

## Humanistic Education in Abdurrahman Wahid's Perspective

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Abstract

*Human values are one of the main components of concern in the education field. One of the Muslim scholars who had very high concern for issues related to humanity was Abdurrahman Wahid or who was familiarly called Gus Dur. For Gus Dur, appreciation of human values is at the core of the teachings of Islam. The emphasis on understanding humanity provides a basis for the humanistic attitude that Gus Dur wanted to build. Humanistic education in the concept of Gus Dur is a discussion of human values voiced by Gus Dur which includes universal humanity, human rights and justice. Therefore, this paper intends to discuss humanistic education in Gus Dur's perspective.*

*Keywords: humanistic education, human right, justice, Abdurrahman Wahid*

Abstrak

Nilai-nilai kemanusiaan adalah salah satu komponen utama yang menjadi perhatian di bidang pendidikan. Salah satu cendekiawan Muslim yang memiliki kepedulian yang sangat tinggi terhadap masalah yang berkaitan dengan kemanusiaan adalah Abdurrahman Wahid atau yang akrab disapa Gus Dur. Bagi Gus Dur, penghargaan terhadap nilai-nilai kemanusiaan adalah inti dari ajaran Islam. Penekanan pada memahami kemanusiaan memberikan dasar bagi sikap humanistik yang ingin dibangun oleh Gus Dur. Pendidikan humanistik dalam konsep Gus Dur adalah diskusi tentang nilai-nilai kemanusiaan yang disuarakan oleh Gus Dur yang mencakup kemanusiaan universal, hak asasi manusia dan keadilan. Oleh karena itu, makalah ini bermaksud membahas pendidikan humanistik dalam perspektif Gus Dur.

Kata Kunci: pendidikan humanistik, hak asasi manusia, keadilan, Abdurrahman Wahid

### **A. Introduction**

One of the Muslim scholars who had very high concern for issues related to humanity was Abdurrahman Wahid or who was familiarly called Gus Dur. In the overall constellation of Gus Dur's thinking, this view of value has become the starting point in tracing the flow or paradigm of his thinking. For him, appreciation

of human values is at the core of religious teachings. Without these values, the world is only filled with various forms of violence and social conflict.

This understanding provides a basis for the attitude of humanism that Gus Dur wanted to build. Humanism in this context is a fairly high appreciation for human values inherent in humans. The appreciation has implications for giving "loose" space for freedom of action and thinking for everyone in accordance with the quality of their human values.<sup>1</sup>

Abdurrahman's struggle for universal humanitarian principles, sometimes tends to be controversial which is outside the mainstream of religious interpretations. However, the commitment to fight for human values has become the basic spirit of his actions and political movements. That is why, he was later known to be steadfast and persistent, although many people considered him "stubborn" and tended to be authoritarian when he tried to maintain the determination of his personality. Commitment to uphold humanitarian values seems to be an inexorable commitment. For him, upholding human values is an inseparable part of religious teachings.<sup>2</sup>

The desire to fight for humanism as part of the struggle for his life is indeed very prominent. The humanism he wants to fight for must be of human value which no longer looks at primordial elements. Humanism which is still limited by primordialist barriers will only pose a threat to the objectivity of struggle over these values.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the humanism discourse voiced by Gus Dur is universalistic so that it must touch all humanity regardless of their cultural, educational, social, political, ethnic, language, belief and religious background. Therefore, this paper will discuss humanistic education in Gus Dur's view. In this paper, several elements of Gus Dur's humanistic education are discussed which cover universal humanitarian principles, human rights and justice.

## **B. The Meaning of Humanistic Education**

The term education, in English is expressed as education, rooted in Latin, *educare*, which can be interpreted as "continuous guidance (to lead forth)". If expanded, the etymological meaning reflects the existence of education that goes on from generation to generation throughout the existence of human life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Listiyono Santoso, *Teologi Politik Gus Dur* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz, 2004), p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Listiyono Santoso, *Teologi Politik Gus Dur*, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Listiyono Santoso, *Teologi Politik Gus Dur*, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> Suparlan Suhartono, *Filsafat Pendidikan*, (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2009), p. 77.

