

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AMID THE CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

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Abstract

This article discusses the importance and urgency of the implementation of multicultural religious education. It can be used as an effective instrument and media to reduce religious radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia. Multicultural religious education provides the same space for the growth of differences and religious diversity. Through multicultural religious education, students are expected to have a high commitment to their religion while having a tolerance and appreciative attitude towards other religions. With a multicultural religious education, students are expected to have a sense of plurality. It will only be successful if it is taught by educators who have multicultural awareness. In addition, the curriculum, materials, methods, and evaluation of multicultural religious education learning must also contain and be compatible with multicultural values. Therefore, it needs political will from all stakeholders to jointly formulate a blueprint for multicultural religious education.

Keywords: *multicultural religious education, religious radicalism, terrorism, student*

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tentang pentingnya dan urgensi penyelenggaraan pendidikan agama multikultural. Ini dapat digunakan sebagai instrumen dan media yang efektif untuk mengurangi radikalisme agama dan terorisme di Indonesia. Pendidikan agama multikultural memberikan ruang yang sama bagi tumbuhnya perbedaan dan keragaman agama. Melalui pendidikan agama multikultural, peserta didik diharapkan memiliki komitmen yang tinggi terhadap agamanya sekaligus memiliki sikap toleransi dan apresiasi terhadap agama lain. Dengan pendidikan agama multikultural diharapkan siswa memiliki rasa pluralitas. Hal itu hanya akan berhasil jika diajarkan oleh pendidik yang memiliki kesadaran multikultural. Selain itu, kurikulum, materi, metode, dan evaluasi pembelajaran pendidikan agama multikultural juga harus memuat dan selaras dengan nilai-nilai multikultural. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan *political will* dari seluruh *stakeholder* (pemangku kepentingan) untuk bersama-sama merumuskan *blueprint* pendidikan agama multikultural.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan agama multikultural, radikalisme agama, terorisme, peserta didik

Introduction

Post-reform, cases of terrorism and religious radicalism increased in Indonesia. There have been many cases of terrorism and religious radicalism that have occurred in Indonesia. Some examples are the Bali bombings I, Bali II bombings, the JW Marriot hotel bombings, the Australian embassy bombings, the Thmarin bombings, and the Surabaya bombings. The latest case is a suicide bombing at the Cathedral Church, Makassar, South Sulawesi. According to data of the Indonesian National Police, there were 228 terrorism suspects arrested by the Indonesian National Police throughout 2020 (*Tempo*, 2020).

Ironically, many perpetrators of religious radicalism and terrorism involve students and youth (university students and alumni). Their barbaric actions have harmed Indonesia. In addition to hurting the values of diversity, their vile behavior has tarnished Indonesia internationally. As a result of their actions, Indonesia, once known to the world public as a polite and friendly country, now seems to have become a grumpy nation. The recent spread of religious radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia indicates that diversity values in Indonesia are beginning to fade. In fact, diversity is the most valuable social capital for this nation. With diversity, the pillars of Indonesian nationality were built. Without diversity, Indonesia probably would never have existed.

When viewed psychologically and socially, the spread of religious radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia is one of them rooted in social prejudice. Social prejudice itself was born because the community does not have the awareness to accept the presence of other different groups. In general, non-multicultural societies tend to put forward primordialism and claims of truth that regard their most correct group and instead regard other groups as wrong groups and are perceived as threats. The emergence of social prejudice is a fertile medium for the growth and development of religious radicalism and terrorism.

Therefore, it is important that serious efforts to break up religious radicalism and terrorism while disseminating the values of tolerance and peace. One of the things that can be

done is to teach multicultural religious education in educational institutions. Departing from this issue, this article discusses the importance and urgency of the implementation of multicultural religious education. Before discussing it, I will first explain the significance of religious education in encountering radicalism and terrorism in the name of religion.

The Significance of Religious Education

Education is a strategic instrument to promote inclusive values since education provides a space for implanting and implementing ethics and virtue values. Education is not only as knowledge transfer, but also transfer of values. Transfer of values is heritages of ethical-religious-humanist values from former generation to the next generation. Educational institution is primary socialization agent after family. In formal education, values and norms are implanted. In this institution also, someone is gaining habit, appreciation, and view of life. Educational institution has many superiorities which can be used to lessen problems in pluralistic society (Ngganggung, 2005, 254-256).

