

THE ROLE OF GEORGE S. COUNTS' RECONSTRUCTIONISM IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

PERAN PEMIKIRAN REKONSTRUKSIONISME GEORGE S. COUNTS DALAM IMPLEMENTASI PEMBELAJARAN BERDIFERENSIASI DI SEKOLAH MENENGAH ATAS

Sumaryono¹, Akhmad Asnawi², Sugiyono³, Endang Fauziati⁴

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta^{1,2,3,4}

*q100250046@student.ums.ac.id¹

**Corresponding Author*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain George S. Counts' Reconstructionist philosophy, the concept of differentiated learning, and its application within the Reconstructionist perspective in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. The research employs a library study with a qualitative descriptive approach, using data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that Counts views education as an agent of social reconstruction that plays an active role in building a democratic and just society. His ideas align with the principles of differentiated learning, which respect students' diversity, foster critical awareness, and promote social responsibility. The integration of these two concepts forms a humanistic and transformative educational paradigm, where teachers act as facilitators of social change and students become agents of renewal toward a civilized and equitable society.

Keywords: Reconstructionism, George S. Counts, differentiated learning, Merdeka Curriculum.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan pemikiran Rekonstruksionisme George S. Counts, konsep pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, serta penerapannya dalam perspektif Rekonstruksionisme pada Kurikulum Merdeka. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka dengan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, melalui analisis reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Counts memandang pendidikan sebagai agen rekonstruksi sosial yang berperan aktif dalam membangun masyarakat demokratis dan berkeadilan. Pemikirannya selaras dengan prinsip pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, yang menghargai keragaman potensi peserta didik serta menumbuhkan kesadaran kritis dan tanggung jawab sosial. Integrasi kedua konsep ini menghasilkan paradigma pendidikan humanistik dan transformatif, di mana guru berperan sebagai fasilitator perubahan sosial dan peserta didik menjadi agen pembaruan menuju masyarakat yang berkeadaban.

Kata kunci: Rekonstruksionisme, George S. Counts, pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, Kurikulum Merdeka.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern education cannot be separated from its strategic role as a means of forming a civilized, democratic, and socially just society. In this context, educational philosophy serves as a normative foundation and value direction that guides the entire educational process so that it is oriented not only toward mastering knowledge but also toward developing awareness, morality, and social responsibility. One philosophical school that has had a significant influence on the development of contemporary educational thought is reconstructionism, which views education as a means of reconstructing the social order toward a more just and civilized society.

Reconstructionism emerged in the early 20th century as a response to the various social and moral crises that plagued society as a result of industrialization, capitalism, and sharp social inequality. At that time, education was considered to overemphasize academic and technical aspects, thus failing to address real social challenges. In this context, George S.

Counts emerged as a central figure in promoting the need for an active role for education in fostering social change. Through his monumental work, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (1932), Counts asked a fundamental question: Do schools dare to build a new social order? This question illustrates his idea that education should not be neutral; instead, it should side with the effort to liberate humankind from injustice, oppression, and social inequality.

According to Counts, schools have a moral responsibility to be agents of social reconstruction (agent of social reconstruction). Education is not merely a means of reproducing old culture, but rather a tool for transforming culture toward a better social life. He rejects the traditional view of education that positions schools as neutral institutions or merely preservers of the status quo. Instead, Counts asserts that education must prepare students to think critically, have social awareness, and dare to take part in fighting for the values of justice, democracy, and humanity. In his view, teachers function not only as instructors but also as moral and social leaders who help students understand social realities and motivate them to make changes.

George S. Counts's thinking has strong relevance to the direction of education policy in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This curriculum positions students as active subjects of learning who have the freedom to think, express themselves, and create according to their individual potential and background. One of the main strategies in implementing the Independent Curriculum is differentiated learning, which aims to provide educational services according to each individual's learning readiness, interests, and learning profile. This principle aligns with Counts' reconstructionist view, which emphasizes the importance of respecting human uniqueness and fostering critical awareness of social reality.

In differentiated learning, teachers act as facilitators and drivers of social transformation. Teachers not only transfer knowledge but also create a contextual, reflective, and dialogical learning environment. Through this process, students are trained to develop empathy, critical thinking, and sensitivity to social issues around them. Thus, differentiated learning is not merely a pedagogical strategy but also a reflection of the reconstructionist paradigm, which seeks to make education a liberating and emancipating force.

Based on this description, this study aims to: (1) explain George S. Counts' Reconstructionist thinking; (2) explain differentiated learning; and (3) describe the application of differentiated learning from George S. Counts' Reconstructionist perspective.

2. METHOD

This research uses library research method with qualitative descriptive approach. This method was chosen because the focus of the research lies in examining concepts, theories, and previous research results relevant to George S. Counts' Reconstructionist thinking and its implementation in differentiated learning in the context of the Independent Curriculum. A qualitative descriptive approach is used to provide an in-depth, systematic, and analytical overview of the relationship between the philosophical foundations of reconstructionism and modern educational practices in Indonesia.

