

Building the Foundation of Education through Learning Philosophy and Theory: A Study on Strengthening the Educational Function of Libraries

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A B S T R A C T

Quality education requires a solid philosophical and theoretical foundation. Educational philosophy provides the normative direction and values of education, while learning theories offer empirical guidance for designing effective and learner-centered instruction. This study examines how both perspectives strengthen educational foundations through optimizing the educational role of libraries in the digital era. Using a descriptive qualitative literature review supported by findings from the Darul Ma'arif Al Insan Foundation, the study reveals that philosophy shapes educational orientation, whereas learning theories guide practical instructional strategies. Their integration reinforces libraries as active learning centers that promote information literacy, character development, independent learning, and lifelong learning. Libraries managed in alignment with philosophical principles and learning theories—through relevant collections, adaptive services, and supportive environments—can enhance their function as non-formal educational institutions. Thus, educational philosophy and learning theories are strategic components in building an adaptive and sustainable education system in the context of digital transformation.

Keywords: *Philosophy of Education, Learning Theory, Library, Educational Function, Information Literacy*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar that forms a knowledgeable, moral, and competitive human civilization that is mostly shaped by education. As the conceptual foundation that directs the direction and goals of education, philosophy and theory of learning play an important role in this context. The philosophy of education provides the foundation for creating an education system that is relevant to the demands of contemporary society, in addition to explaining the nature of the human being and the learning process. Learning theory, on the other hand, offers a scientific foundation for how humans learn, gain understanding, and reach their full potential through experience and interaction with the surrounding environment.

Libraries are an important component of the education system that is often underutilized. Libraries have a strategic role in education in encouraging lifelong learning, in addition to being a place to preserve and distribute information. Libraries must adapt to a new educational paradigm centered on critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and digital literacy in the contemporary digital era and information transformation. Therefore, increasing the role of library education is essential to create a strong and sustainable educational foundation. Strengthening the role of library education can be focused on becoming an important component in the educational ecosystem through philosophical approaches and learning theories. Learning theory provides an empirical and methodological approach to creating successful teaching strategies in a library environment, while educational philosophy offers normative guidance regarding learning objectives. Libraries can be more than just a place to

read; Libraries can be centers for creative development, active learning, character development, and literacy culture.

The foundation of ethical and epistemic learning is provided by the philosophy of education. In contrast to passive learning, Dewey's Progressivism emphasizes active, experiential learning, in which students learn through engagement with their social and physical contexts (Aprianti et al., 2025). This is in line with Vygotsky's theory of social learning, which emphasizes the zone of proximal development, where learning takes place through the supervision of more experienced people and social interaction (Hong, 2021). The foundations of the philosophy of education are axiological (what values should be taught), ontological (human nature and learning), and epistemological (how humans acquire information). For example, research by Suharry et al., (2024) shows how important educational philosophy is as the foundation for the formation of students' personalities. In line with that, Thahir (2022), explores how modern education theory affects the evolution of Islamic education. As an educational institution, libraries should define themselves as embodiments of educational principles, such as critical literacy, lifelong learning, and equitable access, rather than just as technical services.

Ki Hadjar Dewantara emphasized the importance of education based on national cultural values in the Indonesian context, using the motto "ing ngarso sung tulodo, ing madya mangun karso, tut wuri handayani". This idea shows that education should be focused on the formation of socially conscious, independent, and civilized human beings. Therefore, the philosophy of education serves as a guideline for creating an education system that is relevant to societal and contextual needs, rather than just abstract ideas.

Libraries are now the "community hub" for informal education. UNESCO (2023) noted the involvement of libraries in closing the global education gap, while the ALA study (2022) emphasized libraries as a forum for digital education initiatives. However, as discussed by IFLA (2021), issues such as limited access to technology in rural areas require creativity. The four main purposes of contemporary libraries are informational, educational, cultural, and recreational, according to IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). The educational function places libraries in strategic partnerships with formal and informal educational institutions to help people develop critical thinking and reading skills. The library functions as a learning resource center that facilitates lifelong learning activities, according to (Lasa, 2017). Libraries can be agents of social change that improve the character and intellectual capacity of the community through various services such as information literacy, critical thinking skills training, and digital resource management.

