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PREPARING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS TO SERVE A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY ¹

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1. Introduction

We all agree that our country Indonesia is one of the big countries in the world. With cultural diversity, customs, religions, languages, races and the number of ethnic groups that it has made Indonesia a large nation that has a pluralistic or multicultural society. On one side, the diversity possessed by the Indonesian people can be strength, but on the other hand, it can also be a threat.³ It can be strength if we, as citizens of the nation can maintain the diversity with an attitude of tolerance. On the contrary, however, the condition of pluralism can be a threat if we cannot treat it well, being intolerant and even hostile to each other on the basis of these differences.

Being aware that Indonesia consist of plural society it is crucial for us to have a better understanding on the concept of multiculturalism in order that we can live together side by side in peace and harmony. Thus, introducing the concept of multiculturalism to the citizen is helpful to prevent tensions in society. The best and effective way to educate people is through multicultural education. As an agent of change in the community,

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³ Gina Lestari, 2015, “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: Khasanah Multikultural Indonesia Di Tengah Kehidupan SARA*”, *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan*, Th. 28, Nomor 1, Pebruari 2015, h. 32.

education becomes the foundation for overcoming problems arising from multiculturalism. Education with its role in controlling and managing shifts or changes in all aspects of people's lives is demanded to be able to accommodate all the diversity that arises, so that all students get equal education. Such education, referred to as multicultural education.⁴ This can be achieved through education in schools by preparing teacher who will actively be involved in the society.

In terms of methodology, this study is a qualitative undertaking of literary research. Any material containing discussions on the subject be it in the forms of books or articles of journals were utilized to conduct this study. All these documents are considered equal, depending on their relevancy to the topic of the study. As this study focuses on texts containing information on the subject, it employs the technique of content analysis to grasp its real meaning. Babbie defines content analysis as "the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings and laws"⁵, while Holsti describes the content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages"⁶. The objective of employing this technique is in order to be able to present generalization thus it can give theoretical contribution.

This paper presents a discussion on a conceptual analysis of thought concerning the importance of preparing teachers of religious education to be suitable and capable of doing his or her job in a pluralistic society that we are witnessing and experiencing today. The two problem statements in this paper are: (1) what is meant by pluralistic society and

⁴ Setya Raharja, 2010, "Mengkreasi Pendidikan Multikultural Di Sekolah Dengan Menerapkan Manajemen Mutu Sekolah Secara Total", *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, No. 02/Th VI/Oktober/2010, p. 28.

⁵ Earl R. Babbie, 2010, *The Practice of Social Research* (12th ed.), Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, p. 530.

⁶ Ole R. Holsti, 1969, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

(2) what kind of teacher must be prepared to be able to carry out their duties and adapt well in such a society. In order to get a better understanding on the topic, this study scrutinizes features such as: Introduction, Teacher: qualification, function and duty, In need of teacher of religious education, Pluralistic society defined, Advantages and disadvantages of pluralistic society, Introducing multicultural education, Requiring characterized teacher, Teacher of religious education for a pluralistic society, Conclusion. It is hoped that this paper will add to the development of science as well as enrich the existing treasury of theories in the field of education.

2. Teacher: qualification, function and duty

The term teacher is often used flexibly and often exchanges with the term educator. Law of Republic of Indonesia number 14 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers, chapter I article 1 provides the following teacher definitions, "Teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, evaluating, and evaluating students in education of early childhood formal education, basic education and secondary education" [translation, mine].⁷

Then, chapter II article 2 paragraph (1) states that teachers have the position as professionals at the level of basic education, secondary education, and early childhood education in the formal education pathways that are appointed in accordance with statutory regulations. Recognition of the position of the teacher as a professional, as referred to in paragraph (1), is evidenced by an educator certificate. Furthermore Article 4 explains that the position of the teacher as a professional as referred to in Article 2 paragraph (1) serves to improve the dignity and

⁷ UU RI no. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen.

role of the teacher as an agent of learning functions to improve the quality of national education.⁸

Then in Article 6 it is explained, the position of the teacher (and also the lecturer) as a professional staff aims to implement the national education system and realize the national education goals, namely “the development of the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty, have good morality, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and be a democratic and responsible citizen”.⁹ So, according to this law the teacher has a major and heavy responsibility in this country.