The research data was obtained from secondary sources, namely various literature that has high relevance to the research topic. These sources include main reference books, national and international scientific journals, research articles, as well as official documents such as government regulations, guidelines for implementing the Independent Curriculum, and teacher training modules. Sources were selected selectively, considering their credibility, timeliness, and relevance to the study's variables and focus. Furthermore, several classic works by George S. Counts and other reconstructionist figures were used as theoretical foundations to strengthen the conceptual analysis.

Data collection techniques are carried out through process identification, inventory, and classification of literature. The first step is to search various academic publications using

keywords such as Reconstructionism in Education, George S. Counts' Educational Philosophy, Differentiated Instruction, And Independent Curriculum. After the sources were obtained, the researcher conducted systematic recording to the main ideas, key concepts, and relevant findings. Each piece of literature was analyzed to identify thematic connections between reconstructionist thinking and the principles of differentiated learning.

Data analysis was carried out by following the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (2014).)which includes three stages, namely:

1. Data reduction), namely the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming data from various library sources. At this stage, researchers select information relevant to the research focus and group key concepts related to Reconstructionism and learning.differentiated.
2. Data presentation (data display),namely the stage of compiling information systematically in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, or conceptual diagrams to make it easier to understand the relationshipinter-conceptThis stage helps researchers see patterns, trends, and the relationship between educational theory and practice.
3. Conclusion drawing and verification (conclusion drawing/verification),namely the stage of interpreting the meaning of data, compiling conceptual generalizations, and testing the validity of the interpretation results by comparing them with other relevant findings and theories.

To take care of data validity and reliability, this research uses source triangulation technique as well as cross-reference conceptual reviewSource triangulation was conducted by comparing various literature from different authors, publishers, and contexts, thus obtaining a more objective and comprehensive picture. Cross-reference review was conducted by reviewing the conceptual suitability between sources, both from the perspective of educational philosophy and modern pedagogical approaches. Thus, the results of this study are expected to havehigh level of interpretation validityand able to provide conceptual contributions to the development of educational theory and practice in Indonesia.

In addition, the analysis process is also iterative and reflective, where researchers repeatedly review the literature to strengthen arguments and deepen understanding of the phenomena being studied. The final result is a theoretical synthesis that explains the relationship between George S. Counts' Reconstructionist thinking and the application of differentiated learning in the context of the Independent Curriculum, while also providing a new perspective on the role of education as a means of social reconstruction in modern society.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. George S. Counts' Reconstructionist Thought

George S. Counts was one of the important figures in the Reconstructionist school of educational philosophy that developed in the early 20th century. Through his work...Dare the School Build a New Social Order?(1932), Counts asserted that schools have a moral responsibility to act as agents of social change (agent of social reconstructionEducation, he argued, cannot be neutral because every learning process always has moral, political, and social consequences. Therefore, teachers function not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral leaders who shape students' critical awareness of the social realities around them.

Counts believed that schools at that time focused too much on academic and technical aspects, thus failing to address the social, economic, and moral inequalities that existed in society. He rejected the traditional view of education, which tended to maintain the status quo and instead reinforced unjust social structures. For Counts, education must have a moral bias toward the weak and oppressed, and be a means of building a democratic, just, and civilized society.

Furthermore, Reconstructionism positions education as an active force in reconstructing society, not simply adapting to existing realities. Education should encourage students to think critically about social inequality, foster moral awareness, and empower them to actively participate in improving unjust social conditions. Within this framework, teachers act as facilitators of social awareness, helping students interpret reality, develop empathy, and take courageous action to create positive change.

Furthermore, Counts believes that true democracy can only be realized if education can shape open-minded, responsible, and socially sensitive citizens. Therefore, he believes the curriculum must be dynamic, relevant to societal needs, and contain strong social content. Education should not only produce intellectually intelligent individuals but also people of character.

social, able to integrate knowledge, values, and real actions in community life.

Thus, George S. Counts' Reconstructionist thinking emphasizes that the essence of education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge, but rather a tool for building social order. A new, more just society. Schools become arenas for developing critical awareness and centers for the birth of agents of social change oriented toward humanity and social justice.

3.2. Differentiated Learning Concept

Differentiated learning is a pedagogical approach that focuses on student diversity. This concept is based on the idea that each student has a different background, potential, interests, and learning style, so the learning process must be tailored to individual needs. According to Tomlinson (2001), differentiation refers to a teacher's systematic efforts to adapt content (what is taught) to individual needs, process (how students learn), and products (how students demonstrate learning outcomes) according to each student's learning readiness and profile.

1. Content differentiation is achieved by varying the depth and breadth of learning materials to suit students' ability levels. Students with basic understanding can be provided with reinforcement materials, while students with advanced abilities can be challenged with concept expansion or real-life case studies.
2. Process differentiation refers to adapting learning activities and strategies to students' learning styles. For example, visual learners may learn through images or videos, while kinesthetic learners are more effective through hands-on activities and projects.
3. Product Differentiation provides opportunities for students to express their understanding through various forms of output, such as reports, presentations, artwork, or social projects.

