic approach. The library research method was selected on the grounds that this study is centred upon the collection and analysis of information derived from various literary sources, including books, scholarly articles, documents, and prior research findings pertinent to the research topic (Haryono et al., 2023). The hermeneutic approach is employed to interpret John Dewey's thought, thereby enabling the meaning of the concept of democratic political education to be comprehended and contextualised in relation to Generation Z's political perceptions and the values of Pancasila Democracy. The adoption of this approach is predicated upon the very nature of hermeneutics as an approach oriented towards the interpretation of textual meaning (Hasanah, 2023: 57-59). The object

of this study is the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions from the perspective of John Dewey's democratic political education.

The data sources consist of both primary and secondary data. The primary data encompass the works of John Dewey, namely *Democracy and Education* (1930), *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), and *Experience and Education* (1938). The secondary data are derived from books, scholarly journal articles, research findings, and other academic documents that address political education, Generation Z's political perceptions, Pancasila Democracy, and John Dewey's thought.

Data collection was conducted through documentary study, entailing the identification, selection, reading, and recording of relevant library sources. From a hermeneutic perspective, documentary study is not solely aimed at collecting data, but also at obtaining the texts that constitute the object of interpretation in order to comprehend the meaning of John Dewey's thought in accordance with the research context. The collected data were analysed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which encompasses data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was carried out through hermeneutic interpretation of John Dewey's works in order to grasp the meaning of the concept of democratic political education, subsequently establishing connections with the characteristics of Generation Z's political perceptions and the values of Pancasila Democracy, thereby yielding an understanding of the relevance of John Dewey's thought within the context of democratic life in Indonesia.

Discussion

The Concept of the Monopluralist Human According to Notonagoro's Thought

The hermeneutic interpretation of John Dewey's major works namely *Democracy and Education* (1930), *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), and *Experience and Education* (1938) reveals that Dewey did not formulate democratic political education as a discrete, self-standing concept. The interpretation of these three works demonstrates that his ideas concerning democratic political education are dispersed across his discussions of education, experience, social life, democracy, and reflective thinking. On the basis of this interpretative exercise, this study reconstructs John Dewey's concept of democratic political education into four interrelated core concepts that serve as the foundation for the formation of democratic citizens.

The analysis reveals that experience constitutes the primary foundation of John Dewey's democratic political education. In *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938:18-20) elucidates

that educative experience engenders growth, insofar as each experience bears continuity with subsequent experiences. This finding indicates that knowledge is not constructed through rote memorisation or passive reception of information, but rather through the individual's engagement in experience, which is subsequently reflected upon to generate new understanding. Experience thus serves as the basis for knowledge formation while simultaneously functioning as a vehicle for the development of democratic character. In the context of political education, experience enables learners to grasp the meaning of politics through involvement in social activities and democratic practices, thereby fostering attitudes of responsibility, concern for public affairs, and civic consciousness.

The subsequent concept identified is education as a social process. The analysis of *Democracy and Education* demonstrates that Dewey conceives of education as a social process through which values, habits, knowledge, and experience are transmitted from one generation to the next via communication and social interaction (Dewey, 1930:21-30). Education is inseparable from societal life, as the learning process unfolds through interpersonal relationships. The school is positioned as a social environment that enables learners to engage in dialogue, collaborate, respect diversity, and resolve problems collectively. This finding suggests that the school functions as a space for the cultivation of democratic habits through the social experiences that occur in everyday life.

The research also reveals that democracy as a way of life constitutes the primary orientation of John Dewey's thought. The analysis of *The Public and Its Problems* shows that Dewey regards democracy not merely as a form of government or a formal political mechanism, but as a pattern of life constructed through communication, participation, cooperation, and responsibility for the common good. Dewey (1927: 148) asserts that "democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself". This finding indicates that democracy is understood as a way of life actualised through everyday practices. Education plays a role in cultivating democratic habits through experiences of dialogue, deliberation, cooperation, and respect for the common interest.

The final concept identified is reflective thinking. The analysis demonstrates that the capacity for reflective thought constitutes a complementary element of John Dewey's democratic political education. Dewey explains that reflective thinking is the process of actively, persistently, and carefully considering a problem before reaching a decision (Dewey, 1930: 239-244). This capacity is developed through learning experiences that encourage individuals to observe, investigate, formulate alternative solutions to problems, and evaluate various possible resolutions. This finding indicates that political education not only equips

individuals with knowledge concerning politics, but also cultivates the capacity for rational thought, thereby enabling them to participate responsibly in democratic life.

The interpretative findings demonstrate that democratic political education in John Dewey's thought is the product of the interrelationship between the concepts of experience, education as a social process, democracy as a way of life, and reflective thinking. These four concepts are mutually reinforcing in shaping an education that is oriented not only towards the mastery of political knowledge, but also towards the formation of citizens who are critical, participatory, and responsible in democratic life.