This meaning is in line with the understanding of education revealed by Napoleon Hill in a different Latin, namely *educio*. The term *educio* means to develop from within; to draw out, to go through the law of use. Which freely means improving the quality of ourselves from within, then developing it, and being able to apply all the knowledge that has been achieved beneficially.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the term education in the terminology of our religion is called *tarbiyah*, which contains the basic meaning as growth, increase, or make things higher. Because the basic meaning of growth or improvement, then this contains the assumption that in every human being there are seeds of goodness. It is the duty of parents and educators to develop the positive seeds of their students as well as possible. Thus, education (*tarbiyah*) is a process of enhancing the positive potentials that reside in the souls of every child to achieve the highest quality, and the educational process never ends as long as the body still contains.<sup>6</sup>

Whereas the term humanistic comes from the word humanism in English which has several meanings namely humanity; system of understanding related to humans.<sup>7</sup> Historically, humanism was a special Renaissance movement combined with a re-study of Greek and Roman literature: a rediscovery of human and natural unity, and a re-celebration of the pleasures of life, all of which were considered lost in the medieval world.<sup>8</sup>

The main principle of humanism is respect for human dignity, intellectual desires and respect for the ability of human ratio.<sup>9</sup> In other words, humanism is a teaching that wants to make humans especially with their intellectual strength, as a central point of attention.

From the meaning of education and humanism above, we can formulate the notion of humanistic education as a process of developing positive potential in human beings to the fullest and concern for human dignity and abilities. Humanism education prioritizes its orientation towards the development and progress, welfare, and happiness of humans. In the perspective of humanistic education, human

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<sup>5</sup> Napoleon Hill, *Membangun Otak Sukses*, terj. Teguh Wahyu Utomo (Yogyakarta: Baca, 2007), p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> Look inside Nurcholish Madjid, *Masyarakat Religius* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2000), p. 83-84; And see also in another of his works, *Dialog Keterbukaan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998), p. 250.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Salim, *The Contemporary English-Indonesia Dictionary* (Jakarta: Media Eka Pustaka, 2005), p. 1066.

<sup>8</sup> Simon Blackburn, *Kamus Filsafat*, terj. Yudi Santoso (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2013), p. 413.

<sup>9</sup> F. Budi Hardiman, *Filsafat Modern* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004), p. 8-10.

beings have the capacity to lift their dignity while at the same time creating the progress and welfare of the life they desire.

Related to humanistic education in Gus Dur's thinking, of course it is not rigorous as the meaning on that level. Humanistic education in Gus Dur's concept here is a discussion of the principles or human values voiced by Gus Dur. Humanistic education in the context of Gus Dur's thought, wanted to discuss the high concern for the human values of a person like Gus Dur. In the discourses that he rolled out, Gus Dur always directed his final orientation to and for the benefit of humans, especially the weak and oppressed people in a structural manner. This is what becomes our stressing point when discussing Gus Dur's humanistic education.

### **C. Principles of Humanistic Education**

#### **1. Principles of Universal Humanity and Human Rights**

One of the core humanistic thoughts voiced by Gus Dur is the principle of universal humanity. With this principle, Gus Dur wants universal humanity to be the mouth of his struggle in realizing justice and prosperity, equality and peace of man, whoever they are. This concern is also universal, namely to humanity regardless of their social and political background, economy and culture, education and social status, even their beliefs and religion. Our main concern when performing virtues, in the perspective of Gus Dur's humanism, must be based on the human figure and not the cultural, economic, educational, social, political or religious attributes. The main factor when doing virtue to humans is because humans themselves are indeed very deserving to be glorified, respected, and appreciated.

