

The Biography of Tilaar's Thought in Historical Perception: Critical-Transformative Pedagogy

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji biografi pemikiran Henry Alexis Rudolf (HAR) Tilaar sebagai salah satu tokoh pendidikan Indonesia yang berpengaruh, khususnya dalam konteks pedagogik kritis-transformatif. Tilaar memandang pendidikan tidak sekadar sebagai sarana transfer pengetahuan, tetapi juga sebagai instrumen pembebasan manusia dari ketidakadilan, penindasan, dan kesenjangan sosial melalui pengembangan kesadaran kritis individu maupun masyarakat. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode sejarah dengan pendekatan kajian pustaka sebagai sumber utama untuk menelusuri dinamika pemikiran Tilaar dari masa ke masa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran Tilaar mengalami perkembangan yang bersifat evolutif, dimulai dari kecenderungan konservatif pada masa mudanya, menuju konstruktif ketika menjabat sebagai pejabat di Bappenas, hingga akhirnya mencapai tahap kritis-radikal setelah masa pensiun. Pola ini unik karena berbeda dari kecenderungan ilmuwan pada umumnya yang semakin mapan justru semakin konservatif, sementara Tilaar sebaliknya semakin kritis dan radikal dalam pandangan-pandangannya.

Kata kunci: pendidikan kritis, pendidikan transformatif, sejarah pemikiran.

Abstract

This study aims to examine the intellectual biography of Henry Alexis Rudolf (HAR) Tilaar, one of Indonesia's most prominent educational figures, particularly in the context of critical-transformative pedagogy. Tilaar viewed education not merely as a medium of knowledge transmission but as an instrument for liberating human beings from injustice, oppression, and social inequality by fostering critical awareness among individuals and society. The research employs the historical method with a literature review approach as the primary source to trace the dynamics of Tilaar's educational thought over time. The findings reveal that Tilaar's ideas evolved in an unusual trajectory: beginning with a conservative tendency in his youth, moving toward a constructive orientation during his service at Bappenas, and later becoming increasingly critical and radical after his retirement. This pattern stands in contrast to the general tendency among scholars, who often grow more conservative as their socio-economic status becomes more secure, whereas Tilaar became progressively more critical and radical in his educational perspectives.

Keywords: critical education, transformative education, history of thought.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been known and practiced throughout every period of human civilization, yet each system of education has differed significantly across time and space. This variation is shaped by the underlying philosophy of humanity and society as well as the prevailing cultural

image of human beings, making education never a neutral practice but inherently ideological (Apple, 2004). In the Indonesian archipelago, formerly known as Nusantara, educational practices were deeply rooted in local philosophies and cultural traditions. For instance, in Javanese thought, the image of human

beings was symbolically reflected in *wayang* as shadows controlled by the *dalang*, suggesting that human life was predetermined by divine will. Consequently, traditional Javanese education, like other indigenous educational paradigms, emphasized social positioning, hierarchical obligations, and feudal consciousness rather than individual emancipation (Magnis-Suseno, 1997).

HAR Tilaar (1932-2012), a prominent Indonesian educational thinker, critiqued the continuation of such feudal patterns in the New Order era. According to Tilaar (2002), Suharto's educational policies were highly militaristic and authoritarian, imposing uniformity in thought and behavior in line with the state's political interests. The interaction between teachers and students mirrored a command structure, producing what Tilaar described as a "culture of silence" (*budaya bungkam*) and submissiveness toward authority. This model, he argued, resulted in pseudo-discipline while ignoring Indonesia's inherent diversity. Tilaar linked the collapse of the New Order and the multidimensional crises of the late 1990s to the structural failures of this oppressive educational model, echoing Paulo Freire's (1970) notion of the *pedagogy of the oppressed*.

