



Original Research

Dialogic-Critical Education as a Solution to Mitigate the Decay of Democracy in the Process of Electing Council Members in Indonesia

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Abstract: The Indonesian political civilization has to construct a quality and lasting democratic system through dialogic-critical education. This research is based on the growth of elite dominance in democracy, clientelism in politics, and political parties' challenges in solidifying people's power. This study examines how dialogical-critical educational concepts, the legislative council, and general election organizers might mitigate Indonesia's erosion of democracy. The method used is a mixed-method approach, and data were taken from 265 respondents through questionnaires, field observations, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The researchers used the multistage cluster random sampling technique to select 265 respondents. The researchers reviewed political party policy documents, analyzed political party ideology, explored the struggles of elected regency legislative councils, examined the role of election organizers, and analyzed voter characteristics through field observation, FGDs, and questionnaire distribution. The results of this study reveal that the decay of the democratic system in Indonesia can be addressed through the mutual support of the notion of critical, plural, inclusive, and dialogical pedagogy. This study's findings recommend that the role of political parties be revitalized, the functioning of regency legislative councils and election organizers be enhanced, and the capabilities of the constituents be strengthened to mitigate the erosion of the political system in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Critical Political Education, Democratic System, Dialogical-Critical Pedagogy, General Election, Legislator, Party Ideology*

Introduction

Today's political dynamics in the Republic of Indonesia necessitate a thorough analysis due to various unanticipated maneuvers and the actions of political actors that are often ignorant, perfunctory, speculative, and negligent, worsened by inconsistent critical constituents across the regions of Indonesia. However, the reality that various acts undertaken by irresponsible political players are still winning popular backing is concerning. This occurrence could be regarded as an early indicator of democratic breakdown, which poses challenges in formulating a logical and critical rationale for fostering a solid and long-lasting democratic system in Indonesia and other nations that uphold democratic principles similar to those of Indonesia.

Several previous studies have not focused on how dialogic-critical education serves as an alternative to prevent the decline of the democratic system in Indonesia. For example, the study by Feulner (2024) and Tanjung et al. (2020) focused on how the elite's power is substantial, leading to modifications in democratic systems and procedures in Indonesia and many other countries. The resulting research aligns with Indonesia's political framework's four types of elites (Wisnaeni and Herawati 2020; Mubiina 2020). First, the oligarchy is composed of individuals who can influence the establishment of public policy due to their economic and political authority. Second, the financial elite wields influence over a specific economic sector without direct control over political or public institutions. Third, the political establishment comprises individuals who enhance their influence by controlling and employing political organizations, such as political parties. Fourth is the bureaucratic elite, individuals who have political authority due to their positions within the system of government.

Research conducted by Fossati (2020) also merely focused on clientelistic politics; the dominance of the elite eventually made its way into the core democratic institutions, both official and informal, and has yet to offer concrete evidence about the role of dialogic-critical education in preserving a healthy and sustainable political democracy. Fossati (2020) affirmed that clientelism is a word for protective relationships that are good for both parties. These kinds of relationships can happen between people or groups higher up in the social ladder (called "patrons") and people who want to get or protect certain benefits (called "clients"). In this case, the clientelistic structure is based on exchange relationships that are not organized equally. Four parts cannot be separated from the planned clientelistic relationships: family, mafia-organized favoritism/patronage, and autocratic groups and clientelistic parties (Gottlieb and Larreguy 2020; Hedetoft 2022).

Those forms of clientelism, as stated earlier, strengthened the research by Pierskalla and Sacks (2020) and Sula et al. (2023), who affirmed that clientelism is an important part of the political process. However, these two groups of researchers are like others, not revealing the essence of dialogic-critical education as a new solution to maintaining a sustainable democratic system. Pierskalla and Sacks (2020) and Sula et al. (2023) focused on the claim that along with favoritism in politics, Indonesia's political scene has stalled due to political parties not doing sufficient to give people power. Parties are less organized than they used to be; they rely increasingly on candidates hired from outside the party and have difficulty keeping their campaign platforms consistent. Ideological platforms are becoming less important to political parties, making it harder to tell them apart regarding their programs and policies. In the end, there is almost no relationship between voters and parties. This idea means that parties and well-defined voter groups are not connected at all, or at least not continuously (Ahmad 2024; Vélchez and Achmad 2023).

