The Urgency of Multicultural Education to Islamic Learning in Schools

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Abstract: Theological learning in schools tends to be given only for strengthening the belief and achievement to come to heaven without given awareness to have a dialog with other religions. The condition makes religious education being exclusive and intolerant. Nevertheless, in today’s pluralism era, religion must take reorientation philosophic-paradigmatic about how to build an understanding of students’ multiculturalism, which is more inclusive, plural, multicultural, humanist, dialogist-persuasive, contextual, substantive, and socially active.

Keywords: Islamic learning, multicultural education

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The violence practiced in the name of religion, such as fundamentalism, radicalism, and terrorism, has lately been increasing in Indonesia. The unity of the country currently being tested for its existence. Various indicators that show national disunity are easily seen. Some conflicts in Ambon, Papua, Poso, and violence cases against Syiah in Sampang Madura, are like fire in the chaff, which can explode at any time. These events do not only claim many lives but have also destroyed hundreds of places of worship (both mosques and churches and even a boarding school).

The universal ethical values of religion should be a driving force for people always to uphold peace and improve the welfare of all people on this earth. However, religion is precisely one of the causes of human violence and destruction. Therefore, preventive measures are needed so that the problem of religious conflicts will not happen again in the future. For example, by intensifying dialogue forums between religious communities and streams of faith, building a more pluralist and inclusive understanding of religion, and providing education about pluralism and religious tolerance in schools (educational institutions).

On the other hand, religious education provided in schools does not turn on good multicultural education and even tends to be the opposite. As a result, social conflicts are often hardened by religious legitimacy taught in religious education in schools in conflict-prone areas. It makes the conflict has roots in fundamental religious beliefs so that violent social conflicts are increasingly difficult to overcome because they are understood as part of their religious vocation.

Religious education in public and religious schools is exclusive; religion is taught by denying the right to life of other religions, as if only one’s religion is right, while others’ are wrong, lost, and threatened. Religious education should be used as a medium to develop universal morality in religions while developing inclusive and plural theology (Jackson, 2018). In this regard, educational institutions in multicultural societies need to teach peace and conflict resolution as in multicultural education. Furthermore, Islamic learning as one of the subjects, demanded to be able to bring the word of peace in every student’s soul.

DISCUSSION

The term multicultural education derives from the attention of an American education expert Prudence Crandall (183-1890) who intensively spread views about the importance of the background of students, both in terms of cultural, ethnic, and religious aspects. Education that pays serious attention to learners’
backgrounds is the forerunner to the emergence of multicultural education (Hermino, 2016). The issue of multiculturalism became the topic of discussion in the formal education in 1990. Etymologically; multicultural education consists of two terms, namely education and multiculturalism. Education means the process of developing a person’s or group’s attitudes and behavior to mature through teaching, training, processes, and ways of educating (Slamet, Masrukhi, Haryono, & Wasino, 2017). Multiculturalism is defined as cultural diversity and various politeness (Hassen, 2016). Meanwhile, terminologically, multicultural education means the process of developing all human potential that respects their plurality and heterogeneity as a consequence of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity (Ainul, 2005). The understanding has vast implications in education because education is understood as a continuous or a lifelong process. It requires the highest respect for human dignity.

The concept of multicultural education in its journey spread widely to regions outside the United States, especially in countries that have ethnic diversity, religion, and culture like Indonesia. Whereas, the discourse on multicultural education can be defined as education for/about cultural diversity in response to the demographic and cultural changes of a particular community's environment or even the world as a whole (Dummet, 2006). In line with Freire’s opinion, education is not an “ivory tower” that tries to stay away from social and cultural realities. Education, according to Freire, must be able to create an educated society, not a society that only glorifies social prestige as a result of wealth and prosperity (Fraise, 1984).

Multicultural education is a response to the development of diversity in the school population, as demands for equal rights for each group. It covers all students without differentiating groups such as gender, ethnicity, race, culture, social status, and religion. Bank, one of the pioneers of multicultural education, has grounded the concept of multicultural education into the idea of education equality, states that the substance of multicultural education is education for freedom as well as the dissemination of inclusive movements in order to strengthen relationships among people (as inclusive and cementing movements) (Banks, 1994).

