

The Application of Humanistic Learning in Facing the Challenges of Modern Education: A Study of Literature

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Abstract. *This study aims to examine the application of humanistic learning to address the challenges of modern education through a literature review approach. Humanistic learning emphasizes the holistic development of students' potential, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, and places students at the center of the learning process. Amidst globalization, the development of digital technology, the demand for modern-day skills, and the increasing complexity of socio-cultural issues, a humanistic approach is considered relevant for maintaining the human dimension in education. This study analyzes various scientific literature discussing the concept of humanism, humanistic learning models, and their implementation in various modern educational contexts. The results indicate that humanistic learning can enhance students' intrinsic motivation, creativity, emotional engagement, and learning independence. Furthermore, this approach can counterbalance the tendency toward dehumanization in technology-based education. However, the study also identified various challenges, such as limited teacher competency, school cultural resistance, and the suboptimal integration of curricula that support learner-centered learning. The study concludes that the application of humanistic learning remains relevant and needs to be strengthened through teacher training, the provision of supportive learning environments, and educational policies that emphasize human values.*

Keywords : *Humanistic Learning; Humanism; Challenges Of Modern Education; Literature Review; Modern Education.*

Abstrak. *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penerapan pembelajaran humanistik dalam menghadapi tantangan pendidikan modern melalui pendekatan studi pustaka. Pembelajaran humanistik menekankan pengembangan potensi peserta didik secara menyeluruh, termasuk aspek kognitif, afektif, dan psikomotorik, serta menempatkan peserta didik sebagai pusat proses belajar. Di tengah arus globalisasi, perkembangan teknologi digital, tuntutan keterampilan abad modern, serta meningkatnya kompleksitas masalah sosial-budaya, pendekatan humanistik dianggap relevan untuk menjaga dimensi kemanusiaan dalam pendidikan. Studi ini menganalisis berbagai literatur ilmiah yang membahas konsep humanisme, model pembelajaran humanistik, serta implementasinya di berbagai konteks pendidikan modern. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran humanistik mampu meningkatkan motivasi intrinsik, kreativitas, keterlibatan emosional, dan kemandirian belajar peserta didik. Selain itu, pendekatan ini dapat menjadi penyeimbang terhadap kecenderungan dehumanisasi dalam pendidikan berbasis teknologi. Namun, penelitian juga menemukan berbagai tantangan, seperti keterbatasan kompetensi guru, resistensi budaya sekolah, serta belum optimalnya integrasi kurikulum yang mendukung pembelajaran*

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berpusat pada peserta didik. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penerapan pembelajaran humanistik tetap relevan dan perlu diperkuat melalui pelatihan guru, penyediaan lingkungan belajar yang suportif, serta kebijakan pendidikan yang menekankan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan.

Kata kunci: Pembelajaran Humanistik; Humanisme; Tantangan Pendidikan Modern; Studi Pustaka; Pendidikan Modern.

INTRODUCTION

Social, cultural, economic, and technological changes in the modern era have had a significant impact on education. Modern education systems are required to produce students who not only master academic knowledge but also possess life skills, creativity, critical thinking, digital literacy, and a humanistic character. (Oktavia, 2022). This global transformation is increasingly felt with the development of digital technology and artificial intelligence which is changing the way humans communicate, work and learn (Danuri, 2019). Nowadays, education can no longer be separated from technological developments, because schools and educational institutions are required to become centers of innovation that are adaptive to the needs of the times.

Amidst this progress, a major challenge has emerged: how education can maintain humanitarian values in a digital and mechanistic era. According to Paulo Freire (1985) in Wijaya, (2024), education as a means of liberation. Liberation from the shackles of a situation leads to independence, and freedom from being bound or trapped by circumstances that dominate to himself most. An education system that is overly focused on cognitive achievement, exams, and statistical figures tends to neglect the affective, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of students. This phenomenon is evident in an overly competitive culture, academic stress, loss of interest in learning, increasing boredom, and reduced social empathy among students.

One of the most pressing concerns in contemporary education is the emotional and mental well-being of students. High academic expectations, competitive environments, and the influence of social media contribute to increased anxiety, burnout, and disengagement. Humanistic learning, with its emphasis on empathy, acceptance, and emotional support, provides a nurturing environment where students can develop self-awareness and emotional regulation.

In many modern classrooms, students experience disengagement due to limited personal relevance in the curriculum. Humanistic learning seeks to revive intrinsic motivation by connecting learning to students' interests, personal goals, and real-life experiences. Activities such as reflective journaling, project-based learning, and

experiential learning enhance engagement by placing students at the center of the learning process.