They make it easier for legislators to work together, let voters believe governments are trustworthy, lower the cost of running campaigns and getting people to vote, and bring

together and voice people's interests. A politician's distinctive personality or the personalization of power is also important to parties since it helps them reach their objectives quickly (Kılıçdaroğlu 2020; Muliawan and Sumantri 2020).

Three investigations of Indonesia's democratic system have also been carried out by Budiharso et al. (2023), Jamaluddin (2020), and Mulya et al. (2024), who declared that democracy and the process of democratization are essential for creating a fair government system that includes everyone and meets the needs of the community. They believe that this process should consist of working to make democratic structures stronger, get more people involved, and eliminate barriers that stop democratization from moving forward. However, they have not yet analyzed how dialogic-critical education can help plural and inclusive politics work together to limit the power of leaders and clientelistic politics in Indonesian democracy.

All previous studies have focused more on institutional strategies to enhance the essence of democracy; it is equally essential to strengthen democracy and to educate citizens' critical awareness through dialogical education. This gap can be covered by the findings of this study, which serve as an alternative solution to the systemic decay of democracy in Indonesia. The findings of this study provide an alternative novelty in that dialogic-critical education functions as a bridge to enhance the social-political awareness of learners, thereby fostering the development of aware, active, and responsible citizens in a democratic society.

Theoretical Framework

The dialogic-critical education paradigm that was developed by Paulo Freire (1970), the quality system of democracy theory that was proposed by Bauman (1997), and Jürgen Habermas' Deliberative Democracy theory (1992) are the three primary theoretical underpinnings that are utilized in the present study. The researchers adjusted these three conceptual underpinnings to generate various statements for the survey questionnaire and the list of topics for the focus group discussion (FGD).

Integrating Dialogical-Critical Pedagogy and Political Education

To study the assessment and attainment of representative votes, you must look at election results to determine who was chosen based on the given votes. The process starts with an accurate and precise count of votes, and then the results are checked by the body that conducts elections (Riwanto et al. 2024; Putra et al. 2024). After the list of elected legislators is announced, each election stage is evaluated for procedural strengths and shortcomings. These reviews address flaws and build ways to improve the electoral process in the coming years (Satriawan et al. 2023; Mohamed 2024). Revealing the strengths and weaknesses of each procedure requires the sharpness of voters' reasoning, which is shaped by the idea of critical, pluralistic, and inclusive political education. The essential role of critical, plural, and

inclusive education is viewed as transformation space in enhancing a sustainable and high-quality system of democracy (Hamad et al. 2022; Rollier 2020).

Critical education means thinking critically, saying what you think, and learning about politics with an open mind. In the process of democratization, this means listening to each other. Plural education aims to get more people involved in society to disseminate power (Arrianie et al. 2024; Fernando et al. 2024). Plural political education signifies the presence of transparency and engagement to counteract the centralization of power. The meaning denotes reciprocal reference. Ultimately, inclusive political education incorporates all essential components within a society defined by impartiality, reflexivity, and proximity. The implication pertains to the politics of recognition (Sugiaryo and Trisiana 2020). All individuals who take part in the democratic process are considered to be “actors” of democracy since they engage in the politics of awareness.

Through Paulo Freire’s initiatives, pedagogical dialogue (Ribeiro et al. 2021) can enhance Indonesia’s democratic system and make it last longer by setting up critical, inclusive, and pluralistic ideas. Based on this strong case, this study looks into how dialogical educational concepts can be used, what the roles of regency legislative members are, and how general election organizers can help make Indonesia’s democratic system better and more resilient.

The cornerstone of the teaching–learning process is based on the concept of dialogue education. This educational strategy emphasizes teachers and students engaging in dialogues or communicating with one another. This concept is derived from the principles offered by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher and educator. In his book titled “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” Freire set up a system that focused on dialogue. Freire believed that education should be a liberating process that allows students and teachers to work together to acquire in-depth knowledge of the universe around them (Pietersen 2022; Ribeiro et al. 2021). Moreover (Tolentino 2022; Muraro 2022), the loss of democracy in Indonesia can be reversed by implementing dialogical education principles and guidelines combined with critical, plural, and inclusive political education, as was outlined earlier.