Some scholars in Indonesia have the same point concerning teacher. Uzer, for instance, regards teacher as job title or profession that requires special skills as to teach. To be a teacher is required special conditions, especially as professional teachers who have to master the intricacies of true education and teaching with a variety of other science that needs to be nurtured and developed through specific training and education.¹⁰

Because of the heavy duties and responsibilities, in order to be appointed as a teacher, one must meet certain qualification requirements, he must have competence and, in addition to that, he must also be certified. For qualifications (as explained in the Law No. 14 year 2005 concerning Teacher and Lecturer), in addition to being physically and mentally healthy and having the ability to realize national educational goals, a teacher must have an academic qualification obtained through a tertiary education program or program of diploma of four (article 9). In addition to meeting these qualification requirements, a teacher is also required to have pedagogical competencies, personal competencies, social

⁸ UU RI no. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen.

⁹ UU RI no. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen.

¹⁰ Moh. Uzer Usman, 2001, *Menjadi Guru Profesional*, Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, p. 5.

competencies, and professional competencies obtained through professional education (article 10). Apart from the qualification and competency requirements, a teacher must also be certified as a professional educator. Higher education institutions that have an accredited education personnel procurement program established by the Government according to the provisions of the Act, organize educator certification, and the teacher certification program is carried out objectively, transparently, and accountably.¹¹

3. In need of teacher of religious education

It needs to be stressed here that religious education teachers in the national education system in Indonesia also have a role that is no less important compared to teachers of general subjects. In Islamic literature there are a lot of terms used to refer to the word 'teacher'. The word 'teacher' means someone who has the duty of teaching. In Arabic there are a number of words containing the meaning of teaching, such as *ustad*, *mudarris*, *mu'allim*, and *mu'addib*.¹² A Muslim teacher has responsibility to make learning process of religious education in school touches not only cognitive aspect but also affective and psychomotor aspect as well. In this case what is needed is a supreme teacher. In Islamic perspective, such an idealized teacher can be found in an ultimate profile of teacher, as many Muslim scholars have promoted.

Al-Qalqasyandi, for instance, a Muslim educator in the era of the Fatimid caliph in Egypt, described the profile of teacher of religious education as follows. Firstly, from the perspective of physical requirements, (a) the teacher must have great body, (b) the teacher must have shining face, (c) the teacher must have wide forehead and clean from hair. Secondly, from the perspective psychological requirements, (a) the

¹¹ UU RI no. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen.

¹² Abuddin Nata, 2006, *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam I*, Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, p. 61.

teacher must have healthy mind, (b) the teacher must have keen understanding, (c) the teacher must have civilized heart, be fair and knight, (d) the teacher must have a broad chest, (e) the teacher must know the meaning of what he or she talks about, (f) the teacher must have clear statement and easily understood, (f) the teacher must choose glorious words, (g) the teacher must avoid something leading to words that is not clear.¹³ It is important to realize that teachers have a very important role in the education process, especially in the delivery of religious education teachings, because it is the teacher who can make the students' blueprints and direct them to the desired destination. So, a good and qualified religious education teacher is needed in order to prepare students who will become citizens in a pluralistic society.

4. Pluralistic society defined

To get a better understanding in this matter, we need to know in advance the definition of what a pluralistic society is. Collin dictionary gives a definition as follow, a pluralistic society is "one in which many different groups and political parties are allowed to exist".¹⁴ Merriam-Webster defines pluralism as "a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization".¹⁵ Very often, pluralistic society is also called multicultural society. Usman Pelly (quoted in Gunawan), states that multicultural societies are people of countries, nations, regions, even limited geographical locations such as cities or schools, which consist of people who have different cultures in equality. In essence, a multicultural society

¹³ Zuhairini, 1995, *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*, Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, pp. 169-170.

¹⁴ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pluralist>. Retrieved on 2 October 2016.

¹⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pluralism>. Retrieved on 2 October 2016.

is a society consisting of various kinds of tribes, each of which has a different cultural structure.¹⁶ These two terms are often used interchangeably.