Nowadays, digital communication has altered how students interact with peers and teachers. While technology facilitates connection, it may also reduce face-to-face interactions, empathy, and social sensitivity. Humanistic learning prioritizes positive interpersonal relationships, encouraging dialogue, collaboration, and mutual respect. Classroom environments built on trust and openness help students cultivate empathy, communication skills, and a sense of belonging.

However, the modern world demands individuals who can think critically, solve problems creatively, and adapt to change. Humanistic learning encourages exploration, curiosity, and the pursuit of personal meaning, qualities essential for creative thinking. Instead of focusing solely on correct answers, humanistic classrooms value the learning process, self-expression, and the ability to question assumptions.

In this context, the humanistic learning approach has again gained attention as a solution to balance academic demands with the humanitarian needs of students. Humanistic education positions students as unique individuals, possessing individual potential, interests, motivations, and values that must be respected and developed. (Jiwa, 2008). This school of thought emphasizes that the main goal of education is to help individuals achieve self-actualization and become empowered human beings.

As is well known, education serves to develop human potential holistically. However, educational practices often emphasize only cognitive aspects, academic achievement, and quantitative assessment. According to (Sinaga & Firmansyah, 2024), This approach causes students to lose the opportunity to grow as unique, creative, and reflective individuals. It is in this context that humanism emerges as a philosophical and pedagogical approach oriented toward meaningful learning, individual freedom, self-actualization, and respect for human dignity.

Humanistic education developed as a critique of the mechanistic education system which was too oriented towards memorization, standardized tests, and authoritarian teacher-student relations. According to (Anwar, 2020), Humanism holds the view that every student has potential that can develop through learning experiences that support their emotional, social, and spiritual needs.

Furthermore, humanism in education does not only emphasize warm interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, but also prioritizes freedom of learning, respect for experience, meaningful learning, and holistic self-development (Astuti, Mulianingsih, & Soleh, 2022). Rogers (1994) cited in (Kumari,

2024; Tangney, 2014), emphasizes the importance of student-centered learning as an approach that enables students to develop self-understanding, independence, and decision-making skills. Meanwhile, Maslow argued that the learning process can only occur if an individual's basic needs are met, including safety, esteem, and self-actualization.

However, implementing humanistic learning in the field is not easy. Modern education faces a number of complex challenges: a dense curriculum, administrative demands, national assessment standards, pressure for academic achievement, limited resources, and a school culture that still tends to be authoritative. Teachers often struggle to place students at the center of learning due to heavy workloads and an education system that does not fully support a humanistic approach. The widespread use of learning technology also presents a dilemma. On the one hand, technology facilitates access to learning; on the other, excessive use can reduce humanistic interaction, increase dependency, and even create a digital divide.

Furthermore, modern students have very different characteristics from previous generations. They grew up exposed to digital media, an abundance of information, and virtual interaction patterns that influence how they learn and understand the world. Teachers, as learning facilitators, are required to understand the characteristics of the digital generation who prefer flexible, interactive, collaborative, and technology-based learning, while still requiring emotional interaction and human values.

Humanistic learning in the context of modern education is crucial as an effort to bridge the cognitive, affective, and social development needs of students. Studies show that a humanistic approach can increase learning motivation, self-confidence, creativity, reflective thinking skills, and even mental health. Teachers who implement empathetic communication patterns, provide space for expression, and are non-authoritarian have been shown to be more capable of creating a conducive, comfortable, and low-stress learning environment. Therefore, research on the application of humanistic learning is highly relevant, especially in the context of facing global educational transformation.

In Indonesia, the demand for humanistic learning is growing stronger along with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes differentiated learning, character development, and freedom to learn. According to (Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022), The Merdeka curriculum is actually aligned with humanistic principles, but its successful implementation depends heavily on teacher capacity, the school environment, and parental support. In many schools, we still find one-way (teacher-centered) learning, the dominant use of lecture methods,

minimal emotional engagement, and a lack of space for students to express their opinions or explore themselves. Therefore, understanding the application of humanistic education is crucial to providing practical guidance for teachers and schools in the modern era.

Based on this phenomenon, this study seeks to examine in-depth the application of humanistic learning to address the challenges of modern education. This research aims not only to understand the concept theoretically but also to examine actual practices in the field, the obstacles encountered, and their implications for student development. The results are expected to serve as a scientific reference and practical guideline for teachers, schools, and educational policymakers.

