

## Comparison of Educational Thoughts of KH Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey on Humanist Education

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### ABSTRACT

The essence of education is the process of humanizing humans through the formation of free and creative humans. However, data from various sources show that there is an increase in cases of violence among students and a lack of respect for human values. Therefore, a humanist educational approach is needed that is able to develop individual potential optimally and build social awareness to achieve a harmonious life. This study uses a library research method by reviewing various reference sources such as books, journals, articles, and previous research. The main literature used includes books by KH Abdurrahman Wahid on education and religious humanism as well as John Dewey's writings on pragmatism and experience-based education. Data are analyzed descriptively to identify similarities and differences in the thoughts of the two figures. The concept of humanist education developed by KH Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey provides an important contribution to understanding education as a means of humanizing humans. Gus Dur integrates religious values into education, while Dewey emphasizes experience-based education to form democratic and productive individuals. The combination of the thoughts of these two figures can be the basis for developing a more holistic and inclusive education system. In the Indonesian context, integrating this approach can help create an education system that is not only academically relevant, but also capable of building a tolerant, just, and prosperous national character.

**Keywords:** *Education; Humanism; Pragmatism*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education has a very strategic role in the life of a nation, especially in ensuring the sustainability and development of society. Education is ideally a process of humanization or an effort to humanize humans, as stated by HAR Tilaar that the essence of education is the process of humanizing humans through the formation of free and creative humans (Mukhlis., 2008).

However, reality shows that the education system often fails to achieve its main objectives. Data from various sources show that there is an increase in cases of violence

among students, drug use, and a lack of respect for human values. This is evidence that moral and social values have not been fully embedded in the education process. Therefore, a humanist educational approach is needed that is able to develop individual potential optimally and build social awareness to achieve a harmonious life. It should be understood that education is not just transferring knowledge to students, but more than that transferring values. In addition, education is a cultural work that requires students to always develop their potential and creativity in order to survive in their lives.

This article discusses the comparison between the concepts of humanist education developed by KH Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey, two figures who have progressive views on education as a means to build human character. With this approach, it is hoped that solutions can be found to improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a library research method by reviewing various reference sources such as books, journals, articles, and previous research. Examples of the main literature used include books by KH Abdurrahman Wahid on education and religious humanism and John Dewey's writings on pragmatism and experience-based education. The data were analyzed descriptively to identify similarities and differences in the thoughts of the two figures.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation that researchers have carried out. The result contains:

### **The Concept of Humanist Education**

Humanist education is an integrated effort to humanize young people so that they are able to form character and realize students who have virtues. So humanist education is education that aims to direct the potentials that every human being has so that they are more humane (Bambang, 2008).

According to Baharudin and Moh. Makin, humanist education is education that views humans as God's creations that have certain innate qualities. Because as individual beings they have constructive and destructive powers, as social beings they have obligations that must be carried out as well as rights that they must obtain. Or in other words, humanist education is education that views humans as humans, namely living beings created by God with certain innate qualities to be developed maximally and optimally.

According to Muhammad Azzet, humanism education is education that provides freedom to students in the educational process so that they can become more enlightened human beings. Because according to him, education that emphasizes the process of building awareness is more important than education that is more oriented towards memorizing theories of knowledge. . (Baharudin,etc, 2007).

Humanist education is a unique, independent, and creative humanization system. The behavior of each person is determined by that person and understanding humans towards the environment and themselves, viewing humans as humans, namely God's creatures with certain natural traits, and building human character in humans that respects the dignity and worth of humans as the most perfect creatures. Thus, humanist education is actually a holistic education. Because, in the educational process there is no part of human consciousness that is the best and no aspect of human life that is not handled. (Haryanto, 2016).

### **The Humanist Education Concept of KH Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey**

Gus Dur's thoughts on humanist education are rooted in inclusive Islamic values and religious humanism. This humanism places humans as creatures glorified by God, with equal rights and dignity regardless of religious, ethnic, or racial background.

In his book, KH Abdurrahman Wahid wrote;

*"At first, a person is just a believer, then he practices Islam when he has realized the importance of sharia. Only then does he enter a higher level (ihsan) by studying Sufism, reality, and ma'rifat. At this level, he begins to realize that belief in monotheism and obedience to sharia must be manifested in love for fellow human beings."* (Abdurrahman, 2001).

The concept of humanist education by KH Abdurrahman Wahid is an approach based on inclusive Islamic values, aimed at humanizing humans through the development of individual potential to the maximum, respect for diversity, and the formation of independent and tolerant characters. This education not only transfers knowledge but also builds awareness of human values as a manifestation of God's love.

Education according to Gus Dur must be based on multiculturalism, respecting diversity as an integral part of the learning process. He believes that education must guide students to become whole, independent, and free from oppression. In this context, education does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also on character development and human values.

*"Islamic education must certainly be able to straighten out the response to the challenges of modernization and understanding of Islam and formalist Islamic education towards Islamic education based on the indigenization of Islamic education, this awareness is still missing in Islamic education. There needs to be structural awareness as a natural part of the development of Islamic education. In other words, we must pay attention to the development of Islamic education in various places and make a clear map of the configuration of Islamic education itself, this is homework that inevitably must be handled well."*

Key elements in the concept of humanist education according to KH Abdurrahman Wahid include several important aspects that integrate human values with Islamic principles. The following are these elements:

a. Religious Humanist

KH Abdurrahman Wahid developed religious humanism that prioritized social concern and human values. He believed that every individual has basic rights that must be respected, and education must create awareness of these rights as part of a social and religious mission.

b. Humanity

Humanist education according to Gus Dur emphasizes love as the core of Islamic teachings. He believes that true faith must be manifested in the form of compassion for fellow human beings.

c. Justice and Equality

The concept of humanist education by KH Abdurrahman Wahid emphasizes the principles of justice and equality. Education must uphold the rights of every individual without discrimination, so that everyone has an equal opportunity to develop. This reflects KH Abdurrahman Wahid's view of religious and social pluralism where equality is the main focus.