In this context, there is something very interesting. The principle of universal humanity as one of the universal teachings of Islam, in the view of Gus Dur actually exists in the treasures of Islamic thought, namely maqashid sharia. In maqashid sharia, there is a concept of al-kulliyatul khams (five universal principles) which includes:

- (1) The physical safety of the citizens of the community from physical acts is outside the law (hifdzu an-nafs);
- (2) Safety of their respective religious beliefs, without any compulsion to convert to religion (hifdzu ad-din);
- (3) Family and family safety (hifdzu an-nasl);
- (4) Safety of property and personal property from disturbance or eviction outside legal procedures (hifdzu al-mal); and

(5) Safety of property rights and professions (hifzu al-aqli).<sup>10</sup>

In Gus Dur's reading, the five universal principles in *the maqashid syariah* discourse all lead to universal human interests. Let's look at his argument.

The guarantee of physical safety of community members requires the existence of a government based on law, with fair treatment to all citizens without exception, in accordance with their respective rights. Only with legal certainty can a community be able to develop an insight of equal rights and degrees among its citizens. While the two types of equations that guarantee the realization of social justice in the maximum sense. Whereas we know, that the world view or *weltanschauung* is the most obvious universality is the view of social justice.

Likewise, the basic guarantee of the safety of each person's religious beliefs underlies the relationship between citizens of the community on the basis of mutual respect, which will foster a growing framework of tolerance and mutual understanding. Regardless of how thick the history of history is with oppression, narrowness of views, and injustice towards minority groups who have different beliefs or religions from majority beliefs, the history of humanity proves that tolerance is actually an inherent part of human life.<sup>11</sup>

While the basic guarantee of family safety displays a very strong figure, both moral in the sense of a whole ethical framework and in the sense of morality. Family sanctity is protected as strong as possible. Because the family is the most basic social bond, it should not be used as an arena for any form of manipulation by the existing power system. It is this family sanctity that underlies the faith that radiates tolerance in a very high degree.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, the basic guarantee of property safety (*al-milk*) is a means for the development of individual rights in a fair and proportional manner, in relation to community rights to individuals. Communities can determine their desired obligations collectively for each individual citizen. But the stipulation of obligations is the limit, and individual citizens cannot be subject to obligations for society more than those limits. The most practical limit, and the most obvious when viewed from the development of socialism and especially Marxism-Leninism today, is the ownership of property by individuals.

With that right, the citizens of the community individually have the opportunity and means to develop themselves through patterns or methods of their own choosing, but remain in the general flow of people's lives. The history of

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<sup>10</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2007), p. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 6.

mankind shows that the basic right to ownership of these assets is what determines the creativity of the citizens. This can mean that the willingness to make a transformation is what the community shows the universal face of their lives.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the basic guarantee of professional safety displays another figure of the universality of Islamic teachings. Appreciation to the freedom of adherents of the profession means the freedom to make choices at their own risk, about the successes to be achieved and the failure to imagine them. In other words, freedom to embrace the chosen profession means the opportunity to determine the direction of life complete with one's own responsibility. However, that choice remains within the framework of the general flow of people's lives, because the choice of profession means putting themselves in the general flow of community activity, which is full of its own measurements.<sup>14</sup>

According to Gus Dur, as a whole, the five basic guarantees above show the universality of a whole and round view of life. Government based on law, equality and tolerance towards different views are the main elements of humanity and, thus, display the universality of Islamic teachings.<sup>15</sup>

If we go back to Imam Syathibi, as Founder of Maqashid al-Syariah, these five universal principles are indeed referred to as *'Ittifaq al-Milal*, namely the manifestation of the consensus of religions, not just Islam. This means that the five values of the universal principle can be developed for the message of mankind outside of Islam as well. For this reason, these five principles are universal.<sup>16</sup>

But it doesn't just stop there. For Gus Dur, this universal humanitarian principle also relates to human rights in contemporary discourse. Islam remains relevant in providing a normative foundation and cultural foundation for universal human rights discourse. In another article, Gus Dur reduced several points as the cultural background of Islamic teachings concerning his concern for universal human rights.