METHOD

This study is qualitative research. This study employed a literature review using the PRISMA model. The method comprises four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

In the *Identification* stage, articles searched from Google Scholar databases using the keyword combination: "*humanistic learning*". This process yielded an initial 31,900 articles. Of these, 4,650 duplicates were identified, and 3,040 articles were eliminated to avoid redundancy. This left 1,610 articles for further analysis. Next, the *Screening* stage involved reading the titles and abstracts of all articles. The screening criteria included relevance to the primary focus of the study. At this stage, 1,330 articles were eliminated for non-alignment, leaving 280 articles for further analysis. The next stage, *Eligibility*, involved a full-text review of each remaining article. Articles that did not provide full access, had weak methodology, or did not significantly contribute to the theoretical framework were eliminated. Of the 280 articles reviewed, 220 were eliminated, leaving 60 articles that met all eligibility criteria. In the final stage, *Inclusion*, the 60 articles were deemed eligible and used as the primary sources for analysis in this study. These articles were sourced from national journals published between 2015 and 2025.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a *Thematic Analysis* approach, which consists of data reduction, categorization and coding, and thematic synthesis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data obtained from related literature, the humanistic approach in the context of education, places students at the center of the learning process (learner-centered). In its practice, the implementation of humanism is not only seen in

teaching methods, but also in philosophy, teacher-student interactions, the classroom environment, and how to assess student development.

The Advantages of Humanism, Especially in the Context of Education and Human Development

In the modern era of competitive pressures and academic demands, the humanistic approach offers a more humane and balanced alternative. Through its various advantages, this school of thought makes a significant contribution to educational practices that foster confident, creative, adaptive learners with strong self-awareness. In other words, humanism reminds us that the essence of education is not merely to produce skilled individuals, but also people of character and meaning.

In today's modern era, education no longer focuses solely on mastering content, but rather on the ability to think and become adaptive, creative, and self-sufficient individuals. The humanistic approach positions students as whole people, not objects of learning.

Humanism emphasizes a learning environment free from threats, fear, and pressure. Humanistic teachers in learning always provide acceptance (unconditional acceptance), build warm and empathetic relationships, avoid humiliating punishment, and open up space for two-way dialogue. A psychologically safe environment helps students dare to express themselves, ask questions, try new things, and not be afraid of making mistakes.

Furthermore, humanism rejects authoritarian and one-way learning. Teachers in the classroom act as facilitators, not primary instructors. Its implementation includes aspects such as giving students the opportunity to choose learning activities, encouraging students to set learning goals, tailoring learning to students' interests and needs, and encouraging independence and responsibility for learning. When students feel valued, they are more likely to achieve significant learning.

In addition, humanism believes that the most effective learning is experiential, not simply rote. Examples include hands-on practice, experiments, field studies, role-playing, simulations, and problem-solving based on real-world contexts. Concrete experiences help students find meaning and construct concepts from their own lives.

Humanism also views students as beings who not only think but also feel. Implementation includes aspects such as reflective journals, sharing experiences, discussing feelings after activities, and self-evaluation. As a matter of fact, each student has a different learning style, interests, talents, and learning pace. Humanistic teachers always allow for task differentiation, provide alternative ways to complete assignments, do not impose a single method, and adjust the learning

pace. Humanism views individual uniqueness as an asset, not a barrier. This helps students understand themselves, their motivations, and their learning process.

Adapting the thought of Paulo Freire, humanistic education rejects banking education, which views students as passive objects and does not provide space for critical thinking, creativity, or exploration, often referred to as a non-humanistic model. Instead, a humanistic approach involves teachers and students working together dialogically to identify problems, observe, reflect, and design actions to solve them, ultimately empowering students to become active subjects in their own learning.

Broadly speaking, collaborative learning fosters empathy, communication, and social values. Examples of implementation include group projects, collaborative problem-solving, cross-subject collaboration, and creative activities that value the process, not just the outcome. This aligns with the goal of humanism, which is to develop social and emotional aspects. Furthermore, humanism does not reject assessment, but rather rejects assessments that focus solely on numbers. Its implementation includes authentic assessments (portfolios, projects, presentations), self-assessment, peer assessment, and formative feedback that is constructive rather than judgmental. The focus is on overall student growth, not competition between students.