Dialogic-Critical Education in the Democratic System of Indonesia

Education is a pillar for addressing various restrictions on citizens’ literacy. Dialogic-critical education plays a role in maintaining a healthy and sustainable democratic system in Indonesia, particularly in the election of regional council members and regional heads, since both emphasize active participation, critical awareness, and citizen responsibility in the sociopolitical process. Dialogic-critical education is an educational style that stresses dialogue as a learning process and educates students who can think critically, reflectively, and transformatively regarding the social reality around them (Thorpe et al. 2024; Ribeiro et al. 2021). This approach emphasizes several key principles, as stated by Muraro (2022) and Pietersen (2022): (1) dialogue as the foundation of learning, in which teachers and students

occupy equal positions as active subjects who collaboratively seek meaning and truth through open and respectful communication; (2) the development of critical awareness that encourages learners to recognize inequalities within social, political, and economic structures and to seek transformative solutions; (3) education as not only a process of knowledge transmission but also a means of liberation from injustice and oppression; and (4) contextual and relevant learning that is closely connected to learners' lived experiences and social realities, making education more meaningful, reflective, and transformative in shaping learners' perspectives and ways of thinking.

These four characteristics affirm that the relevance of dialogic-critical education to the democratic system in Indonesia is very strong, where dialogic-critical education serves as the foundation for a healthy and sustainable democracy in a country. This type of education educates politically literate voters. It creates active, critical citizens who care about the quality of their political representation in the election of regional legislative council members and other democratic events.

Dialogic-critical education strengthens voters' critical capacities in several important ways: it enables citizens to resist political manipulation, evaluate political information more objectively, critically assess candidates' track records, and monitor existing systems and structures of power; it encourages greater public participation in voting processes while promoting accountability and transparency in the performance of political representatives; and it fosters resistance to transactional politics by cultivating informed, critical, and socially responsible voters rather than apathetic or purely pragmatic citizens.

These three points align with Jürgen Habermas's Deliberative Democracy theory (Hammond 2025; Swith 2022). Habermas emphasizes that a true democratic system arises from constructive discussions in an inclusive public space. A dialogic-critical learning approach becomes a training ground for democratic deliberation from an early age in educational institutions, such as schools, campuses, and other relevant communities.

The study team developed the following research questions based on what was said.

1. How can critical, inclusive, and plural political education prevent democratic failure in Indonesia?
2. How can dialogical-critical education mitigate the decay of democracy in Indonesia?

Method

A mixed-method approach is used in this study. Data were taken from questionnaires and FGDs from political parties' documents and policies, 9 legislators from Manggarai Barat Regency, 6 election organizers, and 250 voter representatives. The researchers used the multistage cluster random sampling technique to select the respondents. The technique used by researchers aims to represent a diverse population in the research locus. Administrative

areas were first grouped into clusters, and the clusters and respondents were then randomly selected. The respondents included election organizers, legislators, and voters. This technique ensured a broad representation of local democratic experiences while maintaining efficiency and data validity. Several statements about the legislative function in the questionnaire were then explored through interview questions (FGD), referring to Baum's theory (1997), as cited in Turner (2013). Meanwhile, the statements related to constituent satisfaction adopted the theory proposed by Przeworski et al. (1999). Then, statements concerning how well election-organizing institutions work were modified from Diamond's political theory and Jürgen Habermas' Deliberative Democracy theory (Diamond 2015). A FGD was used to interview respondents from each electorate, representing the whole group. The goal was to determine constituents' problems by completing the survey questionnaire. Also, information about how people felt about the work of the regency legislative council, the work of general election organizers, and how voter representatives felt about the work of the regional representatives council is divided into four groups: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The researchers then divided the data collected into three themes: political party policy analysis, democracy implementation based on general election organizers, legislator performance, and voter responses, and the importance of integrating critical, plural, and inclusive education and dialogical pedagogy to prevent Indonesia's democratic system from being unsuccessful.

In this study, qualitative data analysis followed a clear six-stage process. Step 1 involved organizing and preparing data, including collecting materials, saving discussion notes, transcribing interviews, and recording field observations. Step 2 consisted of reviewing all materials to gain a comprehensive understanding of the collected data. In Step 3, data was encoded. Step 4 applied the coding process to clarify context and identify key ideas for analysis. Step 5 consisted of providing further detail on the topics, supported by visuals, images, or tables where appropriate. Step 6 entailed offering interpretations or meanings of the numerical data obtained from the survey questionnaire. Further, the findings of this study are categorized into three distinct themes: first, the outcomes of the analysis of political party policies; second, the outcomes of the process of implementing democracy based on the organizers of general elections, the performance of legislators, and the responses of voters; and third, the significance of integrating dialogical pedagogy with critical, plural, and inclusive education to mitigate the decline of the democratic system in Indonesia.