Related to the focus, Tilaar (2002) reveals that in multicultural education programs, the focus is no longer directed solely at the racial, religious, and cultural domain of mainstream groups. Such focus has been a pressure on intercultural education that emphasizes increasing understanding and tolerance of individuals who come from minority groups to the dominant mainstream culture, which in turn causes people from minority groups to be integrated into mainstream society. Multicultural education is an attitude of caring and understanding differences or political recognition of minority groups.

Based on the reasons, there are some formulation of multicultural education. First, multicultural education is a development process that seeks improvement. Therefore, multicultural education has no boundaries or narrow barriers which often become a thick wall for humans to have interaction with each other. Second, multicultural education develops all human potential, including intellectual, social, moral, religious, economic, politeness and cultural as the first step is obedience to the noble values of humanity, respect for others’ dignity and those who have different economic levels, political aspirations, religion, or cultural traditions.

Third, education respects plurality and heterogeneity. Those aspects are a necessity in today’s society. Plurality is not only understood by ethnic diversity but also as the diversity of thought, paradigms, understanding, economics, politics, etc. It does not allow each group to claim that the group is a role model for the others. Thus, the coercive effort is not in line with the values of multicultural education. Fourth, multicultural education respects and values cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Respect and appreciation are very urgent attitude to be socialized because the advancement of telecommunications, information, and transportation technology has exceeded national boundaries, so a country cannot be isolated from the world. Thus, privilege and privacy that only pay attention to certain groups become irrelevant.

In that context, multicultural education sees society broadly. Based on the fundamental view, the attitude of indifference and nonrecognition not only stems from racial structural inequality, but multicultural education paradigm also includes subjects regarding injustice, poverty, oppression, and underdevelopment of minority groups in various fields, such as social, cultural, economics, education, etc (Huitt, Huitt, Monetti, & Hummels, 2009). Some paradigms will encourage the growth of ethnic studies to find their place in the education curriculum from elementary to tertiary level. The core purpose of the discussion on this subject is to achieve empowerment for minority and disadvantaged groups (Maksum, 2011).

The multicultural education paradigm is expected to erase stereotypes, egoistic, and individualistic attitudes and views among students. On the contrary, it is always conditioned towards growing a comprehensive view of others, a view that recognizes that its existence cannot be separated or integrated with the surrounding environment whose reality consists of ethnic plurality, religion, culture, and needs (Gorski, 2003). Therefore, it is proportional if the multicultural education process is expected to assist students in developing the process of identifying or introducing
them to the culture, ethnicity, and global community. Introducing culture means they are introduced to various types of places of worship, social institutions, and schools. The introduction of ethnicity means that children are trained to live according to their abilities and play a decisive role as citizens of their community. Through global recognition, students are expected to have an understanding of how they can take part in the global arena of life that they face.

The Urgency of Multicultural Education in Indonesia

Indonesia is one of the largest countries in the world, with a population of around 249.9 million. It shows that the country is very diverse in socio-cultural conditions. Nasikun explains that the diversity of the Indonesian people could be seen at least two unique characteristics. First, horizontally, as marked by the reality of social unity based on differences in ethnicity, religion, customs, and regional differences. Second, vertically, marked by the vertical differences between the upper and lower layers, are quite sharp (Nasikun, 2007). The differences will become a burden or wealth depending on how to process them. With the motto Unity in Diversity that has been sparked by the founding fathers of this nation, it is hoped that Indonesian people can live together side by side in a safe, peaceful, and prosperous atmosphere. As an effort to increase students’ appreciation of local wisdom, it will not be separated from the role of an educational institution.