So, it can be understood that pluralistic society is a heterogeneous society that has diverse backgrounds be it culture, religion, language or race and ethnicity. Meanwhile, people who live in a pluralistic society and he or she is satisfied and accepts the situation and believes that a variety of conditions are good things can be said as a “pluralist”.¹⁷

5. Advantages and disadvantages of pluralistic society

It is undeniable that every condition has advantages and disadvantages. Pluralistic society is not an exception. From a number of sources, it can be seen that pluralistic society has advantages. The advantages are, among others: (1) support for social freedom. Many people become afraid of excessive power by a business or other institution, the reason being that their freedom will decrease in a situation like this. (2) Many opportunities for leadership. In a pluralistic society there are many leadership opportunities, as people who have the talent and ability to lead need not be afraid to realize their leadership abilities. Thus, a pluralistic social organization is a training ground for leadership. (3) Tolerance of other ideas. In a pluralistic society the community is aware that the existence of diverse ideas to solve a problem is very necessary to solve different needs, for that reasons, tolerance among fellow citizens is needed. (4) Improve social decision. Plural conditions have caused many diverse organizations that have diverse perspectives, so consequently they also provide a lot of input into the social decision-making process in society. (5) Satisfaction of different human needs. Psychologically, every

¹⁶ Ketut Gunawan & Yohanes Rante, 2011, “Manajemen Konflik Atasi Dampak Masyarakat Multikultural di Indonesia”, *Jurnal Mitra Ekonomi dan Manajemen Bisnis*, Vol.2, No. 2, Oktober 2011, p. 216-217.

¹⁷ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pluralist>. Retrieved on 2 October 2016.

person is different from each other, and therefore, their needs and patterns are different too.¹⁸ In short, one of the main strengths of a plural society is that its inhabitants have more acceptances and are more tolerant. Generally speaking, members of a pluralistic society try to better understand differences that might be difficult for others to accept. In addition, they tend to be less biased towards minorities, although this is not always the case.¹⁹

However, pluralistic societies also have disadvantages, such as: (1) lack of central direction. In a pluralistic society people tend to pursue their own goals, unless there is a primary goal that will unite them. That is why a pluralistic system will be very dependent on the government to provide social goals and long-term plans and policies that they want to achieve. (2) Emphasis on institutional power instead of service. In a pluralistic society each institution has freedom of action. Therefore, each institution will emphasize their strength more than their services. (3) Social fragmentation. In a pluralistic society many diverse groups emerge so that their goals will overlap. Such conditions will make them have to exert a lot of energy to coordinate and look after each other. (4) Elitism. As technology develops and social systems become more complex, inevitably some people must know more than others about this complex problem, otherwise they will be left far behind. (5) Focus on conflict. It is often said that pluralism is focused on resolving conflicts because many autonomous organizations want to meet their own needs, so it is not uncommon for conflicts to arise between one party and another.²⁰ It is normal that in every system or condition there must be positive aspects and negative aspects. Now, our task is how to minimize the negative aspects and maximize and take maximum benefit from the positive aspects.

¹⁸ <https://bba-mba-guide.blogspot.com/2012/06/what-are-strength-and-weakness-of.html>. Retrieved on 5 October 2016.

¹⁹ <https://sciencestruck.com/what-is-pluralistic-society>. Retrieved on 5 October 2016.

²⁰ <https://bba-mba-guide.blogspot.com/2012/06/what-are-strength-and-weakness-of.html>. Retrieved on 5 October 2016.

6. Introducing multicultural education

It is a fact that we live in and become part of a pluralistic society. It is also said that Indonesia is the third biggest multicultural countries in the world, in addition to United States of America and India.²¹ Therefore, introduction of multicultural education is a must. James Banks (quoted in Mania) defines multicultural education as education for people of colour. It means that multicultural education wants to explore differences as a necessity, then how to respond to these differences with full of egalitarianism and enthusiasm. Meanwhile, Hernandez (also quoted in Mania) defines multicultural education as a perspective that recognizes the political, social and economic realities experienced by each individual in diversity and culturally diverse human encounters, and reflects the importance of culture, race, sexuality and gender, ethnicity, religion, social, economic status, and exceptions in the education process.²² Asy'arie argued that multicultural education is a process of instilling a way of life respecting, sincere, and tolerant of the cultural diversity that lives in the midst of a plural society. With multicultural education, it is expected that there will be resilience and mental flexibility of the nation in the face of social conflict.²³

The idea of multicultural education in Indonesia itself, as explained by H.A.R Tilaar is education to increase respect for the ethnic and cultural diversity of the community.²⁴ Some people are in doubt that Indonesia will

²¹ Gina Lestari, 2015, "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: Khasanah Multikultural Indonesia Di Tengah Kehidupan SARA*", *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan*, Th. 28, No.1, Pebruari 2015, p. 32.