In response, Tilaar (2000, 2002) proposed a "New Paradigm of National Education" aimed at liberating Indonesian

society toward becoming *manusia merdeka* free and dignified human beings in line with the nation's founding ideals of "just and civilized humanity." This paradigm was grounded in critical pedagogy, inspired by Paulo Freire's concept of *conscientização* or critical consciousness, which encourages learners to recognize and act upon social, political, and economic contradictions (Freire, 1970). Tilaar's critical-transformatory orientation was also shaped by the works of Michael Apple (1996), Peter McLaren (1997), and Indonesian educational reformers such as Ki Hajar Dewantara and Mohamad Syafei.

Nevertheless, Tilaar consistently reminded that critical pedagogy should not be reduced to mere dogma or superficial critique. Instead, it must remain grounded in empirical realities and continuous reinterpretation in response to social change (Tilaar, 2004). His intellectual journey thus represents an accumulation of critical engagements with both global and local thinkers as well as his own experiences as an educator and technocrat during the New Order period.

This study therefore seeks to explore three central questions: (1) How did Tilaar's life experiences shape his educational philosophy? (2) What are the main characteristics and intellectual influences of his pedagogical thought? and (3) What impact did his ideas have on the

broader discourse of Indonesian national education?

METHODS

This study employs the historical method, which involves several key stages: heuristics or the collection of sources, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Gottschalk, 1983). The primary data used in this research are derived from a comprehensive literature review, focusing on written texts that document the development of H.A.R. Tilaar's educational thought.

Methodologically, this research falls under the category of intellectual history (*sejarah pemikiran*). According to Kuntowijoyo (2003), intellectual history always begins with texts, as ideas are expressed, debated, and transmitted through them. The dialectic between ideology and the lived experience of its adherents, as well as the influence of broader social forces, creates a dynamic relation between ideology and practice. The task of intellectual history is therefore to examine ideas, contextualize them within the historical settings in which they emerge, grow, and evolve, and to assess their impact on society. Kuntowijoyo further explains that in analyzing texts, scholars may focus on the genesis of ideas, their consistency, their evolution, and their development over time.

To interpret Tilaar's thought, this study also adopts a hermeneutic approach inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey (1990). Hermeneutics seeks to understand historical figures as situated beings shaped by their socio-historical contexts. For Dilthey, historical understanding is rooted in interpreting individual actions as inherently embedded within external systems such as social, political, and economic institutions that carry established norms and values. In this sense, Tilaar is regarded as a product of his external environment, including his family background, historical circumstances, and societal regulations (Sumaryono, 1999). This hermeneutic orientation enables the study to uncover the meaning of Tilaar's educational philosophy as both an intellectual construct and a reflection of Indonesia's broader historical transformations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From a Humanist, Western-Educated Family

Henry Alexis Rudolf (HAR) Tilaar was born in Tondano, North Sulawesi, on June 16, 1932, as the second of three siblings. His father, Kilala Tilaar, was a church activist, teacher, and socially engaged intellectual, while his mother, Engelien Mamuaya, had completed her education at the *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (MULO) in Tondano an achievement reserved at that time for Dutch children or indigenous

elites. One of his maternal uncles even pursued higher studies in the Netherlands and became both a pastor and the first Indonesian from Minahasa to hold a leadership position in the local church, previously occupied only by Dutch clergy. This intellectual and spiritual heritage positioned Tilaar's family as part of the educated elite in Minahasa.

Tilaar himself acknowledged that the encouragement of his family fueled his dreams as a village boy to continue his studies in Java, far from his hometown. This aspiration was not unusual, since Tondano had long been regarded as the educational center of Sulawesi and had produced many prominent national figures. Among them were Domine Wenas, Sam Ratulangi, and A.A. Maramis, who had also received Western-style education and later became leaders in the Indonesian independence movement (Ali, 2017).