Based on the hermeneutic interpretation of John Dewey's works, democratic political education is constructed upon four principal concepts: education as the reconstruction of experience, education as a social process, democracy as a way of life, and reflective thinking (Dewey, 1938: 18-20; Dewey, 1927: 148; Dewey, 1930: 34-37, 239-244). These concepts collectively conceptualise the formation of political perceptions as a dynamic process that evolves through individual experience, social interaction, communication, and critical reflection upon democratic realities. For Generation Z, this developmental process occurs amidst fundamental shifts in information access driven by rapid digital transformation. Social media and digital platforms simultaneously expand access to political information and constitute the initial political experiences that shape how this generation comprehends, interprets, and evaluates political reality (Katadata Insight Center, 2023). This dual role of digital media highlights both opportunities and challenges for democratic political socialisation, as the very environments that inform political understanding also generate distortions that may undermine its quality.

The Digital Political Socialisation of Generation Z: Characteristics and Challenges

Generation Z demonstrates adaptive characteristics towards technological development, rendering digital media their primary source of political information (Ramadhani & Khoirunisa, 2025). Research indicates that these young people exhibit a marked preference for experience-based, collaborative, and exploratory learning modalities, which shape how they engage with political content (Mulyana, 2023). These characteristics facilitate rapid and extensive access to diverse political information, yet simultaneously expose them to heightened risks including hoaxes, disinformation, political polarisation, and news coverage that foregrounds conflict and political deviance rather than substantive democratic processes (Katadata Insight Center, 2023). Consequently, a significant segment of Generation Z has

developed the perception that politics is synonymous with power struggles, corruption, and narrow group interests rather than with collective problem-solving and democratic deliberation.

These conditions demonstrate that political education challenges in the digital era transcend mere knowledge transmission about political systems. Contemporary political education must assist young citizens in comprehending, interpreting, and evaluating political reality more objectively. Within this context, John Dewey's democratic political education framework offers particular relevance, as it positions education as a transformative process that actively shapes experience, fosters meaningful social interaction, and cultivates capacities for reflective thinking (Dewey, 1930: 34-37; Dewey, 1938: 18-20). This framework provides learners with foundations for understanding politics not as abstract knowledge but as lived experience to be critically examined through social engagement.

Reconstruction of Experience: Transforming Negative Political Perceptions

Dewey's concept of the reconstruction of experience constitutes the first principle demonstrating the relevance of democratic political education for reorienting Generation Z's political perceptions. Dewey (1938: 18-20) explains that experience serves as the primary foundation of the educational process, insofar as each experience bears continuity with subsequent experiences and determines the direction of individual growth. Educative experience fosters development, whereas non-educative experience may impede the growth process. This continuity principle suggests that political learning cannot be divorced from lived experience; rather, it is through the deliberate reconstruction of experience that transformative political understanding emerges.

This concept bears direct relevance to Generation Z's characteristics, as the majority of their political experiences are acquired through digital media consumption rather than direct political participation (Katadata Insight Center, 2023). Information concerning corruption, elite conflict, political polarisation, and identity politics constitutes initial experiences that influence their perspectives on politics. Such experiences are frequently received as viral fragments that rarely provide comprehensive pictures of democratic practice. When accepted without reflective processing, these fragmented experiences tend to generate partial, overgeneralised perceptions that politics is invariably synonymous with negative practices.

Democratic political education plays a crucial role in reconstructing Generation Z's political experiences, transforming perceptions that initially gave rise to cynicism into educative ones. Dewey (1938: 20) asserts that experience must be reorganised and reconstructed to afford new meaning to individuals confronting subsequent experiences. Political education thus does not aim to eliminate negative experiences, but rather to facilitate

understanding that political deviations constitute part of political dynamics, not the essence of politics itself. Through reconstruction, Generation Z is encouraged to connect political experiences acquired through digital media with more substantive democratic values. Experiences of conflict, corruption, or polarisation become comprehensible not as exhaustive depictions of politics but as challenges to be addressed through democratic mechanisms. In this manner, political experiences that generated negative perceptions can be transformed into learning experiences that cultivate more objective, rational, and responsible political understanding.

Education as Social Process: Creating Alternative Dialogical Spaces

The concept of education as a social process demonstrates strong relevance for reorienting Generation Z's political perceptions. Dewey (1930: 34-37) explains that education is a social process unfolding through interaction, communication, and shared experience within societal life. Individuals are not educated directly, but through social environments that shape their thinking, attitudes, and behaviour. This perspective aligns with research indicating that Generation Z's political perceptions are influenced not only by individually received information but also shaped through interaction with family, school, peers, and especially social media (Rohim & Wardana, 2019). The digital sphere constitutes a new social environment exerting considerable influence on political perception formation.

