



The Resistance Practice of Ki Hadjar Dewantara Towards the Dutch Colonial

Eka Nada Shofa Alkhajar

Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

Ki Hadjar Dewantara is one of the great figures in Indonesia. His ideas and thoughts have inspired the nation to dare to determine its future: Indonesian independence. This article examines the practice of resistance to Dutch colonialism carried out by Ki Hadjar Dewantara. This study uses a qualitative research method, namely document analysis. In addition, an interactive analysis model was used to analyze the data. The study results show an interesting dialectic regarding the resistance practices that Ki Hadjar Dewantara carried out, from the political movement to the educational paths. All of them led to the course of non-cooperative resistance against the Dutch colonial.

Keywords: *Ki Hadjar Dewantara; Resistance; Dutch; Education*

Introduction

Ki Hadjar Dewantara is one of big names inherent strongly to Indonesians' memory. He was known as a native figure having carved and chiseled the traces of independence in this country. However, this memory about Ki Hadjar Dewantara apparently begins to fade and be buried amid globalization hurly-burly. Even, the present independence filler generation is likely the one knowing him only as a mythic character in the past who was willing to sacrifice his soul and body to give us independence.

It of course should be alerted to that the nation's next generation experiences degradation in their ability of identifying his character, moreover speaking of his struggle's meaning and colorful domain. According to Wineburg (2001), our nation's collective memory about Ki Hadjar Dewantara is getting thinner because the collective occlusion is getting bigger. It is unsurprising that this nation becomes the forgetful one, whereas Milan Kundera has ever reminded us to keep resisting forgetfulness.

It seems that Indonesia has not been good at mapping the future by teaching about the past. In fact, our nation's history holds millions of wisdom that will bring benefits if it can be understood, reflected upon, and interpreted properly. Reading and comprehending the character of Ki Hadjar Dewantara will give us deep meaning string and thread. Sinking with his story of prophetic struggle for the sake of nation's dignity will provide a big narration that it is time for this nation to turn back for a moment to find out how far this nation has stepped over.

Reading story and narration about Ki Hadjar Dewantara is reading resistance practice. At the time when independence was still in the wrestling process to collect its energy to be exploded, Ki Hadjar Dewantara has begun to believe that independence is a nation's right and objective. He also manifested such the belief into all of his daily conducts and practices in both his struggle domain and life journey.

Resistance against colonial, to him, is an obligation because independence is absolute or unconditional. He did not fear for the colonial's various repressions. Being imprisoned or alienated became the part of his toughness in upholding the ideal of independence. He had a principle "*rawe-rawe rantas malang-malang putung*" (unyielding struggle).

Reading, as suggested by Gadamer (1980), is the activity of interpreting. Therefore, reading Ki Hadjar Dewantara can be done intertextually and linking it with social-cultural scope with a variety of dimensions encircling it. Hopefully this attempt of re-presenting this word string will not end up in the dead and meaningless word sea as it becomes record pile and ceremonial rite noise only.

Research Method

This study applied a qualitative research method of document analysis (Bowen, 2009). The researcher collected, sorted, and processed data from relevant sources according to the research needs. This research used data triangulation techniques to validate the data. The data analysis technique used was an interactive analysis model involving data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results of the research were then presented descriptively and narratively.

Results and Discussion

Being born from a noble family, Pakualaman in Yogyakarta, in fact did not fade Ki Hadjar Dewantara's critical reasoning. He did not waste his opportunity of acquiring education. Being educated in Western manner did not make him serving the West with all of his instrumental logics. Instead he should have the essential meaning of education, in which education to him is the safeguard of reasoning in order to keep living and to be able to be partial to the truth. Through the education he has acquired, Ki Hadjar Dewantara developed a variety of strategies and practical methods to resist the existence of Dutch in the archipelago.