Despite their elite status, Tilaar's mother instilled in her children the values of modesty and simplicity. The family lived on his father's modest salary as a civil servant, and Tilaar often recalled eating *nasi jagung* (corn rice), a staple considered humble and even stigmatized in Minahasan society, as it was associated with laborers such as coconut pickers. This experience of frugality, juxtaposed with the cultural pride of Minahasan elites, shaped Tilaar's appreciation for humility and resilience.

His father, meanwhile, was remembered as a man of generosity who often lent or even gave away portions of his income to help friends and neighbors in need. Although this practice sometimes left the family struggling, Kilala Tilaar consistently emphasized to his children the importance of rejecting selfishness and prioritizing the needs of others. "Cast aside egoism," Tilaar later recalled his father saying, a principle that would profoundly influence his ethical outlook.

From the contrasting yet complementary qualities of his parents, Tilaar drew guiding principles that shaped his worldview. At least three enduring lessons emerged. First, his father's conviction that education and moral integrity were indispensable foundations for life. Coming from a background as both teacher and pastor, Kilala saw education not merely as academic training but as character formation something that elevated human dignity beyond material possessions. Second, his father's subtle but firm transmission of nationalist values. Though not immediately recognized by the young Tilaar, these seeds of patriotism would grow stronger as he encountered pivotal events later in life. Third, his father's passion for reading, passed down through subscriptions to publications such as *Panji Pustaka*, which exposed young Tilaar to Indonesian intellectuals like Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and Sanusi Pane, as well as to broader political

developments in the archipelago. These readings nurtured his sense of Indonesian identity and laid the foundation for the nationalistic tone that would permeate his writings.

In 1946, following in his father's footsteps, Tilaar enrolled in *Inheemsche MULO*, a teacher-training institution, and within four years had distinguished himself as one of its best students. He later advanced to the *Kweekschool*, which still retained Dutch colonial structures, and by 1952, he completed his pedagogical diploma. This marked the beginning of his career as a teacher, with his first assignment in Pare-Pare, South Sulawesi, where he left his birthplace and family to dedicate himself to education.

Beyond his family upbringing and schooling, Tilaar's worldview was also shaped by the cultural environment of Minahasa, a society long noted for its openness and adaptability to progress. Unlike the feudal traditions of Java, Minahasa never developed a hereditary monarchy. Instead, it was governed through local leaders called *kepala walak*, who represented their communities in councils and made collective decisions. This participatory governance structure reflected democratic traditions that predated even the Dutch colonial *Volksraad*. Such egalitarian values also fostered inclusivity toward newcomers, including Javanese migrants resettled in

Minahasa following the Java War (1825-1830).

Adding to this influence was Tilaar's frequent relocation due to his father's teaching assignments, which exposed him to different cultural settings across the archipelago. For the young Alex Tilaar, as he was affectionately known, these experiences cultivated a strong sense of multiculturalism and nationalism concepts that later became central themes in his scholarly research and public advocacy.

Known as an Outstanding Student

After spending two years in South Sulawesi as a teacher, Tilaar was determined to continue his higher education. He recalled that, upon graduating from the *Kweekschool*, the government had promised him the opportunity to pursue further teacher training at the university level, on the condition that he first served as a teacher for two years. Yet, once his service was completed, the government's pledge was not immediately fulfilled.

Driven by determination, Tilaar applied to the Faculty of Philosophy and Pedagogy at Gadjah Mada University (UGM). Unfortunately, financial constraints prevented him from continuing his studies there. He then sought assistance from Soegarda Poerbakawatja, Inspector at the Ministry of Education, who eventually ensured that the government honored its commitment to

finance Tilaar's further education. Because of his prior teaching experience, he was advised to first enroll in the *B-I* teacher training program in Bandung. After three years of study, he graduated in 1957 at the top of his class, outperforming participants from across Indonesia. He then advanced to the *B-II* program, earning a pedagogical diploma in 1959, and subsequently worked as a high school teacher in Bandung.