- (1) The creation and placement of human beings as beings who have a degree of glory in the natural order (cosmology) of the universe, pointing clearly to the necessity of treating humans with the treatment that is in accordance with the glory of that degree. Before he was born (while still in the womb) and after leaving this mortal world, humans have or still have rights that are clearly formulated and protected by law in the view of Islam. Because of his rights and because of his ability to use those rights well, God has established man as his

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<sup>13</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 7-8.

<sup>14</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*

<sup>16</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, dkk, *Islam Nusantara* (Bandung: Mizan, 2015), p. 21.

substitute / representative (caliph, vicegerent) on this earth, as explicitly stated by the Qur'an.

- (2) The principle emphasis on regulating people's lives in a universal legal system (shari'a) points clearly to the appreciation of Islam in general for human rights. Law can only be implemented properly and fairly if the rights of individuals and unions are clearly formulated in the legal system that is used as a regulator of community life. The rules of Islamic law concerning all sectors of people's lives, from basic rights to obtain legal and state protection to regulating relations between countries (international law *al-qanun al-duali*), in their long history have developed complete methods to do formulation like that.
- (3) The view of treating all life as worship work which underlies the life of a Muslim will always make him hold on to a clear understanding of rights and obligations in managing their lives.<sup>17</sup>

Even according to Gus Dur, the tendency of humans to use their noble position incorrectly in the life of this universe, so that he could at any time become the lowest and despicable creature (*asfalu al-safilin*) not in the least reduce the glory of the degree he had originally; so that it is understandable why in Islamic theology the concept of original sin is not known. Humans are basically the noblest creatures, whatever happens later in his life after he was born. How limited even though individual rights and unions are formulated in the Islamic legal system, this reality cannot deny the reality of certain rights for him, which demand to be preserved and developed for his welfare and happiness.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, by quoting Ishaque's view, Gus Dur explained there were 14 pieces of human rights in Islamic law, all of which were based on the words of God in the Qur'an. The fourteen human rights as a whole support the purpose of fostering and forming moral beings who have perfection (a morally perfect being). These rights can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The right to life protection;
- (2) Right to obtain justice;
- (3) The right to obtain equality of treatment;
- (4) Obligation to follow what is right and the right to reject what is not legally correct;
- (5) The right to plunge into the lives of people and the state;
- (6) Right to obtain independence;

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<sup>17</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 367.

<sup>18</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 368.

- (7) The right to obtain freedom from pursuit and prosecution (conviction);
- (8) Right to express opinions;
- (9) Right to protection against prosecution on the basis of religious differences;
- (10) The right to individual peace (privacy);
- (11) Economic rights, including the right to get a job, the right to get a reward for wages when unable to work, and the right to get a proper wage for the work done;
- (12) The right to obtain protection for honor and good name;
- (13) Rights to property;
- (14) The right to obtain appropriate benefits and commensurate compensation.

This latter right is primarily aimed at the tendency of government institutions to take policy without considering the disadvantages addresses citizens.<sup>19</sup>

In Listiyono Santoso's perspective, human values have always been a reference in all of Gus Dur's actions and thoughts. He is a person who believes that any religion always puts this value as a condition to build a conducive dialogical relationship in an atmosphere of plurality. When Gus Dur tried to unravel the tension about the interesting problem between humanity's religion and culture, he proposed a solution to prioritize aspects of humanity rather than debating the reasons for religious interpretations that were still debatable. Not because religious basics are not important, but rather to put what is a religious issue and become part of worldly problems. As Gus Dur said:

The tricky problem now is: how to break the tension that always and often occurs between religions (as a network of rules) with culture (as a process of change). In my opinion, the most important thing in Islam now is how we make measurements about what should be done .... In my mind again, the formulation of its size is very simple, namely: things that glorify (elevate dignity or position) of humanity must take precedence. The manifestation is maintaining human rights and developing a just society structure in which the Muslims live. The size group above acts as a quasi norm (not the norm, but its role is the same as the norm). If the development of the era or culture does not match that size, it must be stopped. Also vice versa, if it happens to be the teachings of religion that actually do it, then the size must also put a brake on it.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 368-369.