Humanism believes that creativity is a form of self-actualization. Implementation includes encouraging students to express ideas through art, writing, technology, or practice, allowing students to use unique styles in completing assignments, and using activities that encourage creativity such as drama, posters, videos, experiments, and innovative projects.

Humanistic education encourages internal motivation, not rewards or punishments. Teachers can help students realize personal goals, relate material to real life, provide meaningful challenges appropriate to students' abilities, and provide emotional support. According to Maslow, student motivation increases when basic and psychological needs are met. Based on a literature review of various studies and theories of humanistic education by Rogers and Maslow, it was found that humanistic learning is able to increase learning motivation.

Furthermore, modern education demands critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills. The study results show that the humanistic model plays a significant role in developing these skills through a learning process that emphasizes autonomy, small-group collaboration, dialogue, and reflective activities.

Humanistic learning also fosters social-emotional learning (SEL), a crucial foundation for coping with the psychological pressures of the digital world. Research shows significant improvements in empathy, self-confidence, and emotional management skills in students who participate in this approach.

The literature review shows that integrating technology into humanistic learning is not contradictory, but rather synergistic. When technology is used reflectively, it actually expands opportunities for more personal and meaningful learning. However, teacher guidance is still needed to ensure that technology does not displace human values.

Studies show that when teachers position students as subjects of learning and provide space for psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), intrinsic motivation increases. An empathetic and non-judgmental environment encourages students to be more engaged in the learning process.

In addition, the humanistic approach specifically emphasizes the development of affective aspects: empathy, interpersonal communication, responsibility, and self-awareness. This has proven relevant to addressing the needs of the modern workforce and society, which highly demands non-technical skills.

Furthermore, the application of humanistic principles (self-directed learning and personal meaning) encourages students to be more prepared to use technology critically. Thus, the humanistic approach is not antithetical to digitalization, but rather helps students develop wisdom in utilizing technology. Teacher involvement as a facilitator can also improve the quality of interactions. Teachers who act as facilitators (rather than information centers) have shown improvements in the quality of classroom interactions, student engagement, and a sense of ownership in the learning process.

Humanism makes important contributions to creating more humane learning. However, this approach has limitations in terms of effectiveness in large classes, the demands of a rigorous curriculum, objective evaluation, and the readiness of both teachers and students. Therefore, humanism is often combined with other approaches to achieve a more balanced and appropriate approach to the needs of modern educational contexts.

The Application of Humanistic Approach In Modern Education

The humanistic approach is an educational paradigm that places humans at the center of the learning process. In modern education, this approach is increasingly relevant because it emphasizes humanitarian values, freedom, respect for individual uniqueness, and the holistic development of self-potential. Humanism seeks not only

to improve academic abilities but also to develop the emotional, social, moral, and spiritual aspects of students so they can become whole and meaningful individuals.

As a reality, modern education faces complex challenges: globalization, digitalization, changes in student character, and the demands of great competencies. Learning models that are too cognitive and product-oriented have proven to be less able to prepare students to face this reality. The humanistic approach presents a solution because it emphasizes the wholeness of the human person (holistic education): intellectual aspects, emotions, values, and personal experiences.

In the era of AI and advanced technology, human qualities (human soft skills) are becoming increasingly important. Humanistic principles support a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered. This approach helps students become more independent, creative, and able to construct meaning from everyday experiences.

In facing the burden of modern learning, the teacher's role as a counselor and value guide, ensuring that technology is used to develop human potential, not replace it, allows teachers to create a safe and comfortable space for students to explore knowledge and emotions. Such interactions help students cope with academic stress, social pressure, and digital distractions.

The study's findings support the teacher's role as a facilitator at the heart of humanistic learning. Teachers who employ this approach not only transfer knowledge but also build positive emotional connections. Their empathy, authenticity, and openness create a psychologically safe learning environment. Besides, the use of technology in modern education is unavoidable. However, technology must be seen as a tool to strengthen humanistic values. Humanistic learning emphasizes the unique needs of each individual. Technology allows for the recording of students' learning preferences, learning pace, and even learning styles. Also, unlimited learning resources allow students to control the direction and depth of their learning.

Theoretical data shows that a humanistic classroom environment can reduce learning anxiety, especially in students who experience high academic pressure or difficulties with social adaptation. The implementation of humanistic learning provides a strong foundation for education to face technological disruption and social change. Through an approach that prioritizes human dignity, emotions, intrinsic motivation, and personal meaning, education becomes more relevant, adaptive, and sustainable. Implementation challenges remain, but they can be addressed through teacher training, curriculum updates, and the use of values-oriented technology.