²² Sitti Mania, 2010, "Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Pembelajaran", *Lentera Pendidikan*, Vol. 13 No. 1 Juni 2010, p. 80.

²³ Iis Arifudin, 2012, "Urgensi Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural di Sekolah", *INSANIA*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Mei-Ags 2007, p. 3.

²⁴ H.A.R. Tilaar, *Multikulturalisme, Tantangan-Tantangan Global Masa Depan dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Nasional*, Jakarta: Grasindo, 2004, pp. 137-138.

be able to implement multicultural education as good as it has been implemented in the United States of America.²⁵ Indonesia, as strengthened by experts who have great attention to multi-ethnic education, actually makes multiculturalism a common platform in designing learning based on Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), even those values are pursued through citizenship subjects and supported by religious education.²⁶ Thus, religious education also has an important role in supporting the success of multicultural education.

Gorski (quoted in Amirin) states that there are three main objectives of multicultural education, (which may be called as instrumental and terminal objectives), namely: (1) eliminating educational discrimination, providing equal opportunities for each student to develop their potential (instrumental goals), (2) make students able to achieve academic performance according to their potential (internal terminal objectives), (3) make students socially aware and active as citizens of local, national, and global communities (external terminal final goals).²⁷

Furthermore, James Banks (quoted in Mania) explains that multicultural education has several dimensions that are interrelated with one another. Firstly, Content integration, namely integrating various cultures and groups to illustrate fundamental concepts, generalizations and theories in subjects or scientific disciplines. Secondly, knowledge construction process, that is to bring students to understand the cultural implications in a subject (discipline). Thirdly, an equity pedagogy, which is adjusting teaching methods with student learning in order to facilitate student with an academic achievement that varies in terms of race, culture

²⁵ Akhmad Hidayatullah Al Arifin, 2012, "Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Praksis Pendidikan Di Indonesia", *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi dan Aplikasi*, Volume 1, Nomor 1, Juni, 2012, h. 79.

²⁶ Dede Rosyada, 2014, "Pendidikan Multikultural Di Indonesia Sebuah Pandangan Konsepsional", *Sosio Didaktika: Vol.1, No.1, Mei 2014*, p.3.

²⁷ Tatang M. Amirin, 2012, "Implementasi Pendekatan Pendidikan Multikultural Kontekstual Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Di Indonesia", *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi Dan Aplikasi*, Volume 1, Nomor 1, Juni, 2012, p. 4.

or social. Fourthly, prejudice reduction, which is identifying the racial characteristics of students and determining their teaching methods.²⁸ So, every teacher in charge of implementing multicultural education must pay attention to these dimensions in carrying out their duties.

7. Requiring characterized teacher

To be able to improve the quality of the learning process in multicultural-based education requires teachers with certain characteristics. Aldridge, as pointed out by Rosyada (quoted in Sukardi), mentioned the required teacher characteristics are as follows: (1) The teacher must be able to create a classroom situation that is calm, clean, non-stressful, and very supportive for the implementation of learning. (2) The teacher must provide opportunities for students to access all material and sources of information for learning. (3) The teachers need to use cooperative learning models through discussion in small groups, debates, or role-playing. (4) The teacher must be able to connect new information to something that is already known by students, so that it is easy for them to understand. (5) The teacher must be able to encourage students to work on assignments, by conducting studies and searching on new and in-depth things. (6) The teacher must have progress notes of all student learning processes, individual assignments, so that they can carry out evaluations in the form of portfolio.²⁹

Furthermore, to implement multicultural education in Indonesia there are several procedures that must be taken. First of all, preparing the curriculum by inserting various competencies that students must have about multiculturalism in relevant subjects, because multiculturalism is a new movement and has not become a comprehensive science. Then, it is followed by a formulation of various material in accordance with the

²⁸ Sitti Mania, 2010, p. 82.

