

EDUCATING RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN INDONESIA AS A BASIS FOR STRENGTHENING NATION UNITY

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Abstract

Under the spirit of state motto, Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity) and state philosophical basis, Pancasila (The Five Principles), Indonesia, as the democratic state, persistently keeps unity. This article, yet, is more concerned with how important educating religious tolerance is. The issue of religious tolerance, as far as the study is concerned, deserves serious attention, since it indicates very virtual aspect of societal arrays in that the government is trying to pursue harmonious life among people in the country. Official laws and regulations have been served to protect and respect individual right to choose their own beliefs, and interfaith in the context of inter-religion relationship in the country. They, among others, include the amended 1945 Constitution (Chapter XA, Human Rights, Article 28 E, point 1, 2), Decrees of Ministry of Religious Affairs, and other relevant regulations preserving harmony among different religious followers. Apart from the existing rules of religious lives, the tolerance has been often threatened by 'deviant' actions among the extremists or the fundamentalists. In this respect, religious tolerance education is mandatory. In a sense, educational system promoting religious tolerance in the country offers the citizens moral education that covers civics and religion subjects/courses introduced at all levels of education.

Key words: *diversity, unity, life harmony, tolerance, educational system*

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a vast archipelago comprised of about 13,700 islands spread over 1,475,000 square kilometers. It is also the fifth most populated country on earth with 220 million people and the third largest population in the world. It is also a multicultural and multi-religious country (Indonesian Statistics Centre, 2014). There are 1,128 ethnic groups by different languages and customs. The largest ethnic group is the Javanese that makes up 41% of the total population of Indonesia. The Javanese are concentrated on the island of Java but millions have migrated to other islands throughout the archipelago. The Sundanese, Malay, and Madurese are the next largest groups in the country. Many ethnic groups, particularly in Kalimantan and Papua, have only hundreds of members.

Indonesia, a country with a population of 237,641,326 people, six major religions are embraced, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Indonesian Population Census, 2010). In addition, there are a number of religious and other beliefs that exist and develop in Indonesia. The diversity of ethnicity, culture, and religion remains one entirety in Indonesia, inspired by the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (different but still one, unity in diversity).

In this archipelagic country, religion plays a major role in social life. It is stated, the first principle of the state ideology, Pancasila: “belief in the one and only God”. This Indonesian Constitution states “every person shall be free to choose and to practice the religion of his or her choice” and “guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his or her own religion or belief”. A number of different religions are practiced in Indonesia and their collective influence on the country’s political, economic and cultural life is significant. Official laws (e.g. a state constitution) and other supporting regulations: serve to protect and respect individual right to choose their own beliefs, and interfaith in the context of inter-religion relationship in the country. In addition, based on the amended 1945 Constitution (Chapter XA, Human Rights, Article 28 E, point 1, 2); Decrees of Ministry of Religious Affairs, the someone choice of religion is the right of each person and government officially declare in protecting their own choices (seePuspandari, 2015).

Indonesian government is officially acknowledged some religions. The main recognized religions are Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Hamayotsu, 2015). Based on the census report (2010), 88 percent out of 100 percent of the Indonesian population is Muslim, 6 percent of Protestant, 3 percent of Catholic, and 2 percent Hindu. Other religions (Buddhist, followers of traditional indigenous religions, Jewish, and other Christian denominations) are less than 1 percent of the population. Some Christians, Hindus, and members of other minority religious groups say that the census undercounted non-Muslims.

2. Religious Tolerance toward Nation Unity

The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) maintains religious harmony by empowering communities, religious groups, and religious leaders to solve their own problem of religious harmony and providing guidelines in the management of religious harmony. The religious harmony constitutes the relations among people that are based on tolerance, mutual understanding, mutual respect, and respect of the equality in the implementation of religious teachings and cooperation in the social life, being a good member of the nation and state of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the Constitution (UUD) in 1945. The

3 maintenance of religious harmony is a joint effort between the religious community and the Government in the field of services, order, and the empowerment of the religious community.

The forms of the effort to encourage harmony among religious groups are so far as follows:

Strengthening the foundations (rules/common ethics) of harmony in intra and inter-religious groups;

Building social harmony and national unity in the form of efforts to encourage and guide all people to live in a frame of harmonious theology to create the ideal attitude of tolerance and togetherness;

Creating the environment conducive to life in order to produce religious practice and understanding that support harmony in intra and inter-religious groups;

Exploring widely the importance of humanitarian values derived from the pluralistic values of all mankind;

5 Deeply implementing the spiritual values of humanity implemented for the humanity leading to the divine values;

Developing a multicultural perspective for all elements of society;

Developing awareness in the community that difference is a reality in life, therefore it should be seen as the mosaics that can make life more beautiful;

Encouraging that religious understanding is always in harmonious relation with the understanding of the Indonesian nationality horizon.

Besides that, the empowering of religious leaders in Indonesia has been done by empowering FKUB (*Forum KerukunanUmatBeragama* – fora for inter-religious harmony). FKUB have been established in all 33 Provinces and some 403 out of some 532 districts and municipalities. Their functions are to empower local religious leaders and help protect inter-religious harmony and promote cooperation among religious groups in Indonesia, as well as to provide opportunities for dialogue among religious groups. The members of such form consist of the representatives of all existing religious groups.

3. Religious tolerance education to strengthen unity in the diverse contexts

Religious tolerance education is admitted as the meaningful and significant strategy in terms of life harmony in Indonesia. Jackson and Fujiwara (2007) argue that education for religious tolerance is also closely associated with peace education. In an effort of nation character building, both informal education (also at home) and formal schooling play very important role. Formally speaking, religious tolerance education can be carried out through engaging in moral and behavioral enhancement/training in relevant integrated ways as reflected in school subjects, Civics (Pancasila Education) and Religion. The religious tolerance education is given to students from basic education levels to higher education with at least 2 credit hours. Though, the moral values of being tolerant can be infused in other relevant subjects.

The present study also suggests that teachers creatively and critically develop teaching materials that trigger students' involvement in social process of interpreting religious tolerance. The materials should be adjusted to the level of age (starting from very early age), culture, social and economical status, and life perspectives. In addition, the selected teaching pedagogy should also corroborate the social process of constructing each classroom member's understanding of being tolerant in small scope of social contexts and wider life boundaries. The subjects of the education should be actively immersed in totally-involved in 'meaning-making of tolerance' activities in real life contexts shaping and being shaped by individual

participation. The subjects, then, are trained to be critical in facing every different angel of religious life through problem-solving of certain cases they are facing.

4. Conclusion

The efforts of the government to keep and maintain harmony have been so strong as described above. Therefore, the future agenda is to strengthen religious tolerance by strengthening local and religious wisdoms in each religion by the religious community. On the other hand, the government should increase its efforts to empower communities and (if necessary) strengthen regulations providing guidance for the implementation of a harmonious life.

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