During his *B-II* studies, Tilaar's intellectual abilities attracted the attention of Drs. Ferdinand C. Wimmers, a Dutch lecturer, who appointed him as his assistant in his second year. This academic mentorship deepened Tilaar's intellectual focus, particularly in the field of education. Collaborating with Wimmers, he traveled extensively across Indonesia to conduct examinations for students in various regions. These experiences provided him with invaluable insights into the conditions of education in Indonesia, forming the foundation of his scholarly orientation and shaping his critical reflections on the national education system in later years.

As a student, Tilaar was recognized among his peers for his outstanding academic performance. Conny Semiawan—later Rector of IKIP Jakarta (1984-1992) and a fellow student at the University of Indonesia recalled Tilaar as exceptionally gifted. In fact, Semiawan noted that even before Tilaar attained the rank of

professor, he had already served as an examiner in her doctoral defense in 1978.

In 1960, upon completing his studies in Bandung, Tilaar moved to Jakarta. There, Iskandar Poltak Simanjuntak invited him to teach as an assistant lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Indonesia, which later became the Teachers' Training Institute (*IKIP Jakarta*). Simanjuntak, a curriculum expert and one of the founders of the Christian University of Indonesia, became an influential colleague. A few years later, in 1964, Tilaar received a prestigious USAID scholarship to pursue further studies in the United States.

He initially enrolled at the University of Chicago but, dissatisfied with the outdated state of educational theory there, transferred after one year to Indiana University in Bloomington. By 1969, he had successfully completed his doctoral studies. Tilaar explained that his move was prompted by the decline of John Dewey's influence in American higher education during the 1960s, as critical thinkers began to dominate the field. Furthermore, Indiana University exposed him to leading economists, including Nobel Prize winners, which later enriched his understanding of educational economics. This knowledge would prove essential when he later assumed strategic roles in institutions such as the National Development Planning Agency

(BAPPENAS), which was heavily influenced by New Order economists.

Despite receiving numerous offers to remain in the United States as a university lecturer, Tilaar chose to return to Indonesia. He believed that his intellectual journey was inseparable from his nation's independence, and thus he felt compelled to serve his homeland. Upon returning, he was appointed as an expert staff member at BAPPENAS in 1970, where he later served as Assistant to the State Minister for National Development Planning in the field of Human Resources (1986-1993). His career at BAPPENAS spanned 25 years, during which he played a significant role in shaping Indonesia's educational and human resource development policies. Concurrently, from 1976 to 1980, he also held the position of Dean of the Graduate Faculty at IKIP Jakarta.

In recognition of his service to education and national development, Tilaar was awarded the *Bintang Jasa Utama* (First Class Civil Service Star) by the Republic of Indonesia in 1998. Through his work with BAPPENAS, he had numerous opportunities to travel domestically and internationally, gaining insights into global educational trends and innovations. These experiences sharpened his critical perspective on Indonesian education, which later became a hallmark of his intellectual contributions.

Tilaar's Educational Thought, 1974-1997

Despite being a civil servant under the New Order, Tilaar became increasingly critical of government policies, especially during the 1970s when the regime consolidated its political power. He published many of his educational ideas in *Prisma*, a journal known as a platform for New Order intellectuals who sought to critically engage with or challenge government policies. Through this medium, Tilaar voiced his opposition to the regime's repressive measures against student movements, framing his critique within the discipline of pedagogy. He argued that such authoritarian approaches represented a form of *pedagogical fatalism*, which failed to address the complexities of youth behavior and development.

Tilaar contended that the pedagogical assumptions of the New Order were inadequate for understanding the so-called "deviance" of youth. Instead, he proposed a broader *ecospheric pedagogical approach*, which emphasized the dynamic interaction between young people and their social, cultural, and ecological environments. According to Tilaar, youth should not be regarded as abnormal, but as subjects with inherent value who contribute meaningfully to collective life. This ecospheric framework, he argued, highlighted that human development and education occur within a

living, changing environment rather than in a vacuum.