He and other nationalists established collective thought and built Indonesian incubation centers to resist the capitalistic colonialists who were dominated this country. In 1908, along with Soetomo and Douwes Dekker, he initiated the birth of a modern organization, Budi Utomo. This organization was later known as a milestone of national revival era. Budi Utomo is a sign and an important signifier of the awareness of joint enemy, Dutch colonialist. Based on van Niel (1960), four years later, Ki Hadjar Dewantara along with Douwes Dekker and Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo established resistance movement again. This time, they did so by means of founding political party, *Indische Partij* in Bandung. The three of them were called *Tiga Serangkai* (triad). It is noteworthy that *Indische Partij* was the manifestation of multicultural consciousness jump concerning the importance of national unity and played main resistance practice in the form of nationalism politic with independence as the ultimate goal.

According to Purwasito (2002, pp. 205-206), in 100th Dutch Independence celebration, the colonial government invited Indonesians to celebrate it. Ki Hadjar Dewantara was so offended that he then wrote a sarcastic stringent article entitled "*Als ik eens Nederlander was*" on *De Express* daily on July 13, 1913 meaning "If I am a Dutch." In this context, Ki Hadjar Dewantara performed paradoxical resistance through the discourse as a method more understandable to reader community. The resistance discourse had very strong effect at that time, mocking the Dutch by means of touching the deepest heart. Imperialism used to "treat Indonesians well" was replied by Ki Hadjar Dewantara satirically. He wrote "If I am a Dutch, I will not tell people to celebrate the Dutch independence, in a country where its independence has been seized."

He wanted to suggest firmly that it is not proper for Indonesians to celebrate Dutch independence from French colonialism because it is obvious that Indonesia is not the part of Belanda, "... I am not a

Dutch. I only a colored-skin child, an ordinary person from a colonized country.” Ki Hadjar Dewantara considered that the Dutch have been insane as they do not respect Indonesians’ feeling who was in misery due to the imperialistic state’s colonization.

Not stopping there, he then delivered satiric utterance “the Dutch sing insulting song against us, they are as if the employer, while we are lackey, and pay attention to this, it is this that occurs in Indonesia everyday.” Ki Hadjar Dewantara then advised Indonesians to pray and to prepare for welcoming the presence of independence. “... Pray to God because only He can listen to your heart voice and give you justice. Be ready, your independence will come immediately.”

In his life dialectic journey, Ki Hadjar Dewantara was eventually interested in developing resistance practice through education (Dewantara, 1967; McVey, 1967). The choice of resistance he took was in radical domain, the non-cooperative resistance against Dutch colonial. This resistance meaning is of course not only being passive and silent, but also being active in taking action vis-a-vis the colonial. It can be read at least on slogan “*Lawan Sastra Ngesti Mulya*” marking the birth of Taman Siswa. The word “*lawan*” here means resistance. Based on Javanese calculations, 1922, the birth year of Taman Siswa, is also a symbol of resistance to the Dutch colonial (Milcent in Purwasito, 2002). In addition, Taman Siswa has five service principles (*pancadarma*): independence, nationalism, humanity, culture, and law of nature. Along with his colleagues in Taman Siswa, Ki Hadjar Dewantara consistently symbolized and fought for the visionary ideals. He did not fear at all for the colonial’s repressive wave aforementioned, meaning that “being imprisoned” and “being alienated” did not fade his toughness in holding on the values he believed in.

The colonial ruler was, of course, getting more restless seeing the rapid development of Taman Siswa institution in homeland. Moreover, his education model can ignite the awareness of nationalism and independence ideal. Ki Hadjar Dewantara realized the intellectual advance of Western education through a breakthrough education adoption. At that time, education system in Taman Siswa was the combination of Western system and ala-Indonesia noble character values. Ki Hadjar Dewantara called it “association between West and East.” On other occasion, he reconfirmed “occidentalism without orientalism will destroy mankind. The two should be united in a harmonious convergence.” The association, in Ki Hadjar Dewantara’s view, is an ideal practice because Indonesian mankind can be educated well and encircled with knowledge advance without the need for the lost nationality identity, moreover “denationalization” that is very deconstructive.