<sup>20</sup> Listiyono Santoso, *Teologi Politik*, p. 102-103. See too Abdurrahman Wahid, *Pergulatan Negara, Agama, dan Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: Desantra, 2001), p. 80-81.

Even because of his deep love for humanity, Gus Dur was very famous in defending various forms of oppression and violence, in any name, especially in the name of religion. This measure (value) for Gus Dur is a form of recognition of human dignity that must be upheld, whenever, wherever, even by anyone. Human values become a common platform for meeting all forms of differences that lie behind them, both ethnicity, language, race and religion.<sup>21</sup>

Retrospectively, the universal mission of Islamic humanism was actually scheduled by Gus Dur. In the book *Zaman Baru Islam Indonesia*, told by Dedy Djamiluddin Malik and Idi Subandy Ibrahim that when Gus Dur was asked, especially the vision he was going to develop, Gus Dur replied: "After taking care of NU, I would like to develop new humanism that no longer thinks beyond limits. narrow religious boundaries".<sup>22</sup>

At this point, it is very appropriate if the senior kyai of Sahal Mahfudz also emphasizes that humanism in Gus Dur's view is the attitude of protecting the weak, minority and oppressed, regardless of the group and the religion from which they originated.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Principles of Justice

In Gus Dur's reading, the Qur'an uses different meanings for words or terms related to justice. Even the word used to display the side or insight of justice does not always come from the root word 'adl. Synonym words like *qisth*, *hukm*, and so on, are used by the Qur'an in terms of justice. Whereas the word *adl* in various conjugative forms may lose its direct connection to the side of justice (ta'dilu, in the sense of associating partners with God and 'adl in the sense of ransom).

If categorized, there are several meanings related to justice in the Qur'an from the root of the word 'adl, that is something is true, the attitude of impartiality, safeguarding one's rights and the right way to make decisions: "you should punish or make decisions on the basis of justice". Overall, the above meanings are directly related to the justice side, namely as the elaboration of forms of justice in life. From the relation of several meanings of the word to the direct insight or side of justice, it is clear how the portion of "color of justice" has a place in the Qur'an.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Listiyono Santoso, *Teologi Politik*, p. 103-104.

<sup>22</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, dkk, *Zaman Baru Islam Indonesia* (Bandung: Zaman Wacana Mulia, 1998), p. 92.

<sup>23</sup> Mukhlas Syarkun, *Ensiklopedi Abdurrahman Wahid Jilid-2* (Jakarta: PPPKI, 2013), p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 349.

The conclusions above are also reinforced by the understanding and encouragement of the Qur'an so that people fulfill their promises, duties, and mandates, protect those who suffer, weak and lack, feel solidarity in concrete ways with fellow citizens, be honest in attitude, and so on. The things that are determined as achievements that must be achieved by Muslims show a very strong orientation to the roots of justice in the Qur'an.

Similarly, the insight of justice is not only limited to the micro scope of the lives of individual citizens, but also the macro scope of people's lives themselves. A fair attitude is not only demanded for Muslims but also for those of other faiths. And even then it is not only limited to fairness in their affairs, but also in their freedom to maintain their beliefs and carry out the teachings of their respective religions.