Beside enable to be a strength, wealth, pride, diversity also can be a challenge in itself as it can trigger various problems. So that is likened to the multiculturality of the nation. It can be likened to a knife that has double eyes. On the one hand, it can become a valuable potential in building a nation’s civilization, but, if it cannot be controlled as well as possible, the multiculturality will create a variety of conflicts that can divide the unity of the nation and even create national disintegration (Lasijan, 2014).

According to Muhaimin (2008), there are three primary keys to develop multicultural education. First, it is integrated through learning with the discussion method in small groups. Second, in the form of sensitivity to information mainly related to issues of a multicultural society, because it conveys ethnocultural and religious, democracy and plurality, universal humanity and other relevant subjects. Third, change the paradigm by instilling mutual respect, sincerity and tolerance for cultural diversity in the community, by strengthening spiritual basics that are sensitive to socio-religious issues.

The above background shows the urgency of multicultural education in schools as an effort to increase students’ appreciation of local culture. The purpose of this paper is to explain the urgency of multicultural education and how it is implemented in the education unit. This research is analytic descriptive and uses the experts’ theories of multicultural education in the field of caring for local culture., then analyzed to find the urgency of multicultural education.

The Concept of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a movement of renewal and process to create an equal educational environment for all students. As a reform movement, the term multicultural education is still unfamiliar to the general public, the definition and understanding are still being debated among education experts. Andersen and Cusher (1994), argue that multicultural education is defined as education about cultural diversity. Banks (1994) defined multicultural education as education for people of color. It means that multicultural education wants to explore differences as a necessity (God's grace/Sunatullah) and how people give respond to these differences with full tolerance and egalitarian spirit (Kartikawati, 2019).

Hernandez, (1989) defines multicultural education as a perspective that recognizes the social, political, and economic realities experienced by the individual in culturally diverse and human encounters, and reflects the importance of culture, race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, religion, social, economic status, and exceptions in the education process. Sapendi (2015) define multicultural education as a progressive approach to transform education, which holistically provides criticism and points out weaknesses, failures, and discrimination that occur in the world of education. In line with the various thoughts above, Jiyanto (2016) believes that multicultural education is education about cultural diversity in response to changes in demographics and cultural environment of a particular society or even the world as a whole (global). Therefore, multiculturalism is a cultural foundation related to the achievement of civility, which is essential for the realization of civilized democracy and democratic civilization.

Multiculturalism is a concept and implementation that has not been fully realized by people. Every human is born in a different situation, carrying several different physical and psychological characteristics, besides that each individual has a belief system, which is not yet entirely acceptable to the collective reasoning of society. Society’s collective reasoning about multiculturalism is still co-opted by logical centrism, hegemonic interpretations which are full of prejudice, suspicion, hatred, and reduction of groups outside themselves. The level of understanding of Indonesian people about multiculturalism is very diverse. However, the majority of Indonesian people have become aware of the importance of multiculturalism as the strength of the nation, and not
the potential to disintegrate unity.

Conceptually, Hakim & Untari (2018) defines multicultural nation more than just cultural diversity. A truly plural society exists if there is an official (recognized) diversity within the basic system of required institutions. The clarity of the Chomaedi & Salamah (2018) concept because it departs from the premise that any institutional system tends to lead to internal integration and viscerality while each different group will tend to form an adjacent social and cultural unity. Apart from the context of the region and the era that influenced the emergence of a concept, but the tendency for uniformity among various ethnic groups. This tendency will place certain ethnic groups in the majority as elements who have the right to address themselves as "representing the community." Even though, in reality, it can lead to primordial attitudes that prioritize the interests of a particular group or community.

Humans create their culture or the social environment as an adaptation to their physical and biological environment. The habits, practices, and traditions continue to live and develop passed on from one generation to another in a given society. In turn, the group or ethnic group does not realize where the wisdom inheritance exists. The next generation is conditioned to accept the "truths" about life around them because the previous generation has set certain norms and values. However, certain norms and values of an area or ethnicity can be accepted or not depends on the perceptions, knowledge and beliefs of the people concerned.