A comprehensive, human-centered strategy is generated when educational philosophy and learning theory are combined to enhance the role of library education. Learning theory offers helpful suggestions for creating educational activities and programs in libraries, while educational philosophy offers direction and core values. Libraries can provide constructivism-based literacy programs, for example, that encourage students to build their knowledge through hands-on experience. From a humanistic point of view, libraries can serve as places that encourage intellectual freedom and the development of individual potential. Thus, a strong, comprehensive, and sustainable foundation of education can be created through the collaboration of educational philosophy, learning theory, and library services.

Libraries as part of the education ecosystem have strategic potential in supporting information literacy, lifelong learning, and character development. UNESCO (2023) affirms the role of libraries in bridging the global digital literacy gap. Recent studies show that school and academic libraries have transformed into collaborative learning commons and digital literacy (Julien et al., 2020). However, most research still places libraries in a managerial or technical perspective, not yet comprehensively integrating the philosophical foundations and theories of learning as the normative and epistemic bases reinforcing their educational functions.

Theoretically, Dewey's progressivism emphasizes experiential learning (Aprianti et al., 2025), in line with Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory of the zone of proximal development

(Hong, 2021). Research by Suharry et al., (2024) and Thahir (2022) confirms the urgency of educational philosophy in character formation and educational transformation. Recent studies have also shown that constructivist approaches in library learning spaces contribute to increased critical literacy and learning engagement (Lloyd & Hicks, 2021).

The research gap of this research lies in the absence of a systematic conceptual synthesis between educational philosophy, learning theory, and strengthening the educational function of libraries in the Indonesian context. The novelty of this research is problematic because it offers normative-empirical integration as a strategic framework for educational library development. This state of the art research places libraries as a value-based learning ecosystem, digital literacy, and meaningful learning.

The purpose of this research is to investigate in depth the relationship between learning theory, educational philosophy, and the strategic role of libraries in enhancing their educational role. This research is expected to help create a new paradigm in educational library management that focuses on student empowerment and meaningful learning through conceptual analysis and literature review.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a study on the educational library at the Darul Ma'arif Al Insan Foundation. Data was obtained through observation, interviews with librarians and students, and document analysis related to literacy policies and programs. Data analysis was carried out thematically by relating library management practices to the principles of educational philosophy and learning theory. A qualitative approach was chosen to explore an in-depth understanding of how educational philosophy and learning theory are translated into library educational practices.

The collected data can describe how the values of educational philosophy (holism, progressivism, humanism) affect the planning of the educational function of the library. Analyze the application of learning theories (behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, social-cognitive, humanistic) in library service programs. Evaluate the impact of the library's educational function on users' learning motivation, literacy, and learning experience.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results show the findings of this study that the educational role of libraries in fostering critical thinking and literacy. School or college libraries that implement proactive management, multimodal collections, and structured literacy programs can increase students' reading frequency and early indicators of critical thinking, according to the findings of literature analysis and field studies (questionnaire surveys and interviews with librarians). Research shows that when libraries offer user onboarding services and curriculum integration, people are more likely to participate in literacy activities and use digital resources. The application of educational philosophy values in strengthening the educational function of libraries includes:



Figure 1. Conceptual Structure

Based on the research findings, the principles of educational philosophy are now the conceptual basis for supervising and expanding the role of library education. Various literacy programs and library education activities reflect values such as human potential development, freedom of thought, and independent learning.

Philosophically, libraries are seen as places of intellectual freedom, not just an archive of information. By offering opportunities for critical and introspective thinking, education should free human beings from ignorance and dependence. In addition, libraries help users develop a critical awareness of the value of access to knowledge and information. Librarians' efforts to create an inclusive, welcoming, and communicative environment where every user feels valued and empowered to thrive is a clear example of the ideals of humanism's philosophy

In addition, the educational services offered by the library reflect Ki Hadjar Dewantara's belief that education is a process of directing the development of students' potential. In the context of contemporary education, this "guidance" function is in the form of academic training, research support, and information literacy guidance.