Dutch colonial’s restlessness with the risk of “resistance” is getting bigger and multiplied in the presence of Taman Siswa institution as embodied into Wild (Illegitimate) School Act (1932). This attempt was taken by the Colonial to ward off the education enlightenment wave brought by Taman Siswa institution that always creates *theater of mind* concerning the ideal of nation-wide state that will, of course, undermine the colonial’s rule. As noted by Mochammad Tauchid in his book entitled *Pedjuangan dan Adjaran Hidup Ki Hadjar Dewantara* (1963), the nationwide state idealized is “the State for everyone recognizing Indonesia as his state and nation”.

Responding to this colonial’s repression, Ki Hadjar Dewantara was neither afraid nor submitted. He along with his colleague and all administrations, and all Taman Siswa institutions throughout homeland declined to be silent and they kept resisting and opposing. The slogan with intense resistant tone was flared up. The slogan can strengthen Indonesian warriors and vibrate the Dutch colonial. The slogan is “*lebih baik mati terhormat daripada hidup nista* (it is better to die in respected manner than to live with insult).” Ki Hadjar Dewantara kept resisting, and said: “*Sedumuk batuk senyari bumi den lakoni taker pati*”, meaning that safeguarding and maintaining the nation’s dignity and prestige should be done up to the last blood drop.

Non-cooperative (non-compromise) principle was implemented by Ki Hadjar Dewantara in each of his life pages on which he was never willing to receive any help from the colonial. He always held on

this principle tightly until his death. To Ki Hadjar Dewantara, any help from the Dutch would attenuate him, so that he would not have power and freedom to perform his entire resistance. He insisted not to receive any help, although the help was intended to Taman Siswa.

On one occasion, Ki Hadjar Dewantara has ever rejected monetary aid equal to 150 gulden from R.A. Kartini's corresponding colleague, Mr. and Mrs. Abendanon, inserting it under the glass when they visit his rented house. Even when colonial government gave monetary help of 3,000 gulden for treatment cost for his sick children. Again, he returned the money. Regarding this, Ki Hadjar Dewantara in his book entitled *Asas dan Dasar Tamansiswa serta Demokrasi dan Leideschap* (1984: 10) stated "to endeavor based on free and discretionary principles, we should work according to our power. Although we do not reject others' help, when the help will reduce our independence physically and spiritually, it should be rejected. That is the way for those not wanting to be bound or commanded by the rule (authority), because they want to endeavor with their own power."

Reading Ki Hadjar Dewantara is, of course, to read the practice of resisting the colonial. Then, tracing farther to the back, resistance practice has actually existed earlier when he disposed and did not use his royal name, Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat. He preferred and felt comfortable by being ordinary people.

Celebrating Education: A Reflection

It is a commonly known fact that education was indeed the primary basis of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's resistance to Dutch colonial rule. His dedication to Indonesian education will forever be recorded in gold ink in Indonesian history. Therefore, we must be able to take inspiration from Ki Hadjar Dewantara's spirit, struggle, and visionary ideas to reflect on and apply them to current educational practices.

We need to realize that education is a crucial factor. Education is a significant capital for a nation to develop and welcome a better future. Without good educational practices, a nation's desire to escape poverty and ignorance is merely a daydream. Everyone in this country, especially policymakers, must understand that the essence of education is to educate the people and treat them as decent human beings (Alkhajar, 2014; Alkhajar & Sofyan, 2022). In this regard, Ki Hadjar Dewantara is the best exemplary figure. He always strived to use his knowledge and ethics for his fellow countrymen. He deeply understood the nature of education and practiced it in real terms. Then, what about the reality of our education today?

The good policies and breakthroughs in education made by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology under Nadiem Anwar Makarim and his staff deserve, indeed, high appreciation. These policies and breakthroughs are efforts to unravel the root causes of education problems and improve the quality of education in Indonesia. The advantages of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy must be maintained while improving its shortcomings.

The main goal is to maintain the continuity of education policies and improve the quality of education in Indonesia. This is crucial because the continuity of education policy is needed to ensure that our education is increasingly advanced and of high quality. We know that one of the root causes of our education problems is the inconsistency of education policy. This country's long history has proven that education policy often changes when there is a change of minister in charge of education. It is as if we do not have a blueprint and a clear road map regarding the direction of the nation's education. According to Luthfia (2021), in this country, a policy that is expected to be a solution to a problem often ends up adding new problems.