However, interaction within the digital sphere frequently occurs within homogeneous environments, generating phenomena such as echo chambers and political polarisation (Sulaiman & Fauzi, 2024). These conditions create closed information ecosystems where existing beliefs are reinforced rather than critically examined, undermining democratic deliberation. Democratic political education offers an alternative social space enabling Generation Z to acquire learning experiences through dialogue, discussion, and participatory engagement. Dialogical learning provides opportunities to express opinions, listen to others' perspectives, and appreciate viewpoint diversity as integral to democratic life. This process expands learners' social experiences so that political perceptions are shaped not solely by digital algorithms, but through open communication and rational exchange of ideas.

Reflective Thinking: Cultivating Critical Political Literacy

The concept of reflective thinking constitutes the third principle demonstrating relevance for reorienting Generation Z's political perceptions. Dewey (1930: 239-244) explains that reflective thinking is an intellectual process conducted actively, persistently, and carefully through problem identification, information gathering, formulation of alternative solutions,

and testing conclusions based on available evidence. This concept is especially relevant for Generation Z, navigating the torrent of digital information flows where factual and manipulative content are increasingly difficult to distinguish.

Research indicates that low political literacy renders a segment of Generation Z susceptible to difficulty distinguishing factual information from manipulative content (Akbar et al., 2026). Consequently, hoaxes, disinformation, and provocative political narratives are frequently received without verification, thereby influencing political perception formation. This demonstrates that critical thinking skills have become a vital necessity for Generation Z confronting the complexity of political information in the digital era.

Democratic political education cultivates reflective thinking capacity through learning that encourages learners to question information, verify sources, compare multiple perspectives, and formulate conclusions based on logical argumentation. This process not only enhances political literacy but fosters critical thinking skills enabling Generation Z to become less susceptible to emotional, provocative, or viral information. Political perceptions ultimately formed are products of reasoning processes grounded in evidence, rather than mere responses to information circulating within the digital sphere.

Foundational Research: John Dewey's Democratic Education Framework

Democracy and Education (Dewey, 1930) elaborates the foundational relationship between democracy and education, where Dewey argues that democratic societies require educational systems that prepare citizens for active, informed participation. This work establishes that education must be understood as a social process through which values, habits, knowledge, and experience are transmitted across generations via communication and social interaction (Dewey, 1930: 21-30). Educational institutions are positioned as social environments enabling learners to engage in dialogue, collaborate, respect diversity, and resolve problems collectively. This forms the conceptual foundation for understanding democratic political education as preparation for democratic citizenship.

Experience and Education (Dewey, 1938) deepens the experiential dimension of learning, articulating that educative experience fosters growth through continuity and interaction. This work explains the distinction between educative and mis-educative experiences, establishing the principle that learning must build upon and transform prior experience to generate meaningful growth (Dewey, 1938: 18-20). This provides the philosophical basis for reconstructing Generation Z's political experiences, transforming negative perceptions into educative political understanding.

The Public and Its Problems (Dewey, 1927) extends Dewey's democratic theory to address the challenges of modern, technologically-mediated societies. This work establishes

that democracy is not merely a form of government but a way of life constructed through communication, participation, cooperation, and responsibility for the common good (Dewey, 1927: 148). Democratic citizenship requires capacities for collective deliberation and action, which must be cultivated through educative experiences. This provides the framework for understanding how democratic political education can enable Generation Z to participate meaningfully despite the challenges of digital information environments.

Conclusion

This study yields a conceptual reconstruction of democratic political education within John Dewey's thought, offering a theoretical perspective for understanding the reorientation of Generation Z's political perceptions. The interpretative findings demonstrate that the formation of political perceptions constitutes an educational process that unfolds through experience, social interaction, democratic life, and reflective thinking capacity, thereby transcending the mere transmission of political knowledge or the enhancement of political literacy in isolation. In the context of Generation Z, who have grown up amidst the advancement of digital technology, this perspective provides the understanding that the formation of critical, democratic, participatory, and responsible political perceptions necessitates learning experiences that enable individuals to construct political meaning reflectively through the practice of democratic life.

This study further reveals that John Dewey's thought bears conceptual affinities with the values of Pancasila Democracy as the foundational basis of political education in Indonesia. These conceptual linkages affirm that democratic political education is oriented not only towards the cultivation of civic knowledge, but also towards the development of democratic character manifested in deliberation (*musyawarah*), participation, responsibility, and wise decision-making. Accordingly, this study offers a conceptual contribution in the form of a democratic political education perspective that can serve as a foundation for both the development of scholarly inquiry and the practice of political education for Generation Z within the context of Indonesian democracy.

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