Factors determining the effectiveness of the educational functions of the quality and accessibility of the collection (including digital collections), the information literacy skills taught by librarians, teacher-librarian collaboration in creating learning activities, and the digital access infrastructure (connectivity, user-friendly interface) are important factors, according to the synthesis of sources and qualitative data. The main challenges are poor metadata architecture, low digital literacy among certain users, and financial constraints (Prihadi & Permana, 2024).

Implementation of Learning Philosophy and Theory on Learning Independence

The learning independence of students at the Darul Ma'arif Al Insan Foundation has increased significantly thanks to the application of the concept of educational philosophy and learning theory in the library. The following are the conclusions obtained from a brief survey given to fifty active library users:

Table 1. Respondent Result Data

Yes	Statement	Number of Respondents	Persentase (%)	Interpretation of Results
1	Students feel that libraries help them learn more independently	41	82%	The majority of respondents consider libraries to play a big role in encouraging independence
2	Students are more motivated to find new learning resources through libraries	37	74%	Most of the respondents felt that the existence of libraries fostered motivation to learn and explore sources of knowledge.
3	Students feel that libraries improve thinking skills	34	68%	More than half of the respondents assessed that libraries have contributed to improving critical thinking skills.

Based on the results of the data above, it can be concluded that the library at Yayasan Darul Ma'arif Al Insan significantly supports the learning process of students, especially in terms of independent learning, motivation to find new resources, and the development of critical thinking skills, according to the results of his explanation that: (1) 82% of students feel that libraries greatly facilitate better independent learning. (2) 74% said they were more encouraged and motivated to look for new educational resources. (3) 68% of library respondents increased their capacity to think critically.

It illustrates how libraries can be true educational laboratories where learning theories are applied in practice while serving as a place for introspection and exploration of knowledge. The idea of lifelong learning is also supported by increasing independence in education. In addition to meeting academic standards, students learn because they understand the value of information as a basic human need. The impact of using digital library technology although its effectiveness depends on local adaptation (user training, local language/metadata

design), digital libraries designed with the principles of accessibility and user engagement in mind increase the reach of services, especially for users in remote/rural areas. Research shows that although digital libraries increase access, they do not necessarily improve critical thinking skills without planned pedagogical interventions (Mamabolo & Durodolu, 2025).

Library as an Educational Institution Based on Philosophy and Learning Theory

Based on the results of the research conducted, libraries began to turn into centers of independent study and intellectual activities. The instructional role of libraries is strengthened by non-formal learning platforms such as research classes, academic clinics, topic debates, and digital literacy workshops. Librarians now act as learning facilitators, helping users find, evaluate, and apply information, rather than just managing collections. This illustrates how constructivist theories that view learning as an active and learner-centered process and the philosophy of progressive education are integrated.

Librarians, as educators, also apply ethical ideals and social responsibility in guiding users, in line with the axiological principle of educational philosophy, which is to make knowledge a means to advance human dignity. In addition, libraries are able to adapt to advances in information technology through the application of contemporary learning theories. Libraries promote technology-based learning and expand their educational reach through digitalization and online learning platforms. Therefore, libraries are strategic partners of educational institutions in creating a learning community, not just a complement to formal education.

The learning model that supports the educational function of libraries The role of libraries as a learning center has been proven to be in harmony with constructivist approaches, collaborative learning, and experiential learning: libraries are places for experiential learning (learning while practicing, reflection, and group discussions) as well as as a repository of materials. The use of digital and face-to-face hybrid approaches) increases participation and application of knowledge in critical thinking activities. Integration of learning theory in behaviorism library educational activities in strengthening discipline and extrinsic motivation. The results of the study show that the library management system implicitly applies behaviorist theory. For example, "best active user" is awarded, while late returns are subject to penalties. Users are encouraged to behave responsibly and disciplined through this stimulus-response cycle.