The ecospheric perspective reflected Tilaar's scientific rigor in addressing the core issues of education and socio-cultural life. He drew upon emerging research that demonstrated patterns of human behavior influenced by environmental factors, arguing that education must take into account both ecological contexts and human potential. From this viewpoint, generational differences between children, youth, and adults were not fundamental conflicts but variations in maturity within the totality of human life. Consequently, so-called "youth crises" were, in fact, crises of societal order and ecological balance.

Tilaar identified several forms of crisis with direct implications for education: A crisis of values - particularly in developing nations transitioning from colonial rule to independence, where rapid social change destabilized ethical and intellectual frameworks. Youth, in particular, experienced intense disorientation. A conceptual crisis - characterized by disagreement over what constitutes a "good life," leading some young people, especially in industrialized nations, to reject materialist lifestyles and engage in countercultural practices, sometimes through destructive behaviors such as drug abuse, sexual liberation, or violence. An erosion of credibility - whereby traditional authorities such as

parents, educators, religious leaders, and political institutions lost legitimacy in the eyes of youth, largely due to rapid and often imposed processes of modernization.

Uncertainty about the future - especially acute in developing nations, where industrialization often failed to generate sufficient employment, leaving young people anxious and disillusioned about their prospects.

For Tilaar, it was dangerous for educational and political institutions to treat youth as passive spectators. Instead, education should embrace a "*life-perspective*" approach, involving youth as active subjects in all dimensions of societal life.

Tilaar's educational philosophy thus rested on the premise that education must remain responsive to dynamic environments and future-oriented possibilities. Education, he emphasized, is fundamentally a preparation for the future a process of equipping younger generations to engage with challenges ahead. Hence, in his 1987 inaugural address as Full Professor at IKIP Jakarta, he articulated a vision of education rooted in *futurism*.

Tilaar expressed concern that contemporary education had become sterile, overly focused on short-term needs, and detached from social change. He rejected the conservative view of education as mere cultural transmission,

stressing instead that in a world of rapid communication and transformation, education must anticipate the future (*future tense*) rather than remain confined to the past or present.

Drawing inspiration from futurologists such as Soedjatmoko and the Club of Rome, Tilaar warned that unchecked industrial and population growth in the 21st century would precipitate global crises of resource depletion, pollution, and ecological collapse. For him, the only solution was the pursuit of global equilibrium, where education played a central role in preparing humanity to navigate these challenges.

Tilaar's Thought: Moving Toward a Critical-Radical Orientation (1998-2014)

Critical pedagogy, or what is often referred to as the pedagogy of liberation, had long developed outside Indonesia, particularly in Brazil through the works of Paulo Freire and in the United States through Henry Giroux. Interestingly, however, by 2014 Tilaar demonstrated that elements of critical pedagogy had already been present in Indonesia since the pre-independence era through the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara.

The roots of critical pedagogy lie in dissatisfaction with the traditional teacher-student relationship that often lacked meaningful dialogue. Paulo Freire,

regarded as its principal founder, derived the concept from his own life experiences. Born in Recife, Brazil, to a middle-class family, Freire personally endured poverty and hunger during the Great Depression of 1929. This encounter with hardship shaped his empathy for the poor and became foundational to his educational worldview. As a child, Freire frequently played “school” with underprivileged children in his neighborhood, experiences through which he developed a deeper understanding of the intersections between poverty, economic marginalization, and educational exclusion. Freire himself admitted that hunger severely constrained his ability to learn, a realization that ultimately inspired him to devote his life to improving the condition of the poor. His most influential work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was first published in Spanish and English in 1970.