As Ki Hadjar Dewantara once expressed to the Dutch colonial, the celebration of education in this country is still a thorn in our hearts. National education celebrations are still filled with the interference of

“despots” and “bandits,” who ignite the grief and anger of the people. It is indeed concerning. When the problems of national education, such as the uneven quality of education throughout Indonesia, have not been fully resolved, these bandit-minded officials turn education into their subordinate power and political machine. These types of officials only have narrow and short-sighted reasoning. They only think about how to gain personal material benefits, obtain worldly glory, occupy the public office positions, or get an extension of their office terms for the next period in the supposedly “democratic” spaces of people’s voices.

Therefore, it is not surprising that many people are clamoring for the implementation of the promise of independence, which is to educate the nation. We must be honest and open our eyes to the fact that the reformation, one of the significant milestones of change in this country, has now revealed its true face: a democracy with thievery and liberalization in all sectors. Over time, this country has become increasingly adept at producing robbers of the people. According to Zamroni (2007), this is inseparable from the success of the New Order in building a nation with a “slave” mentality that lacks creativity and initiative. Although it has decreased, the “as long as the boss is happy” orientation of the New Order era still exists in this country’s social spaces of life. This portrait shows how this long-entrenched mentality still lingers.

What about the leaders? The leaders in the country that is “cursed” to be a prosperous nation by God are often engrossed in aestheticization. The practice of aestheticization is full of trickery, full of reduction of meaning, and of course, full of tactics to hide the actual facts. The leaders in this country are better at beautifying their image and “selling promises.” In their hands, this country becomes “duds.” And, to date, they are still happy to wallow in “sin” and hurt the people’s trust. We must dare to say that this type of leader is an enemy of civilization.

What about the people? In this country, many people still have a feudal mentality and spirit. Tan Malaka warned us long ago about the dangers of this kind of mentality. Especially in the world of education, what is the point of having degrees but not being able to make significant changes, at least in the surrounding environment where the entity is? What is the use of research practices that only pursue the nominal value of money from projects that can be obtained? When research passes for funding but the execution is only a “lip service” and often “perfunctory,” such a phenomenon certainly raises concerns.

In the field of writing, various community service and academic research activities are often only carried out as a means to accumulate “credit scores” for the desire to be promoted. It is clear that these activities are not born out of an awareness of intellectual endeavor. The actions of academics should be an effort to educate and provide tangible benefits to society through new ideas and meaningful writings. In addition, some people in the world of education, including the educators themselves, even casually injure the nature of education with actions and behaviors that are far from noble values. Sexual violence and the cheating of scientific papers in educational institutions are just some examples of the problems that still exist in our world of education. These problems are only the tip of the iceberg phenomenon.

In this country, humanist, enlightening, and intellectual spaces of interaction are, in fact, still within the stage of imaginary and empty dreams, where we often find classrooms or lectures that become numb. Thus, it is unsurprising that this dull dialectic blurs the understanding of reality. Such conditions can be caused by educators, learners, the education system, or even the interaction between these factors. The question is, are these conditions true?

Indeed, we all have to answer it. We cannot deny that many true leaders, officials, educators, learners, and education personnel still have the heart and awareness to continue striving for better change. However, it would be wise for all of us to take a moment to reflect and be willing to admit how far we are still left behind in implementing the noble values that the figure of Ki Hadjar Dewantara once demonstrated in his actions and life practices.

Conclusion

The practice of reading and memorizing Ki Hadjar Dewantara should have been able to make us aware of the meaning and essence of struggle that is to keep attempting to present prosperous and civilized Indonesia. Reading Ki Hadjar Dewantara obviously slaps and reminds us that education agenda cannot be implemented using business as usual. It needs seriousness, role model, and of course high commitment not stopping at slogans, mottos or “nice” advertisements. Finally, Romo Mudji has ever said: “Hopefully the task of reading is the task of enlivening words by words in order to provide meaning.” The word meaningful should be interpreted as a means of providing individual aptitude and social aptitude that can bring out individual intellectuality and social aptitude all at once that can give enlightenment and kindness (*summum bonum*).

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