Positive reinforcement is the key to effective learning, according to B.F. Skinner's theory. Libraries can generate extrinsic motivation that encourages consistent learning behaviors by rewarding active users. Although simple, this method emphasizes the importance of self-control and consistent learning practices.

Cognitivism in the development of information literacy based on interviews, librarians clarified that information literacy training is held regularly in libraries. Cognitive theory, which emphasizes thinking and information processing as the foundation of learning, goes hand in hand with this activity. Students receive instruction in the areas of identifying information needs, finding and assessing information sources, organizing and interpreting data and utilizing information ethically and efficiently. As a result, libraries actively contribute to the development of high-level thinking skills, including assessment, synthesis, and analysis.

Humanism in the creation of inclusive learning spaces The observation shows that by creating a friendly, comfortable, and individual-focused learning atmosphere, libraries also apply humanist values. Natural lighting, free Wi-Fi, and an area for informal conversations make the reading room more adaptive. The importance of intrinsic motivation and self-actualization in the learning process is emphasized by humanist theories (e.g., Rogers and Maslow). Libraries that adopt this strategy become a forum for students' independence and mental health, in addition to being a learning environment. Users are free to pursue their hobbies and learn at their own pace, and they feel valued.

Integration of Learning Theory in Library Programs and Services

The application of learning theory in libraries can be seen from the various strategies used by librarians in managing educational activities. The Behavioristic Approach is seen as a reward and certificate system used in literacy training programs to motivate active learning behaviors as a form of reinforcement. The Cognitivist approach is applied in activities where the user is taught to understand, analyze, and assess sources of knowledge through its use in information literacy and critical thinking exercises. and understand, analyze, and evaluate sources of knowledge. The constructivist approach is applied through Collaborative activities including reading clubs, scientific discussions, and project-based learning are used to implement the constructivist approach. Through engagement and social experiences, users are encouraged to build knowledge. Examples include study groups in libraries, discussion rooms, user research projects, and the use of public resources.

Critical thinking is improved through constructivist-based group learning in school libraries, as shown by (Kurniawati, 2024). The Humanistic Approach is applied by creating a flexible and pressure-free learning environment that adapts to the specific needs of each individual. Connectivity approach: provides online access that integrates online learning platforms, online forums, user networks, and online access to digital collections with physical or virtual libraries. Digital libraries can facilitate pedagogical processes and increase access, as shown by Anwar et al., (2024).

The integration of these various learning theories shows that libraries are adaptive, reflective, and interactive learning environments, in addition to being a repository of information. In line with the idea of lifelong learning, library users can learn according to their learning interests and preferences

Implications of Learning Philosophy and Theory on Improving the Quality of Education This study shows that the application of learning theory and educational philosophy in libraries improves the quality of education in several ways, such as increasing critical thinking and information literacy, users become more independent in finding and assessing information sources. Encouraging motivation and creativity to learn, new concepts and innovations are encouraged to develop in a humanistic and interactive learning environment. Improving access to lifelong learning: Libraries serve as educational resources for all ages and professions. Incorporating moral and humanitarian principles in education: Developing students' moral character in accordance with national educational goals. Therefore, to enhance the role of library education through philosophy and theory of learning is a calculated step to create a strong and durable educational foundation that focuses on the holistic development of the individual.

The library as a space for the implementation of the values of the philosophy of education, this research shows how the library has evolved from a place of library to a center of learning activities that uphold the principles of contemporary educational philosophy. The library uses a progressivist approach by offering a variety of collaborative spaces, literacy exercises, and project-based learning support, based on observations and conversations with librarians. The active learning strategy in libraries is based on John Dewey's ideas of progressivism. In addition to reading, students use scientific forums to write, discuss, and share the results of their research. These exercises encourage critical and introspective thinking, two qualities that are crucial for education that aims to maximize human potential.