Freire's ideas later inspired global movements for social change in education, particularly toward more humanist and democratic models. By the early 1980s, Henry Giroux extended these ideas in his seminal work *Theory and Resistance in Education: Toward a Pedagogy for the Opposition* (1983), a book that introduced the concept of “critical pedagogy” into North American academic discourse. Giroux emphasized democratic dialogue in liberatory education and grounded his ideas in the values of humanity and social

justice. Alongside him, a number of other scholars including Peter McLaren, Joe L. Kincheloe, Douglas Kellner, Ira Shor, Stanley Aronowitz, Antonia Darder, Michael W. Apple, Carlos Alberto Torres, Peter Mayo, and Ivan Illich further developed critical pedagogy.

Both Giroux and Apple drew heavily upon the intellectual legacy of Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), a member of the Frankfurt School, whose neo-Marxist philosophy significantly shaped critical pedagogy. In addition, Tilaar highlighted the influence of postmodernism, which he described less as a unified philosophical school and more as a heterogeneous intellectual movement that critiques modern rationality and its consequences. For Tilaar, postmodern thought was highly relevant to critical pedagogy, as it provided the tools to interrogate contemporary cultural and social realities.

Cultural Studies also played a major role in shaping critical pedagogy. Emerging in Britain, this field emphasized the importance of culture in relation to four central social issues: (1) power, democracy, and popular culture; (2) the disruptive effects of globalization on traditional societies; (3) the shaping of social identity amidst global change; and (4) questions of sexuality and gender.

Tilaar's own intellectual trajectory was profoundly influenced by Indonesia's political transformation. Having retired from his technocratic role during the New

Order, he observed firsthand the collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime on May 21, 1998 a regime that had suppressed civil participation for over three decades in favor of uniformity and economic growth. He had long warned of the dangers of such centralized, coercive policies. Following the regime's downfall, Tilaar identified Indonesia as undergoing multiple, overlapping crises political, economic, legal, cultural, and educational. Unlike his earlier writings of the 1970s-1980s, in which he framed education largely in ecological or managerial terms, Tilaar now explicitly articulated that education is inherently political.

This shift represented a radical departure in his thought. Confronted with the devastation wrought by the New Order, Tilaar openly proposed critical pedagogy as an alternative paradigm for rebuilding Indonesian society. He argued:

“A new national education paradigm will determine the repositioning and re-actualization of education in our effort to construct a new Indonesian society. For this, we require a pedagogy of liberation suitable for democratic life.”

Tilaar thus insisted that democratic values must permeate every aspect of education from systems and curricula to methodologies. Indoctrinative teaching practices and centralized curricula, hallmarks of the New Order, were in his view oppressive and destructive to human

potential. Students, he argued, are not robots but individuals who must be guided toward independence and critical thinking. The authoritarian legacy had not only produced economic crises but also entrenched a culture of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN). Hence, Tilaar called for a revolutionary transformation of educational paradigms to fully break from New Order legacies.

For Tilaar, education was also a fundamental human right. He stressed that equitable access to education must be realized consistently, as inequality in education perpetuates poverty and directly contradicts the Indonesian Constitution (UUD 1945).

Tilaar's Educational Creed: Transformative Pedagogy

After the Reformasi of 1998, Tilaar initially advanced critical pedagogy as a solution to Indonesia's multidimensional crisis. However, he soon concluded that critical pedagogy alone was insufficient for Indonesia's unique context. Decades of New Order centralism had entrenched Western-dominated models of educational science that, in his view, lacked cultural relevance for Indonesian society.

In the post-Suharto transition, Indonesia shifted from centralization to decentralization, including in education. With the abolition of the *Garis Besar Haluan Negara* (GBHN), national programs lacked clear direction, leaving education

vulnerable to neoliberal influences—standardization, marketization, commodification, and the rise of “world-class” rhetoric in schools and universities. Tilaar criticized these developments as superficial imitations of the West.

To counter this, in 2002 he published *Perubahan Sosial dan Pendidikan: Sebuah Pengantar Pedagogik Transformatif untuk Indonesia* (*Social Change and Education: An Introduction to Transformative Pedagogy for Indonesia*), which he considered the manifesto of his mature educational philosophy.