What is quite interesting is the direct connection between the insights or the justice side by the Qur'an with efforts to improve welfare and improve the standard of living of the people, especially those who suffer and weak in their position in society, such as orphans, the poor, widows, women pregnant or who has just experienced a divorce. Also relatives (*dzawil qurba*) who need help as embodiment of justice. The orientation of so many "faces of justice" in the concrete form is that which has a caritative character as well as one that refers to social transformation, and thus is somewhat structural in character. The most important phase of the insight of justice brought by the Qur'an is its nature as a religious order, not just as an ethical reference or mere moral encouragement. Its implementation is the fulfillment of religious obligations, and thus will be taken into account in the deeds of a Muslim on the Day of Judgment (*yaum al-hisab*) later.<sup>25</sup>

But according to Gus Dur, some of the basic characteristics of the justice insight developed by the Qur'an turned out to be mechanistic, not reflective. This is possible, because the "color" of the concrete form of justice discourse is only "the color" of religious law, something that is say legal-formalistic. Given the basic nature of legal-formalistic justice in the Qur'an, we can directly see two main problems, namely the limited vision possessed by the insight of justice itself, and the form of pouring that feels "very rewarding" (*talionis compensatory*).

The limitations of the vision are evident from the fact that if a form of action has been carried out, the obligation to do justice has been fulfilled, even though in other sides it is violated. For example, a husband has "acted fairly" if he "did justice" by keeping the rotation and the provision of income between two wives accurate, without questioning whether having two wives themselves was

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<sup>25</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 349-350.

fair. Thus, the fulfillment of the demand for justice should have a full face, then become partial and depends on the implementation on one side only.<sup>26</sup>

According to Gus Dur, the formalistic nuances of justice need to be read and developed contextually. Today, it is felt the need to question why the concept of justice is so simplistic, as Islam values women only with biological measures. Increasingly heard the need to develop understanding of the text became justice felt by the object of the polygyny action, in which men and women were both seated as legal subjects.

Because the current implementation of polygyny is always felt by women as unfair, except in extreme and rare circumstances. Thus, if the woman had only become a passive object who did not take part in the decision, so that in general she was sentenced to receive a complaint, so with the appearance of women as subjects, in general they were sentenced to refuse. With a brief formula, understanding the text becomes "married" only to a woman, and the second marriage and so on can only be done if there is a need that can be agreed upon by the wife.<sup>27</sup>

From here, according to Gus Dur the concept of justice in the Qur'an needs to be extended as widely as possible in response to various challenges in the realm of life in fact. Examples of these challenges include giving equal rights to minority religious groups; Insights into justice need to accommodate absolute equal treatment for all citizens regardless of the origin of religion, ethnicity, language and culture; and developing an attitude to limit personal property rights in order to equalize the ownership of means of production and consumption in order to establish economic democracy.<sup>28</sup>

Through the arguments about justice above, again we see the tone of universal humanism which is the spirit of Gus Dur's struggle: the meaning of justice should not be primordialistic and must even be freed from the primordialistic veil which is limited to the group and its own group which must enter universalistic by touching all humanity regardless of their background.

#### **D. Closing**

From the various expositions above, several conclusions can be drawn as follows. First, the meaning of humanistic education in Gus Dur's thinking is related to the discussion of universal human principles or values. In most of the discourses that he rolled out, Gus Dur always directed his final orientation to and for the benefit of humans, especially the weak and oppressed people in a structural

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<sup>26</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 350-351.

<sup>27</sup> Wahid,dkk, *Islam Nusantara*, p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan*, p. 352.

manner. For this reason, he always fights for humanitarian values and universal human rights. The struggle for universal humanitarian principles still rests on the fundamental teachings in Islam.

Second, in addition to universal human values, Gus Dur also voiced the principle of justice as an integral part of humanistic education discourse. This principle of justice is one component that is very important to be applied in the realm of social life or the realm of national public space. The principle of justice emphasizes that all people need to be treated equally without discrimination. The discourse of justice developed in humanistic education must be able to provide absolute equal treatment for all citizens regardless of the cultural origin, education, social status, economy, ethnicity, language, beliefs and religion of a person.

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