The application of this concept can be seen in Gus Dur's efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and create harmony in a pluralistic society. Meanwhile, in the view of humanist education, Jhon Dewey, he views education as a continuous development process. He views that education means development, development from birth to death. So, education also means life. For Dewey, "Education is growth, development, life". John Dewey views education as a reorganization and reconstruction of experience to form individuals who are able to adapt to real life. Dewey's educational philosophy is based on pragmatism which assesses knowledge based on its usefulness in everyday life (Said,etc, 1987).

According to John Dewey, the educational process has psychological and sociological dimensions. The psychological dimension demands that education can understand the potential of each student to be developed and know where to channel it. The sociological dimension demands that education can know where to guide the potential of students.

Key elements in John Dewey's concept of humanist education include:

a. Experience as the center of learning

In John Dewey's view, education is growth itself. Therefore, education begins at birth and ends at death. Likewise, the learning process cannot be separated from the education process. Education is an experience, which is a process that continues continuously.

Experience is both active and passive. Active experience means trying, attempting, and changing, while passive experience means accepting and just following. If we experience something then we do something, while if we follow something we get the consequences or results.

Learning from experience means connecting setbacks with progress in our actions, that is, we experience pleasure or pain as a result or outcome.

"To learn from experience is to make a backward and forward connection between what we have done to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence."

b. Connection between school and life

According to John Dewey, a good school is a school that pays serious attention to the type of learning and can help the development of students. Pragmatism education adopts an education system based on centered activities. This means that student activities are very important because they make education more alive, especially making life give truth.

c. Learn by doing

In his book *Democracy and Education*, Dewey offers a concept of adaptive and progressive education for future development. Namely, education must be able to equip students according to the needs of their social environment.

To realize his concept, he offers two approaches in teaching, namely: First, Problem Solving Method. Problem solving method, students are faced with various challenging situations and problems, and students are given complete freedom to solve the problem according to the development of their abilities.

### **The Goals of Humanist Education by KH Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey**

The main goal of humanist education according to KH Abdurrahman Wahid is to produce people who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have high social sensitivity, tolerance, and a sense of humanity. Education should be able to equip individuals with the ability to live peacefully with others, respect differences, and contribute positively to society. In the context of plural Indonesia, humanist education is very relevant to building a harmonious and united society.

While the main goal of John Dewey's humanist education is to prepare individuals to become democratic and productive citizens. Education must be able to equip individuals with critical thinking skills, problem solving, and collaboration. In addition, education must also encourage individuals to become active and responsible members of society.

The purpose of education is directed to achieve a democratic life. Democratic not in the political sense, but as a way of life together as a way of life, shared experience and shared communication.

He firmly stated "And it is well to remind ourselves that education as such has no aims. Only persons, parents, and teachers etc, not an abstract idea like education" .

### **Teacher-Student Relationship**

In the concept of humanist education of KH Abdurrahman Wahid, teachers act as facilitators and learning partners. Teachers must create an inclusive and dialogical environment, and respect the diversity of students. Students are seen as the main actors

in the active learning process. This relationship reflects the principle that education is a means to build human character that respects the rights and dignity of others.

Meanwhile, John Dewey also sees teachers as facilitators who encourage students to learn through direct experience. The relationship between teachers and students is democratic, with students at the center of the learning process. Teachers play a role in creating an environment that supports the exploration and development of individual potential.

**Comparative Thoughts**

Both figures emphasize the importance of human values, but with different approaches. KH Abdurrahman Wahid focuses on the religious and social dimensions, while John Dewey emphasizes the pragmatic and epistemological aspects. These differences reflect the cultural context and background of each figure. The similarity is, both KH Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey put humans as the center of education. Both emphasize the importance of developing human potential as a whole, both intellectually, socially, and emotionally. While the most obvious difference lies in the source of values believed by both figures. KH Abdurrahman Wahid is rooted in Islamic values, while John Dewey is more oriented towards the values of pragmatism and experience.

Another difference lies in the learning method. Although both emphasize the importance of experience, the learning methods they propose have different nuances. KH Abdurrahman Wahid emphasizes moral and spiritual values more, while John Dewey focuses more on scientific methods and problem-solving.

**Table 1. Comparative Learning Methods of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey**

Aspect	KH Abdurrahman Wahid	John Dewey
Source of Value	Islam – Religious	Pragmatism
Educational Objectives	To form people who are faithful, pious, have noble morals, and contribute to society.	Preparing individuals to become democratic and productive citizens
Learning methods	Dialogue, religious studies, worship practices, community service	Problem-solving, projects, hands-on experience
The Role of Teachers	Spiritual and moral guide	Facilitator and guide

## CONCLUSION

The concept of humanist education developed by KH Abdurrahman Wahid and John Dewey provides an important contribution in understanding education as a means of humanizing humans. Gus Dur integrated religious values into education, while Dewey emphasized experience-based education to form democratic and productive individuals. The combination of the thoughts of these two figures can be the basis for developing a more holistic and inclusive education system. In the Indonesian context, integrating these approaches can help create an education system that is not only academically relevant, but also capable of building a tolerant, just, and prosperous national character.

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