Results

Critical, Inclusive, and Plural Political Education and Regency Legislative Role

Quality and long-lasting democracy require critical, pluralistic, and inclusive political education. The regional representatives council must also be competent in its public representation functions. Regional and national politicians must be able to think critically,

appreciate democratic diversity, including social history and personality, and integrate critical thinking with democratic plurality (Przeworski et al. 1999). These scholars argue that these three skills embody the implementation of the three fundamental obligations mandated for the regency legislative council: the legislative function, the financial function, and the supervisory role. The three primary functions of the regional representatives council are obscured in a survey questionnaire presented in statements. The various statements in the questionnaire (Tables 2 and 3) combine theories from relevant experts and the results of direct field observations from the three researchers. Table 1 summarizes the regency legislative council's tasks and how those tasks are fulfilled within the democratic process, judged by four criteria: 4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 1: Function of the Regional Representatives Council

No.	Statement	Percentage of Options			
		SA	A	DA	SDA
A	<i>Legislative Function</i>				
1	Ability to construct the law	60	40	0	0
2	Ability to contribute to executive legal discussions	40	60	0	0
3	Participate actively in the process of making decisions together with the government	0	40	20	40
4	Obey the rules and regulations made	80	20	0	0
5	Reject the decisions made that hurt constituents	40	20	40	0
	Mean of percentage	44	36	12	8
B	<i>Budgetary Function</i>				
6	Facilitate budget strategy discussions and prioritization of the regent/mayor's provisional budgetary limitations by the local government's working agenda	80	20	0	0
7	Be able to review the regional financial budget proposal regulations	60	40	0	0
8	Discuss the draft regional regulation for spending and revenue budget adjustments	0	60	20	20
9	Discuss the proposed local spending and revenue budget accountability policy	0	40	60	0
	Mean of percentage	35	40	20	5
C	<i>Supervisory Function</i>				
10	Monitor the implementation of local government laws	40	60	0	0
11	Be able to supervise the local government legislation	0	40	60	0
12	Approve the Audit Board's local fund audit monitoring	0	80	20	0
13	Encourage financial regulatory authority monitoring with civic society and independent media partners	20	40	40	0
	Mean of percentage	15	60	25	0

According to the earlier-stated facts, the Manggarai Barat Regional Representatives Council consistently performs legislative, budgetary, and supervisory tasks. Researchers discovered that 44% of the regional representatives council strongly agree to constantly be actively involved in constructing laws, while 36% approve of their duties. However, 12% of regional legislators claimed political parties and oligarchic groups that support them occasionally impair their legislative duties. Respondents stated, "Party policies could impact their legislative decisions rather than constituent input from their electoral seat."

Researchers found that 35% strongly agree and 40% agree with the regency legislative council's function. Almost 20% disapproved, and 5% strongly disagreed with their supervising role. According to interviews and FGDs, respondents admitted to being excluded from the budgeting process and participating in budgeting sessions. They also argue that they are sometimes excluded from discussions concerning proposed regional laws about regional expenditure revenue budget adjustments. Considering the supervisory role, 15% strongly agreed, and 60% agreed with their function. However, 25% of respondents disliked their roles. They claim that political concessions from parties or interest groups drive financial supervisory institutions' regulation in partnership with civil society and independent media outlets.

Taking into consideration the legislative, budgetary, and supervisory duties that were discussed earlier, it is conceivable to assert that the respondents have, in general, carried out their jobs in an efficient manner by actively participating in every activity that was carried out. *On the other hand, some respondents stated that the responsibilities linked with their roles as members of the regional representatives council are occasionally compromised by political dynamics and the strength of interest parties.* This view was obtained from the results of FGDs with respondents' representatives (members of the regency legislative council) in the research locus from six political parties.