This approach is rooted in the principle of equity in education, which aims to provide fair learning opportunities for each student based on their needs, rather than treating them equally. With differentiated learning, students become not only objects of learning but also active subjects who play a role in regulating their own learning. This approach aligns with the philosophy of progressive and humanistic education, which emphasizes respect for the unique potential of each individual and encourages active participation and social responsibility in the learning process.

3.3. Implementation of Differentiated Learning from a Reconstructionist Perspective

When viewed from a Reconstructionist perspective, differentiated learning can be understood as a manifestation of humanistic and transformative education. Counts asserted that education should be a means to liberate humanity from social inequality and foster critical awareness of the realities of life. In this context, differentiation is not only a pedagogical strategy to meet individual needs, but also a way to develop students' potential as agents of social change.

Differentiated learning provides space for students to identify themselves, express ideas, and participate in activities relevant to real life. Integrating Reconstructionist values into differentiated learning can be implemented through several strategies, including:

1. Selection of contextual learning themes, namely themes related to social, environmental, or humanitarian issues so that students are able to relate academic knowledge to the realities of life.
2. The application of project-based learning (PBL) or problem-based learning (PBL) which trains critical, collaborative, and reflective thinking skills in solving social problems.
3. Social reflection and collaboration activities, where students are invited to discuss views, identify problems in the environment, and seek solutions together through real action.

With this approach, teachers act as facilitators, guiding students in connecting learning to the social and moral context of society. The learning process doesn't stop at the cognitive level but develops into social experiences that shape empathetic, critical, and just character.

Ultimately, differentiated learning from a Reconstructionist perspective serves not only to improve academic outcomes but also to foster social awareness and moral responsibility in students. Through humanitarian education, schools can become a vehicle for developing a generation capable of reconstructing the social order toward a more democratic, inclusive, and civilized society, in line with George S. Counts' ideal of education as a liberating force.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and discussion, it can be concluded that George S. Counts' Reconstructionist thinking has strong relevance to modern educational practices, particularly in the implementation of differentiated learning in the Independent Curriculum. Counts emphasized that education should not be neutral, but rather must be a means of social reconstruction that supports the values of justice, democracy, and humanity. Schools function as agents of social change tasked with shaping students to have critical awareness, empathy, and moral responsibility for the conditions of the surrounding community.

Meanwhile, differentiated learning provides space for recognition of individual diversity by adapting the content, process, and learning products to the needs, interests, and learning profiles of students. This approach reflects the principle of equity in education, which provides fair and meaningful learning opportunities for each student according to their potential. Thus, differentiated learning focuses not only on academic outcomes but also on developing students' social character and reflective abilities.

The integration of Reconstructionist thought with differentiated learning produces a humanistic and transformative educational paradigm. Education, from this perspective, is viewed as a liberating force that fosters critical awareness, develops reflective thinking skills, and instills noble moral and social values. Teachers act as facilitators of change, not merely transmitters of material but also mentors who motivate students to become agents of social change concerned with justice and humanity.

Thus, it can be emphasized that the application of differentiated learning from George S. Counts' Reconstructionist perspective has strategic significance in developing an education that not only produces intellectually intelligent individuals but also individuals with integrity, empathy, and a critical eye towards social inequality. Such education will be the foundation for the formation of a democratic, inclusive, and civilized society, in line with the ideal of education as a force for building a more humane and just social order.

5. REFERENCES

- Azmy, B (2023) Pembelajaran Berdeferensiasi dalam Kurikulum merdeka Belajar di Sekolah Dasar, *Inventa : Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, Volume 7 No 2
- Brameld, T. (1965). *Education as Power*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

- Counts, G. S. (1932). *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* New York: John Day Company.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Fatimah, S. (2018). "Merekonstruksi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti di Sekolah Negeri." *El-Tarbawi*, 11(1).
- Hannan, S (2024) Konsep Aliran Filafat Pendidikan Rekonstruksionalisme, *Madani: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, Volume 2, Nomor 6, July 2024, Halaman 209-213
- Jayanti, S (2023) Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Mata Pelajaran Sejarah Di SMA Negeri 22 Surabaya, *EDUKASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, Vol. 4, 1 (Juni, 2023), pp. 561-566
- Maryam, A. S. (2021). *Strategi Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi*. Kemdikbud.
- Qomariyah, N. (2017). "Pendidikan Islam dan Aliran Filsafat Pendidikan Rekonstruksionalisme." *Al-Falah: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman dan Kemasyarakatan*, 17(2).
- Sari, H. P. (2020). "Rekonstruksionalisme Pendidikan Islam Menurut Muhammad Iqbal." *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 5(1).
- Sekar, P (2019) Relevansi konsep pemikiran pendidikan dan kebudayaan George S. Counts Dan Ki Hajar Dewantara dengan kompetensi peserta didik, *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan* Vol. 16 No. 2 Tahun 2019 | 177 – 186
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*. Alexandria: ASCD.