The analyzed research shows that a humanistic approach, particularly one based on Maslow's concept of self-actualization and Rogers' principles of student-centered learning, can increase students' intrinsic motivation. A learning environment that supports freedom of expression, emotional openness, and unconditional acceptance encourages students to learn based on self-awareness, not simply external demands.

Several studies have shown that project-based learning, self-reflection, and authentic assessment can increase students' learning interest compared to traditional methods. This confirms that creating a humanistic learning climate significantly influences students' willingness to learn independently. Modern learning models such as project-based learning, inquiry learning, and problem-based learning are rooted in humanistic values: active learners, teachers as facilitators, and an emphasis on personal meaning.

While highly beneficial and relevant in education context, the humanistic approach still has limitations in practical implementation, particularly related to time constraints, academic assessment, teacher preparedness, and the demands of modern curricula.

However, when combined with other approaches, humanism remains a crucial element in creating a more humane education.

Humanistic Learning and Its Role in Addressing Modern Educational Challenges

In the context of modern education, humanistic learning plays a strategic role in addressing the various challenges arising from technological developments, sociocultural changes, academic pressures, and the demands of modern competencies. Amid the increasing complexity of education, especially in Indonesia, from mental health issues and curriculum burdens to unequal access to learning, the humanistic approach offers a solution that balances academic achievement and students' emotional well-being. Through a focus on intrinsic motivation, empathy, creativity, learning autonomy, and harmonious relationships between teachers and students, humanistic learning helps create a learning environment that encourages active engagement, the courage to ask questions, and character development.

By placing humans at the center of learning, the humanistic approach contributes significantly to shaping a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally mature, adaptive, and possesses a strong sense of humanity. Therefore, humanistic learning is key to overcoming resistance to modern education and preparing students to play an active role in a dynamic and changing

society. In addressing modern educational challenges, humanistic learning has several roles. The visualisation of the role of humanistic learning in addressing modern educational challenges is demonstrated in the following figure:

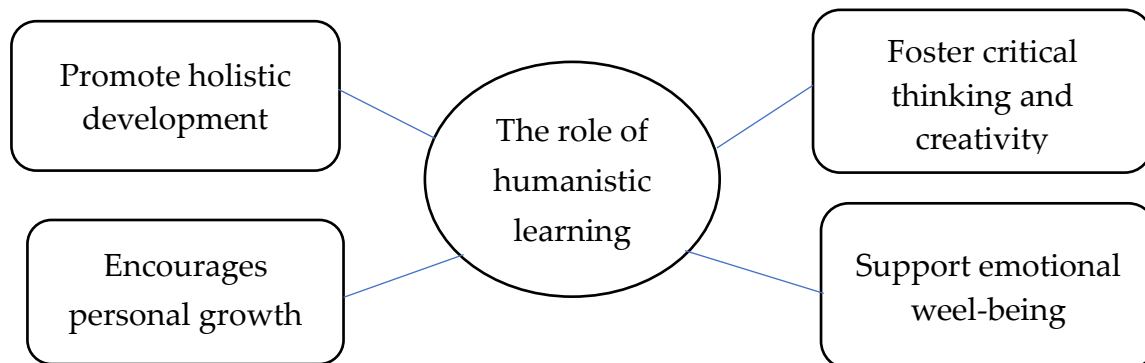


Figure 1. The role of humanistic learning in addressing modern educational challenges

In conclusion, the application of humanistic learning has proven relevant, effective, and much needed to address the challenges of modern education. Although various obstacles remain, this approach remains an ideal choice for creating meaningful, adaptive, humane, and holistic learning. With the support of teachers, educational policies, and the appropriate use of technology, a humanistic approach can shape a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also emotionally and socially mature. However, although humanism provides an essential foundation for a more humane education. However, its limitations emerge when confronted with modern education systems that demand efficiency, standardization, and the use of technology. Therefore, a humanistic approach needs to be combined with other approaches to optimally address the challenges of modern education.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this research confirms that humanistic learning is not only a pedagogical approach oriented toward human values, but also an effective strategy for addressing today's educational challenges. By integrating humanistic values into the curriculum, methods, and learning interactions, schools can create a more inclusive and relevant learning environment, preparing students to become independent, creative, and competitive individuals in the dynamic modern era.

Therefore, humanistic learning is worthy of being the main foundation in the development of a future education system, which is not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also towards the formation of the whole human being.

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