Satisfaction with the Regency Legislative Council's Achievement

The theoretical basis of satisfaction with the job performance of the regional representatives council in this study was adapted from the theory of Przeworski et al. (1999). They say that three primary indicators show how satisfied people are with the job duties of the regency legislative council: how quick they are, how reliable they are, and how accountable they are. These three indicators were put together into twelve statements distributed to respondents. Table 2 shows 250 voters' four-category satisfaction with legislative achievements: 4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 2: The Satisfaction with the Regency Legislative Council's Achievement

No.	Statement	Percentage of the Option			
		SA	A	DA	SDA
A	<i>Responsive</i>				
1	The regional representatives council understands constituent concerns and goals through regular visits and joining in community gatherings.	28	44	28	0
2	The regional representatives council will execute the political agenda.	39.6	20	24.4	16
3	The regional representatives council does more than promise to constituents.	0	26.8	52.8	20.4
	Mean of percentage	23	30	35	12
B	<i>Reliability</i>				
4	The regional representatives council always meets constituency needs.	0	33.6	47.2	19.2
5	The regional representatives council rapidly and successfully solves constituent problems.	16	16	32	36
	Mean of percentage	8	25	39	28
C	<i>Accountability</i>				
6	The regional representatives council is responsible for truthful decisions and policies.	0	39.2	34.8	26
7	The regional representatives council makes its decisions, policies, and duties as public representatives transparent.	8	22.8	26.8	42.4
8	The regional representatives council represents constituents' demands.	48	12.4	13.6	26
9	The regional representatives council empowers constituents with transparency.	0	39.2	34.8	26
10	The regional representatives council assists citizens with legal issues and law enforcement abuse.	0	53.2	21.6	25.2
11	The regional representatives council avoids political acts that help a certain family or group.	0	18.8	48.8	32
12	The regional representatives council does not create programs with entrepreneurial goals in mind.	0	18.8	49.2	32
	Mean of percentage	8	28.57	33.43	30

The research team found that many electors were satisfied with the regency legislative council's functioning based on twelve statements. However, some are unhappy with their duties. The study measured regional representatives council satisfaction and dissatisfaction, considering responsiveness, realism, and accountability. The research team revealed that 23% strongly agreed and 30% agreed with the regional representatives council's role. Then, 35% of respondents disapprove, and 12% strongly disagree with the regency legislative council's

tasks. The study’s team discovered that the regional representatives council did not always visit their constituents, did not commit to campaign promises, and failed to follow through on the promises they made. The reliability variable showed that 23% of respondents strongly agreed with the regency legislative council’s work, and 30% agreed. However, 35% of respondents oppose the regional representatives council’s work, and 12% are severely against it.

The investigators found that 10% of respondents strongly agreed, and 33% agreed with the regency legislative council’s accountability function. About 25% of respondents disagree, and 34% strongly disagree or are displeased with the regency legislative council. Investigators noticed that interviewees believe the regional representatives council sometimes lacks responsibility for its acts, judgments, and policies, especially on public interest matters. As a voice for the people, the regional representatives council is inconsistent. The regional representatives council faces unfair treatment by law enforcement and fails to represent the public in legal matters. The regency legislative council’s political moves often benefit certain families or groups. Voter satisfaction with the regency legislative council’s performance is measured by responsiveness, realism, and accountability.

General Election Commission’s Role

Larry Diamond’s political theory was modified in twelve statements concerning the role of electoral commissions in democracy (Diamond 2015). Table 3 explains how the general election commission prepares, implements, and evaluates the democratic process using highly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree scales that cover five primary functions of the general election commission. These primary functions are modified as twelve statements, as given in Table 3.

Table 3: General Election Commission’s Role

No	Statement	Percentage of the Option			
		SA	A	DA	SDA
A	<i>Independence of the General Election Commission</i>				
1	I perform my duties without prejudice.	80	20	0	0
2	I do not endorse candidates or groups in my profession.	0	60	40	0
	Mean of percentage	40	40	20	0
B	<i>Professional</i>				
3	The laws and regulations govern my election-organizing responsibility.	40	40	20	0
4	I perform my job accurately by employing my knowledge.	0	40	60	0
	Mean of percentage	20	40	40	0