Education is consciousness effort needed as a means of cultivation of behaviour. This cultivation includes how to appreciate differences and religious plurality. According to me, one of strategic education to propagate tolerance values is through religious education. John Sealy (1985: 43-44) proposed that the role and function of religious education among others is to enhance student plurality by their belief and give openness to study other religions in promoting tolerance. In a similiar opinion, Alex R. Rodger (1982: 61) tells that religious education is integral part of education to foster understanding required for different faith and to strengthen their belief at the same time. Meanwhile, according to Kautsar Azhari Noer (2005: 227-228), religious education has a strategic and important position in national education system as a whole since religious education is actually a character education. Implementation of religious education is a systematic effort to disseminate religious massages to students in order to be understood and implemented in real life (Ismail, 2004: xix).

Religious education is effective to incorporate inclusive and creed values to student. The different religion among students is not a barrier to be able to interact and socialize themselves.

Even, through religious education with different religion among students, it can be a medium to discover and find religious values in each religion as well understand other religion tradition (Ma'arif, 2006). Religious education is strategic education since this is obligatory subject which must be taught in all educational level. In the year 1999, government issued Joint Decree (Surat Keputusan Bersama/SKB) of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of National Education Number 4/U/SKB/99. Content of the regulation is parent or student which wish to use their rights to receive religious education according to their religion, hence the school is obliged to fulfill it (Saidi, *et. al.*, 2004: 65). Then, on the regulation of National Education System No. 2 The Year 2003, it is stated that religious education is part of national education system. In more specifically, in article 12 (1) of the regulation, it is stated that: "Every student has the right to get religious education according to their religion and taught by educator as the same religion". It is mentioned that religious education is part of national education system.

Furthermore, on article 37 of the national education system No. 2/2003, it is stated that religious education is obliged into curriculum in any educational level. Regardless of the controversy among society, the regulation No. 2/2003 become constitutional base for holding religious education at educational institutions in Indonesia.

The constitutional capital should be effective instrument to enhance tolerance values and ethics among students. Regarding this point, Zainal Abidin Bagir and Irwan Abdullah (2004) asserted that religious education which is to give starting from lowest-level up to high level is actually a big opportunity to propagate ethical awareness.

Meanwhile, social capital supporting the implementation of inclusive religious education is that Indonesia is religious state. One of indicators to see that Indonesia is religious country can be seen its inhabitant embracing certain religion. Religion and religious education have become integral part of life in Indonesian society. With constitutional-social capital, religious education has strategic position and role to promote tolerance values so that it is actually as one of instruments to encounter terrorism and religious radicalism.

The Failure of Religious Education

Although we have constitutional and social capital, religious education fails to create tolerant and inclusive generation. Unfortunately, according to Bachtiar Effendy (2005: 270), religious education contributes to aggravate religious harmony among believers. In line with Effendy, Johar MS (2005: xv) expresses that religious education has not been able to unite nation in term of multiculturalism in response to religious plurality. On contrast, religious education exactly sharpens the difference among religions so that the religious conflict becomes social phenomenon in society.

Then, Zakiyuddin Baidhaw (2005: 31) asserted that religious education teaching is more focused at truth claim and believes that their religion is the only way of salvation and other religion is wrong as well it will not safe. Expressing a similiar idea, Benny Susetyo maintains that religious education practice only emphasizes on ritualism, but it does not emphasize on students' religiosity. Religious education still emphasizes on religious laws. Religious education does not touch a faith, hope, and affection. In addition, as Benny Susetyo said, religious teaching still emphasizes on having religion, not being religious. This orientation emphasizes on individual piety than social piety. Religious education vision is going to lead students more religiously and be not just religious (Susetyo, 2005: 74).

Brenda Watson in his book entitled *Education and Belief* (1987) pointed out that there are some mistakes of religious teaching at school. Firstly, religious education teacher often changes education process into indoctrination process. Student does not feel free to ask, criticize, and question doctrines of religion, but forced to receive religion doctrines as absolute and undeniable thing. Secondly, teacher in giving religious teaching is more emphasizing on normative-informative teaching and less emphasizing on religious education. Thirdly, teachers generally are difficult to take off their ideology or religion commitment when teaching religious education.