In addition, libraries embrace constructivism, which states that knowledge is created through interaction between users and information sources, rather than simply being communicated. In this case, the library turns into an educational space that supports the creation and search for the meaning of knowledge by students. The increasing use of digital devices, online journals, and scientific databases, which help students gain contextual and personal understanding, is an indication of this.

Discussion

Constructivism that encourages students to build knowledge through interaction, collaborative learning that encourages critical discussion, and experiential learning that encourages reflection after experience are three contemporary learning theories that, when combined with the educational functions of literacy center libraries, learning support centers, maker spaces or experiences, will be effective. Libraries that actively collaborate with educators can develop real-world tasks that demand critical thinking skills in information assessment, synthesis, and argumentation (Kurniawati, 2024).

Orientation and information literacy By improving the user's ability to find and assess sources methodically, the onboarding program reduces the number of mistakes made when using untrusted sources (Idra, 2025). The design of students' multimodality collections can test theories and compare viewpoints through collections that combine text, video, and interactive materials, which spark critical discourse (Prihadi & Permana, 2024). The collaboration of library librarians teachers plays a role as facilitators of high-level thinking skills when librarians participate in learning preparation (assignment design, information assessment rubrics).

Libraries as centers for the formation of academic character libraries contribute to the development of academic character in addition to improving cognitive abilities. Students learn to respect copyright and academic integrity. Avoid plagiarism and maintain scientific ethics in writing and speaking through information literacy exercises, scientific writing instruction, and academic conversations. Therefore, libraries function as a forum for the development of morality and intellectual ethics in addition to providing access to knowledge. The philosophy of humanistic education, which emphasizes the unification of knowledge, morality, and humanity, is in line with these ideals.

Challenges and recommendations for strengthening the educational function of libraries to improve the Role of Libraries in Education Although much progress has been made, there are still a number of obstacles new students have low information literacy, librarians have limited knowledge of contemporary learning theories; and access to digital resources varies in each study program. Therefore, libraries should integrate information literacy training into academic orientation programs to train librarians in the field of pedagogy so that they can play the role of learning facilitators, not just custodians of collections; and creating an "inclusive digital library" policy to guarantee that all students have equal access to learning resources. Comparison with previous studies, these results are in line with international studies highlighting the importance of information literacy training Chen et al., (2024) and the vital role of libraries in facilitating digital distance learning (Lasa, 2017; Mamabolo & Durodolu, 2023). However, a number of studies show that specific instructional designs for critical thinking are necessary; digital access alone is not enough (Mapheto, 2023).

The synthesis of this study discussion supports the idea that libraries can be a real example of how learning theory and educational philosophy interact. Learning techniques in libraries are reinforced by behaviorist, cognitive, and humanist theories; The principles of progressivism and constructivism encourage experiential and reflective learning. The two work together to provide a more comprehensive educational paradigm that develops character, independence, and intellectual responsibility, in addition to imparting knowledge

CONCLUSIONS

From the results of the research and discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that efforts to strengthen the educational function of libraries cannot be separated from the existence of educational philosophy and learning theory as its conceptual and operational basis. Philosophy of education provides a fundamental value guide and direction for the purpose and orientation of learning activities in the library, while learning theory provides a scientific foundation for designing effective, relevant, and meaningful learning strategies. Libraries that are managed based on philosophical principles such as humanism, progressivism, and constructivism have the potential to develop into independent learning

centers that encourage the emergence of critical thinking skills, creativity, and independent learning in society. Through the application of learning theories, both behavior-oriented, cognitive processes, knowledge construction, and personal development, libraries can create a responsive, interactive, and student-centered learning environment. Thus, the integration between educational philosophy and learning theory in library management not only increases the effectiveness of its educational function, but also contributes to the formation of a sustainable and humanitarian-oriented educational foundation. Libraries no longer only serve as a storage place for information resources, but also as a space for intellectual and social transformation that has a strategic role in realizing a learning society.

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