C	<i>Transparency and Accountability</i>				
5	I run transparency campaign operations, for vote counting purposes, and execution.	20	40	40	0
6	I am ready for government and community inspections and supervision of my work.	40	20	40	0
	Mean of percentage	30	30	40	0
D	<i>Educating Voters and Encouraging Active Participation in Elections</i>				
7	I socialized with first-time and experienced electors before voting.	40	40	20	0
8	I educate voters to avoid fake news that could sway election decisions.	0	40	60	0
9	To avoid political cash, I socialized with electors.	0	40	60	0
	Mean of percentage	13.33	40	46.67	0
E	<i>Effective Oversight and Ongoing Reforms to Improve the Electoral Commission's Weaknesses and Adapt to New Challenges</i>				
10	I clearly and fully explain the candidates and political parties, including their platforms, visions, missions, and performance records.	0	40	40	20
11	I am responsible, accountable, and transparent throughout the election.	0	40	20	40
12	I avoid sharing candidate and political party secrets that could help others in the voting process.	0	40	60	0
	Mean of percentage	0	40	40	20

The study found that many respondents were satisfied with the election organizers' performance on the twelve tasks. However, some were unhappy with what they did. Independence, professionalism, openness and accountability, voter education, supervision, and sustainable change were used to evaluate election organizers. The research team revealed that 40% of respondents highly agreed, and 40% agreed with the election organizers' performance concerning autonomy. Then, 20% of respondents disagreed, and 0% severely disagreed with the election organizers' performance. The research team revealed that election organizers occasionally supported parties or candidates. After the interview, respondents claimed they tried to be independent as election organizers. Here is an example of interview results (italic form): *I do not look independent since my political line gives me an option. I attempt to maintain independence so it doesn't appear to support a candidate or party.* The research team found that 20% strongly approved and 40% agreed with the election organizers' performance. About 40% of respondents disagree and 0% strongly disagree with election organizers. The study team found that election organizers sometimes violate rules and fail to validate candidate and voter information.

The study's team discovered that 15% highly agreed and 37% agreed with election organizers' performance on open and accountable characteristics. Then, 47% of respondents

disagreed and 7% severely disagreed with the election organizers' performance. Moreover, election organizers are sometimes dishonest about counting funds and votes. The survey team also found that 13% highly agreed and 40% agreed with the election organizers' education of voters. It is also reported that 47% of respondents disagree and 0% strongly disagree with the election organizers' performance. Election organizers occasionally neglected to educate new and active voters. They also failed to educate voters on how to avoid fake news about candidates and political parties.

Discussion

Party Ideology and General Election Organizers' Task

The Democratic Party's plans include various interconnected aspects to provide cohesion and efficacy in achieving political goals. Every decision and activity of the party is based on its ideology, which embodies its political goals (Minan et al. 2024; Yustisia et al. 2023). The party board handles policy planning and internal management with several structural positions. Members or followers actively participate in party activities, perform party duties, and spread party philosophy. Sympathizers promote the party without participating in its organization. Member regeneration systematically trains and develops members' skills and understanding to prepare them for party roles. The member practice of morality tells citizens how to act and what to do to protect the party's honor and representation. It sets rules for behavior that everyone must adhere to in line with the party's goals and values. This strategy aims to keep things running smoothly, gain greater support, and reach its political goal within democratic politics (Hidjaz et al. 2020; Tyson and Nawawi 2022).

Moreover, examining election organizers like election commissions and election supervisory organizations' abilities requires reviewing the main qualities that help them manage the electoral process. Regulation planning comprises creating the election process's constitutional basis and organizing every component (Syaputra et al. 2024; Samihardjo et al. 2021). Regulation preparation involves creating precise and appropriate legal documents based on a plan. Clear and effective regulation communication helps stakeholders understand and comply with regulations (Samihardjo et al. 2021; Satriawan et al. 2023).

The General Election Process

The general election process has to be organized to ensure equitable, open, and freely held elections. A precise and legal voter registry is followed by candidate or political party interaction and efforts to educate the electorate about their agendas. Voters use the form or voting device provided at the polling station on election day. Voters use the form or voting device provided at the voting location on election day (Satriawan et al. 2023; Vílchez and Achmad 2023). Close supervision ensures the vote is honest and private during the voting process. After voting, the

next step is to carefully count the votes, which must be done under close watch to avoid falsification. After the count is completed, the results are officially announced and shared with the public. This method is supported by checking and evaluating systems that deal with any disagreements or problems that might arise, and ensuring that rules are followed. Following these steps, the general election process tries to accurately reflect the people’s will and keep their faith in the democratic system (Karman et al. 2022; Syarif et al. 2024).