On Romo Franz Magnis-Suseno's view, religious education in Indonesia is not enough to give positive effect in building moral or character. According to him, religious education is still given in the form of ritualism and formalism, without teaching openness and ethical responsibility (Suseno, 2004: 81-82). In accordance with Franz Magnis-Suseno, Paul Suparno (2003: 32-33) criticized to practice religious education. First, religious education emphasizes on

memorizing. For that reason, they understand the lesson and get a good score in examination, however the knowledge does not influence student's behaviour in real life. Religious education is less emphasized on way of behaving, moral values, and life comprehension can help students to experience the better life. Second, religious education model is too much indoctrination. Such a religious education model, teacher is more active and students would an object of learning. There is no space for them to be creative and critical. They are not realized to have life values so that religious values are not comprehended and not perceived as good values. Third, many religious educations emphasize on a formal religious service, but less comprehended in real life. Fourth, in educational evaluation, religious education seems to emphasize on memorizing knowledge. Religious education score is determined by final exam in the form of multiple-choice. It should be based on a holistic process either inside or outside school. Fifth, religious education is less connected to humanity aspects such as emotional, spiritual and social aspect, and life together. Sixth, incorporating of religious values can not work well since it is not supported by an appropriate environment either in school or family as well in society.

Jedid T. Posumah-Santoso (2005: 280–281) pointed out that religious education is not only transferring information or knowledge, but also touching heart so that it encourages students to change. The aim of religious education would succeed when there will be synchronized of cognition (intellectual), affective (behavior), and psychomotoric (skill) dimension. Surprisingly, the criterion of success of religious education in Indonesia is just based on cognitive and psychomotoric ability.

For that reason, it is not wondering that moral, social, and spiritual problems among students emerges. Religious education is unable to give moral education and a guidance in choosing value and norm for their life. Religious education only can bear smart people, but poorly morality and spirituality. Students generally emphasize on score achievement. As a result, religious education distorts the real meaning of faith.

Bahtiar Effendy (2005: 269) asserts that religious education has been reduced to a teaching orientation. In this context, it emphasizes cognition and takes off character development of students as how to behave to religious plurality environment. In similiar line, Abdul Munir

Mulkhan (2007: 79) mentions that religious education is more emphasizing on cognition and psychomotoric aspects. In accordance with Abdul Munir Mulkhan, Musthofa Rembangy (2008: 208) tells that religious education emphasizes on cognitive aspect so that it will take off spiritual and social aspect as part of social piety. As a result, students are inclined to be sensitive on social and humanity problems.

Meanwhile, Kautsar Azhari Noer (2005: 239-240) criticizes that at least there are four factors why religious education fails in promoting pluralism. Firstly, it is more emphasized on transferring religion knowledge than transformation process religious and moral value to students. Secondly, religious education is merely as "decoration of curriculum" or as a "complement". Thirdly, it is less emphasized on morale values supporting religious harmony such as love, affection, friendship, helpful, friendship, and tolerance. Fourthly, it is less emphasized on studying other religions.

M. Amin Abdullah (2005: 244-245) explains that development of material and religious education method is more lately than the development outside school. Current issues and living issues have not covered yet in the material of religious education. The education practitioners – is always trapped by syllabus and educational curriculum– are more emphasized on "conservation" aspect and keeping of educational material and syllabus than "reform" in the field of education. The tendency is more dominantly to maintain "*al-qadim*" (an old educational concepts recognized as tested and effective) than to take education concept "*al-jadid*" (an actual and new concept) which is up-to-date. Furthermore, he expresses that religious education is slightly to respond public issues. Religious education material is more focusly and busy to manage individually or private affairs in term of *alahwl al-syakhsyiyah* (individually morality), but unable to care on common issues and *alahwl al-'ammah* (public morality; public affairs) (Abdullah, 2005: 248).