Transformative pedagogy, according to Tilaar, emerged from Indonesia's struggle to democratize after decades of authoritarianism. While rooted in critical pedagogy, it sought to contextualize theory within Indonesian realities. He rejected eclectic or piecemeal borrowing from Western philosophies, distancing himself from sociologism, pedagogism, and idealism. Instead, he conceptualized pedagogy as a *praxis science* a unity of theory and practice (Fitriani, 2025).

Tilaar argued that transformative pedagogy went beyond both traditional and critical approaches. Unlike traditional pedagogy, which focused narrowly on cultural transmission, and unlike critical pedagogy, which risked collapsing into endless critique, transformative pedagogy emphasized praxis: the active, participatory transformation of society. Its

orientation was explicitly humanist and socio-cultural, affirming education as both a personal and cultural act.

A central feature of transformative pedagogy was its emphasis on individual freedom. For Tilaar, genuine dialogue, creativity, and social contribution could only emerge when individuals were liberated to explore their potential within community life. Education, therefore, had to nurture individuality while situating learners within collective social change.

He proposed three main approaches to transformative pedagogy: (1) Grounding education in the lived reality of learners within local, national, and global contexts. (2) Recognizing and cultivating Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage in accordance with principles of proximity and community. (3) Emphasizing culture as a dynamic, ever-changing force shaped through critical reflection and continuous development.

In this regard, he drew inspiration from Indonesia's own educational traditions, such as the Taman Siswa movement and INS Kayutanam, which integrated education with cultural preservation and social transformation (Hermawan, 2007).

For Tilaar, Indonesia must draw upon its own cultural resources rather than merely copying foreign models. Importantly, transformative pedagogy did not center exclusively on the individual, nor did it detach learning from socio-

political realities. Instead, it viewed education as a process of individualization through participation in society. This was not an individualistic stance, but a social-humanist one, where personal development was inseparable from collective well-being.

Here, Tilaar invoked Anthony Giddens's notion of the "Third Way" as an intellectual parallel. Just as Giddens sought an alternative to the polarities of socialism and capitalism, Tilaar envisioned education as charting a middle path—neither evolutionary gradualism (as in traditional pedagogy) nor radical revolutionary rupture (as in critical pedagogy). Transformative pedagogy thus represented a *third way* of human development, combining personal growth with cultural and social transformation.

Ultimately, Tilaar maintained faith in democracy and the constructive role of the state. He envisioned the state not as an adversary of society but as its partner each complementing the other in nurturing education for a just, participatory, and culturally rooted Indonesian future.

CONCLUSION

Tilaar's educational thought underwent a clear evolution, moving from a liberal-humanist orientation toward a more critical-radical stance. In the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, although he engaged extensively with various approaches to

educational science, his writings did not yet make explicit the idea that education functioned as part of a political battleground. This perspective shifted dramatically after the fall of President Suharto in 1998, when Tilaar strongly argued for the necessity of a paradigm revolution in Indonesian education through the adoption of critical or emancipatory pedagogy.

By 2002, Tilaar advanced further by proposing a new stream of thought he termed *transformative pedagogy*. While remaining within the framework of critical pedagogy, he believed that such ideas must be translated into praxis and adapted to the realities of Indonesian society. For this reason, he refined his theoretical stance and introduced the concept of transformative pedagogy. According to Tilaar, this pedagogical model emphasizes the active role of individuals in social change, with the ultimate goal of raising awareness and nurturing the potential of individuals within the community. Learners, in this view, are not passive recipients but participatory and anticipatory subjects in processes of social transformation. Consequently, educational institutions under transformative pedagogy must function as sites of both social deconstruction and reconstruction, much in line with the emancipatory aims of critical pedagogy. In Tilaar's perspective, education is not merely a managerial or

technical issue; rather, it is deeply intertwined with questions of ideology and politics.

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