Interrelatedness of the Critical, Inclusive, and Plural Political Education

To investigate the evaluation and accomplishment of representative votes, it is necessary to examine the election results to determine who was selected based on the votes given. The procedure begins with evaluating accurate and unambiguous votes, and then the results are scrutinized by the organization responsible for conducting elections (Riwanto et al. 2024; Putra et al. 2024). When the final list of elected legislators is made public, each stage of the election process is analyzed to determine the advantages and disadvantages of the entire process. During these evaluations, problems are addressed, and strategies for enhancing the election process in the years afterward are developed (Satriawan et al. 2023; Mohamed 2024).

Furthermore, according to the study team’s results and discussions, unbiased, pluralistic, and inclusive political education helps strengthen democratic systems that are of high quality and can be maintained throughout the years. Democratic actors are essential to the provision of education that is critical, plural, and inclusive. According to this research, the citizens, the regency legislative council, election organizers, and political parties are the most important factors in ensuring a democracy that is both effective and sustainable. The results of this study provided conclusive evidence that the research group understood the need for pluralistic, inclusive, and critical-minded education to foster a robust democracy (Hamad et al. 2022; Rollier 2020).

A democratic society that is of high quality and will continue for an extended period relies on critical, pluralistic, and inclusive education, as demonstrated in Table 4, which presents the functions, meanings, and implications of critical, plural, and inclusive political education to enhance the quality of democracy and ensure its continued functioning.

Table 4: Interdependence of Critical Education, Plurality, and Inclusivity

<i>Political Education</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Implication</i>
Critical	Enhancing democratic agents’ knowledge and skills.	Ability to think critically, voice points of view, and evaluate political events carefully.	Mutual communication.

Plurality	Increase public participation in the distribution of authority.	Concentrating on power can be addressed by transparency.	Mutual sympathy.
Inclusivity	Be sure to incorporate every social organization.	Impartiality. Reflectivity. Proximity.	Politics of Recognition.

A quality and long-lasting democratic society depends on critical, plural, and inclusive education, as shown in Table 4. Critical education improves democratic citizens' competencies (Tyson and Nawawi 2022; Sugiaryo and Trisiana 2020). The capabilities of democratic citizens can be improved by critical education, as expressed by Tyson and Nawawi (2022) and Sugiaryo and Trisiana (2020). The ability to think critically, to express one's views, and to acquire knowledge about politics while maintaining an open mind are all components of critical education. Listening to one another is an essential part of the democratic process from this point forward. Plural education aims to increase the number of people participating in society to facilitate power distribution (Arriane et al. 2024; Fernando et al. 2024). One way to address the accumulation of power is by implementing plural political education, which denotes the presence of open communication and dialogue. The meaning indicates that there is a referential exchange. In the end, inclusive political education contributes to incorporating all-important components within a society characterized by proximity, reflexivity, and impartiality. There is a connection between the implication and the politics of acknowledgment (Sugiaryo and Trisiana 2020).

Dialogical-Critical Pedagogy for Democratic Reform in Indonesia

Dialogue education emphasizes teacher–student dialogue as the foundation of instruction. A Brazilian philosopher and educator, Paulo Freire, proposed a dialogical approach in “Pedagogy of the Oppressed.” Freire believed education should liberate students and educators to collectively understand everything that exists (Ribeiro et al. 2021; Pietersen 2022). Further, the principles of dialogical pedagogy (Tolentino 2022; Muraro 2022) include:

1. Equality between instructors and students, meaning both groups have equal participation in the learning process;
2. Partnership in learning, where teachers and students work collaboratively, exchanging ideas and experiences openly;
3. Empowerment and critical awareness, meaning dialogical education encourages students to develop critical thinking and social analysis;
4. Meaningful and contextual learning, emphasizing that learning should relate to students' personal experiences to remain relevant; and

5. Openness and reflection, which highlights the need for respect, open-mindedness, active listening, and thoughtful reflection in education.