Then, Darmaningtyas (2003: 29-30) asserts that most all policies related to religious education bring about problems. According to him, it initially leads to segregation of student in school based on religion, but later on it starts expanding to social based on religion. Such a

segregation will generate a synergistic strength in public. On the contrary, it will exactly create breakable social life and nation.

Therefore, according to M. Saerozi (2004: 24-25), all regulations issued by government, including religious education regulation should not opposite to religious morality. The formula should be actualized so that state's policy needs to be aimed at quality improvement of religious education through completion of religious education system. The intended completion is to make religious education more integrated and more integral with national education system. This completion covers some aspects. They are a developed curriculum, empowering educational institution as center of cultural value, attitude and ability, and developing curriculum and establishing of national education system based on decentralization principle, science autonomy, and management.

A criticism to religious education asserted by Komaruddin Hidayat (1999: xii-xiii), Indonesian Muslim intellectual. In his perspective, there are some weakness of religious education. Firstly, religious education now is more emphasized on studying religion. As a result, many people know religion teaching values, but their behavior is unmatched to their knowledge of religion. Secondly, there are many disorders in arranging and electing religious education materials. It is going to lead a disorder principle in which an important principle should put in the beginning, but it is sometimes left. Religious education is more oriented to *fiqh* (Islamic law) which is often recognized as a religion. Even, most society perceives that to have religion is identical with a right *mazhab* (the legal views of a school) acknowledged by the majority. When differing from majority sect, they will be alleged as deviate and distortion. Third, the lack of depth explanation and the semantic mastery of key terms of religion teaching. This weakness causes a biased meaning of religion teaching. This is going to lead an assumption that religion teachings claimed as truth by believers is religion teachings which has become history for a hundreds year and sometimes they do not know the source.

Initiating Multicultural Religious Education

The failure of religious education in creating a multicultural generation requires the government to reconstruct religious education in Indonesia as soon as possible. One of the efforts to reconstruct religious education is to integrate multicultural values into religious education. In other words, a multicultural religious education is needed. The existence of multicultural religious education is important because it provides the same space for the growth of differences and religious diversity. Multicultural religious education is a new alternative to religious education with a dialogist approach to fostering awareness of living together in diversity and difference. Multicultural religious education is an education that is built on the spirit of equality and equality relations, mutual trust, mutual understanding, respect for equality, differences, and uniqueness, as well as interdependence (Baidhawry, 2005: 74).

Through multicultural religious education, students are expected to have a high commitment to their religion while having a tolerance and appreciative attitude towards other religions. With a multicultural religious education, students are expected to have a sense of plurality. The presence of multicultural religious education in Indonesia is increasingly urgent in all educational institutions because – as mentioned above – the perpetrators of religious radicalism and terrorism are many from students, students, and alumni of universities. Moreover, lately there is a tendency of systematic efforts made by certain religious groups to teach hardline religious doctrine (radicalism) among high school students in big cities of Indonesia.

Komaruddin Hidayat (2009) said that several research results showed that radicalism movements and networks have long infiltrated high school. Students with low religious understanding and psychologically seeking identity are being targeted by supporters of radicalism ideology. The target is to control intra-school student organization (OSIS), and *Rohis* (Muslim student organization). Furthermore, according to him, the network of radicalism has been entrenched and spread in various schools, so it needs to be responded seriously, both by the school, the government, and parents. Hidayat said that the student's enthusiasm to learn religion is a good thing, but what must be watched out is when there are spreaders of radicalism ideology who use religious symbols and sentiments to carry out brainwashing for purposes that destroy religion and cause conflict. A similar opinion was expressed by Azyumardi Azra (2011) who said

that school students became special targets for the recruitment of terrorist and radical groups. He argued that several research results proved that there were efforts to recruit students to schools by brainwashing students, which were then filled with certain radical ideologies.

In addition to the large number of student involvement in terrorism and the massive infiltration of religious radicalism into educational institutions, another factor that makes multicultural religious education urgent to implement is the proliferation of radicalism and religious intolerance in educational institutions. The results of a survey by PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah in 2017 show the influence of intolerance and radicalism has spread to many schools and universities in Indonesia. According to the survey, there are 51.1 percent of Muslim student respondents who have intolerant opinions towards minority Islamic groups, who are perceived to be different from the majority. In addition, 34.3 percent of the same respondents have an intolerant opinion towards other religions. This survey also showed that as many as 48.95 percent of student respondents felt that religious education influenced them not to interact with other religions believer. Even worse, 58.5 percent of student respondents have radical religious views (Tim Peneliti PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2017).