Culture is the unique lifestyle of a particular human group (Wiharidit, 2017). Culture is the knowledge that can be communicated, learned behavioral traits that also exist in members of a social group and manifest in the institutions of their artifacts. Taylor, an anthropologist, mentions culture as a whole dimension, including knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and abilities or other habits acquired by members of society. In this case, each cultural group produces its particular answers to life’s challenges such as birth, growth, social relationships, and even death. Culture gives identity to a group of people about the characteristics of their culture. Some aspects of culture are evident in human behavior, but others are hidden. Some of these cultural aspects are explicit in the customs and knowledge of the community and manifest in customary law, traditions that are believed by the community groups.

Among the many definitions of culture, some definitions mention culture as historically created designs for living for life that can be rational, irrational, and non-rational. Rational behavior in culture is based on what the group thinks makes sense to achieve its goals. Irrational behavior deviates from the norms accepted by society and may stem from a person’s frustration in trying to satisfy his needs. Irrational behavior will be done by people without logic and most likely as an emotional response. Non-rational behavior is not based on logic, nor does it contradict reasonable expectations. Many behaviors fall into both types. We do not realize why we do that behavior, why we believe what we do, or that it might be prejudiced according to the views of people outside our cultural group.

Humans create a culture not only as an adaptive mechanism for their biological and geophysical environment but also as a tool to provide a fair share of our social evolution. Thus humans as individual creatures, inherent traits that can be caused by the nature of previous generations of humans. In its development, the geophysical environment in which we live and reside, such as homes, schools, places of worship, offices, or other places, provides a cultural context that influences our behavior. Culture makes it easy for life to solve problems by applying patterns of relationships, and ways to maintain group cohesion and consensus. There are many different ways or approaches to analyze and categorize a culture, so that it is more easily understood.

In simple terms, multicultural education can be defined as "education for/about cultural diversity in response to demographic and cultural changes in a particular community's environment or even the world as a whole." Multicultural education can be seen from three aspects: concepts, movements, and processes (Jacky, 2015). From the aspect of the concept, multicultural education is understood as an idea that views all students regardless of gender and their social class, their ethnicity, their race, and other cultural characteristics have the same opportunity to learn in class.

On the movement aspect, multicultural education is defined as an effort to change schools and educational institutions so that students from all social classes, gender, race, and cultural groups have the same opportunity to learn. The changes made are not only limited to the curriculum, but also other aspects such as methods, strategies, learning management, and the school environment. In the process aspect, multicultural education can be understood as a process to achieve goals so that all students can achieve educational equality. Educational equality, such as independence and justice, is not easy to achieve, so this process must continue.

Building a Multicultural Education Curriculum in Schools

The discourse of multicultural education has indeed warmed up in the mass media and has been widely discussed in some forums; unfortunately, it is
not followed by some solemn and continuous efforts to formulate into more creative ideas. Efforts to promote the concept of multicultural education as part of efforts to reduce the potential of the nation's horizontal and vertical conflicts due to misunderstanding about SARA have not been running significantly. As the implication, efforts to soften the cold and melt the rigidity of religious and humanitarian thought from each religion and culture have not been considered too important to be led to education. Starting from the material and methodological aspects taught in schools, Islamic Schools, seminars, and the general public, tend to teach religious education partially.

Implementation of multicultural education at the level of primary and secondary education can be done comprehensively through civic education and Religious Education, can be done through empowering curriculum slots or adding or expanding competencies of learning outcomes in the context of fostering noble morals, having the intensity to foster and develop harmony interfaith life, by emphasizing various essential competencies as described above. Then, it must also be done in a deductive approach with relevant studies, then developed into religious norms, legal norms, ethics, as well as social norms (Oktaviyanti, Sutarto, & Atmaja, 2016).

Differences in the self-education that must be recognized in multicultural education include ethnic and racial minority populations, religious groups, religious, gender, economic conditions, regions/origins, physical and mental disabilities, age groups, and others (Tukiran, 2014). Through this multicultural education, students are given the opportunity and choice to support and pay attention to one or several cultures, for example, the value system, lifestyle, or language. As the implication, efforts to soften the cold and melt the rigidity of religious and humanitarian thought from each religion and culture have not been considered too important to be led to education. Starting from the material and methodological aspects taught in schools, pesantren, seminars, and the general public, tends to teach religious education partially (only skin).