The researchers describe the characteristics and benefits of dialogical education in the context of strengthening critical politics and democracy in Indonesia, including (1) Building critical awareness, where teachers can strengthen students' democratic literacy through a variety of learning topics, such as studying social, economic, and political inequalities from observation/interviews. Open dialogue in the classroom allows students to analyze political realities in Indonesia, such as corruption, inequality, and political polarization, so they are not easily manipulated by false information or propaganda; (2) Democratic principles require educators to create an environment that allows students to discuss, express their opinions, and participate in decision-making. Students learn the importance of constructively expressing their opinions, listening to and appreciating others' diverse perspectives to reach consensus, and actively participating in community issues like deliberations, elections, and social actions that meet society's needs; (3) Teachers help pupils understand and apply democratic concepts like equality, ensuring that everyone has the right to be heard, elected, and voted regardless of gender or background. Students are also encouraged to speak up without fear while respecting others' beliefs and showing tolerance, which helps them appreciate diversity and culture; and (4) Students are taught to verify information from multiple sources before sharing it on digital media. They are encouraged to examine public political narratives and discuss how information affects political and democratic challenges. These four points can help students become more informed voters and resist information manipulation.

Novelty

Dialogic-critical education serves as an alternative to prevent the declining state of the democratic system in Indonesia by understanding the educational process and pedagogical methodologies. Education is seen as an effective instrument for fighting unusual democratic practices. This study's findings propose that the dialogic-critical education paradigm serves as an intervention against political oligarchy, false populism, and voter apathy. In addition, the findings of this study can alter the prevailing perception that education serves solely as a means for knowledge attainment; it also functions as a platform for cultivating empowered, reflective citizens who are willing to advocate for sociopolitical change. The logical implications of this innovation are (1) the empowerment of students or voters as primary agents in a deliberative democratic framework that prioritizes active engagement, transparent discussion, and shared accountability and (2) the opposition to clientelistic politics, with heightened awareness, citizens can deconstruct the veneer of democracy, including monetary power, elite cooptation, and media manipulation, and substitute it with substantive participation from all sociopolitical stakeholders.

Limitations

The team acknowledged that this study process has limitations. First, the investigation topic: the study participants are limited to regional council members and do not represent the constituency or regional legislative members fairly. Second, research timeline: only three months were spent investigating. This idea ignores realists' view of politics as situational and influenced by community politics. Third, only pedagogical recommendations are restricted to strengthening a sustainable, high-quality democratic system. Fourth, only questionnaires and interviews in FGDs appraise research instruments. Future research might address this study's limitations by expanding the sample to include legislative members, election organizers, and constituents or voters; extending the research period, such as through a longitudinal design, to observe political dynamics in greater depth; triangulating data collection techniques; and developing research recommendations that broaden beyond pedagogy to the institutional level. This more comprehensive approach has the potential to lead to a greater awareness of the essence of democracy, representation practices, and competence at the regional legislative level in future research.

Conclusion

The results indicate that critical, plural, and inclusive political education serves as a means to address democratic failure in Indonesia. The interdependence of critical, plural, and inclusive education is closely linked to its function, meaning, and implications for participants' performance in democratic processes, including regency legislative councils, election organizers, political parties, and voters. Moreover, the incorporation of critical, plural, and inclusive political education, as well as the reemphasis of the necessity for participants in democratic processes to elevate their political awareness in these dimensions, indicates that dialogical education can mitigate the deterioration of democracy in Indonesia. Critical political education aims to foster a critical awareness of individuals' roles as essential components of the democratic process. This idea is accomplished by facilitating a profound and reflective understanding of social, political, and economic issues by political parties, election organizers, and legislative council members as part of the educational process.

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Generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were not used in any way to prepare, write, or complete essential authoring tasks in this manuscript. The authors confirm that they are the sole authors of this article and takes full responsibility for the content therein, as outlined in COPE recommendations.

Informed Consent

Since this research involves humans, the researchers have undergone ethical requirements. The researchers sent a letter to the village chief responsible for each research location, soliciting the respondents' consent to participate in this study. The data was encrypted to safeguard the respondents' identities and guarantee the anonymity of the information provided, and all respondents consented to participate voluntarily. Respondents were also informed that they can stop participating or withdraw from this study at any time if it disrupts their daily routines. Moreover, this study has also been approved by the Research and Community Board from Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi Widya Sasana Malang, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, and Universitas Katolik Atma Jaya Jakarta.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers confirm no conflict of interest in publishing this study's findings in the *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Civic and Political Studies*.

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