This fact must be responded seriously. When educational institutions have been infected with the virus of radicalism and religious intolerance, the hope of creating a multiculturalist generation will not come true. On the other hand, educational institutions will create a radical and intolerant generation. If that happens, there will be conflict and disintegration in Indonesia. Therefore, the presence of multicultural religious education is a necessity. Multicultural religious education will only be successful if it is taught by educators who have multicultural awareness. However, religious teacher becomes significant factor for the success of implanting tolerance values to students. In perspective of Jedid T. Posumah-Santoso (2005: 285), religious teacher is key of success in teaching and learning process as well implanting universal values. Religious teacher is impossible to generate tolerant students if they are intolerant to other believers.

In addition, the curriculum, materials, methods, and evaluation of multicultural religious education learning must also contain and be compatible with multicultural values. Religious teacher must be able to make interesting methods and media in teaching so that it is

not monotonous when they are teaching. This means that it is bad but students sometimes feel bored. It is like one man show. Teacher is dominating in learning process. In term of Paulo Freire (1995: xii), it is banking system. Students tend to be passive and receive anything from teacher. The more teacher fill knowledges, the more teacher will be fine. In other word, teacher just replace students as an object. There is no space for them to be creative and critically. Therefore, religious teacher should leap forward so that student learn fun. In this context, religious teacher can apply and elaborate some methods such as discussion, game, quiz, comparative study, etc. Beside that, religious teacher must be able to make and apply a correct and interesting media. In the era of information technology, religious teacher can apply so many interesting learning. For instance, religious teacher can ask students to watch tolerance and multiculturalism movie.

In addition to method and media, religious evaluation is also important for teacher. evaluation standard may not apply just for normative standard as explicitly implied in religious norm and doctrine, but what extent students' behaviour and awareness could actualize religious norm and doctrine (Paryanto, 2003: 46). Evaluation of religious education must rely on a whole process, it does not solely rely on numerical achievement (Suparno, 2003: 32). More importantly, how to incorporate religious education to shape students' personal (Ludjito, 1998: 15). Religious education evaluation may not ignore the purpose of education. The purpose of education is sharpening intelligence, emotion, and spirit of student in order to grow and develop in balance. For that reason, education must be pointed to emancipation process of student so that student has a base to deal with life's problem in society (Wahyudi, 2006: 47). The aim of education is to make someone become responsible person, respect to others and get involved in society (Mardiatmamadja, 1998: 112).

Therefore, it needs political will from all stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Religious Affair, universities/colleges, and other related parties to jointly formulate a blueprint for multicultural religious education. In my opinion, it is not a difficult job if there is a willingness from the stakeholders. When multicultural religious education can be implemented by an educational institution, it can be an effective instrument

to reduce social prejudice as well as disseminate multiculturalism values to students. If this can be realized, I believe that acts of religious radicalism and terrorism can be reduced, so that religious harmony in Indonesia will be well preserved.

Concluding Remarks

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that multicultural religious education can be used as an effective instrument and media to reduce religious radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia. Multicultural religious education provides the same space for the growth of differences and religious diversity. It is a new alternative to religious education with a dialogist approach to fostering awareness of living together in diversity and difference. It is an education that is built on the spirit of equality and equality relations, mutual trust, mutual understanding, respect for equality, differences, uniqueness, and interdependence. Through multicultural religious education, students are expected to have a high commitment to their religion while having a tolerance and appreciative attitude towards other religions. With a multicultural religious education, students are expected to have a sense of plurality.

Multicultural religious education will only be successful if it is taught by educators who have multicultural awareness. In addition, the curriculum, materials, methods, and evaluation of multicultural religious education learning must also contain and be compatible with multicultural values. Therefore, it needs political will from all stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Religious Affair, universities/colleges, and other related parties to jointly formulate a blueprint for multicultural religious education.

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