Banks (1994) explains that multicultural education has five interrelated dimensions and can assist teachers in implementing several programs that can respond to student differences; (1) dimensions of content integration, (2) dimensions knowledge construction, (3) dimensions of prejudice reduction, (4) equitable pedagogy and (5) dimensions of school culture empowerment and social structure (empowering school culture and social structure). Meanwhile, in the methodical aspects, learning strategies and management are essential aspects of multicultural education. Wahidmurni (2017) defines learning management as "practices and procedures that enable teachers to teach and students learn." Related to these practices and procedures Konradus (2014) mentions three factors in learning management, namely:

1. **Physical environment**

To create a safe and comfortable physical environment, teachers can consider aspects of lighting, colors, table and chair arrangements, plants, and music. Teachers who have an understanding of the cultural background of their students will create a physical environment that is conducive to learning.

2. **Human environment**

Content Integration: This dimension is used by teachers to provide information with critical points of learning by reviewing different materials. Knowledge construction: A dimension where teachers help students to understand multiple perspectives and formulate conclusions that are influenced by the discipline of knowledge they have. Prejudice reduction: The teacher makes much effort to assist students in developing positive behavior about group differences. Equitable pedagogy: This dimension pays attention to ways of changing learning facilities to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes for several students from various groups. Empowering school culture and social structure: This dimension is vital in empowering the culture of students who are brought to school from different groups. Teachers can create a safe and comfortable social environment through selected languages, loving relationships between students, and fair treatment of students of diverse cultures.

3. **Teaching style**

Besides physical and social environment, students also need an encouraging style of teacher teaching. According to Garcia, the teachers’ teaching style is a leadership style or escort technique used by the teacher in the learning process (the kind of leadership or governance techniques a teacher uses). In the learning process, the teacher leadership style is very influential for the presence or absence of student opportunities to share opinions and make decisions. The teacher leadership style revolves around authoritarian, democratic, and free. Authoritarian leadership style does not provide opportunities for students to share opinions. What the teacher teaches students is determined solely by the teacher. Conversely, a democratic teacher leadership style provides opportunities for students to determine the material students need to learn. Furthermore, teachers who use the free leadership style submit entirely to students to determine the learning material in class. For classes with diverse cultural backgrounds, the students seem to be more suited to the democratic style of teacher leadership.

The approach in multicultural education has developed since the 1960s can be identified with four approaches that integrate ethnic and multicultural
material into the curriculum:

- **the contribution approach**
  This approach reflects the least amount of involvement in the multicultural education approach. This is included by choosing books and activities that celebrate holidays, heroes, and special events from various cultures.

- **Additive Approach**
  In this context, approaches, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing the basic structure. It involves incorporating literature by and about people from diverse cultures into the primary curriculum without changing the curriculum. For example, examining Native American perspectives on an-giving will add cultural diversity to the traditional view of an-giving.

- **The Transformation Approach**
  This approach changes the structure of the curriculum and encourages students to see concepts, issues, themes, and problems from an ethnic perspective and several points of view. For example, Thanksgiving will be an entire unit exploring cultural conflict.

- **Social Action Approach**
  This approach combines a transformation approach with activities to strive for social change. Students are not only instructed to understand and question social issues but also do something meaningful about it.

**CONCLUSION**

The implementation of multicultural education in schools is urgent because it can create the schools as places to erase prejudice, and at the same time to train and build students’ character to be democratic, humanist, and pluralist. There are two things that need to conduct in the development of multicultural education in schools. First, to carry out dialogue by placing each existing civilization and culture in an equal position. Second, developing tolerance to allow each culture to understand each other. This tolerance is not only in conceptual notes but also in its operational techniques.

**REFERENCES**