²⁹ Tanto Sukardi & Subandowo, 2014, "Mencari Format Baru Pendidikan Berbasis Multikultural Di Indonesia", *Sosio Didaktika*, Vol. 1, No. 1 Mei 2014, p.107.

competencies to be achieved, and followed by a formulation of the learning process that further provides opportunities for students to foster and develop attitudes, in addition to social knowledge and skills related to efforts to develop a multiculturalist attitude.³⁰ The teacher in charge of multicultural-based learning must pay attention to this procedure and make the best and maximum possible practice.

8. Teacher of religious education for a pluralistic society

In a pluralistic society as we experience it today in Indonesia, religious education is being challenged because of its inability to free students out of religious exclusivity. What we need to do now is to apply an inclusive-pluralist religious paradigm by accepting opinions and other understandings that have a divinity and humanity basis.³¹

The challenge we face today to succeed multicultural education is how the government prepares religious education teachers who have sufficient academic qualifications in accordance with applicable law (Law No. 14 of 2005), and then have good competence in 4 basic competencies for teachers, namely pedagogical competence, professional competence, personality competence and social competence, and has been certified (according to government regulations). In my opinion, however, these things are not enough. Religious education teachers who are going to teach religious material in schools within a pluralistic society must be open-minded and apply an inclusive-pluralist religious paradigm to the students which confirms Islam as *rahmatan lil alamin* (a gift for all nature).

Therefore, a teacher of religious education must be democratic both in words, attitudes and actions. The teacher must have high level of concern for events that are linked to religion, for example the Bali

³⁰ Dede Rosyada, 2014, p. 4.

³¹ Erlan Muliadi, 2012, "Urgensi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Berbasis Multikultural Di Sekolah", *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jun 2012, p.62.

bombings in 2003. In addition to that, the teacher must be able to explain that the core of religious teachings is to create peace and prosperity for all humans. Furthermore, the teachers must be able to provide an understanding of the importance of dialogue and deliberation in resolving various problems related to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity.³² In a pluralistic society, conflicts often erupt as a result of excessive ethnic and religious fanaticism among the community members. Of course, that condition can disturb the harmony that exists. The solution can be to instill the values of each religion and human values that will erase the attitude of ethnic and religious fanaticism.³³ This is not an easy task, but we must start it from now because we have the same goal, namely materializing a nation that is just and prosperous together without making discrimination to citizen of different cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious background.

9. Conclusion

From the discussion that I have presented above, I can draw some conclusions as follows. It is a fact that as Indonesians, we currently live in the midst of a pluralistic society. This condition can have two effects at once, both positive and negative. It becomes positive when we can maintain and care for the diversity and richness of culture, customs, race, ethnicity and religion. On the contrary, it can be negative and even a threat to the unity of this nation if mutual hostility because of existing differences grows and an attitude of tolerance is not adopted.

To ensure that our nation becomes a harmonious and peaceful nation, it is important to introduce this diversity to our community. One way to introduce it is by multicultural education through the existing

³² Erlan Muliadi, 2012, p. 63.

³³ Eli Karliani, 2011, "Pembinaan Masyarakat Multikultural Dalam Meningkatkan Integrasi Bangsa", *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan*, Th. 24, No.2, Agustus 2011, p. 91.

educational institutions or schools. Therefore, it is time for schools to welcome the adoption of multicultural education. This multicultural education can succeed if adequate human resources support it. One of the most important factors in organizing this multicultural education is teacher. No less important in this case is the presence of religious education teachers. They have a central role because it is they who will be the captain who can direct students in the desired direction.

Today, there are still many religious education teachers who have not been able to get out of their zone of exclusion in delivering religious material to the students. So, at this time we need to prepare religious education teachers who have good qualifications, good competence as well as certified (according to government regulation). In addition to that, they have an open insight, are willing and able to apply an inclusive-pluralist religious paradigm. It is religious education teachers like this that must be prepared in the midst of Indonesia's current pluralistic society. *Wa Allah a'lam bi al-sawab..!*

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