

# Building Tolerant Communities through Basic Intercultural Education

Irzum Farihah

*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN) Kudus, Jl. Conge Ngembalrejo Po Box 51, Kudus, Indonesia.  
irzum@stainkudus.ac.id*

**Keywords:** Tolerance, Intercultural Education, Religious Faith.

**Abstract:** Tolerance amongst Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and believers in Jrahi village has been going on hereditarily. However, with the development of information technology that shows various intolerant actions, the condition is now presumed to be more worrying that the attitude of the community gets affected, especially that of the children. Therefore, this research aims at building the attitude of tolerance to students of SDN 1 Jrahi which was conducted by each religion teacher by inculcating religious values in intercultural education. This research used a qualitative approach and the data collection method was by using observation, interviews, and documentations. The data sources of this research comprise the teachers of SDN 1 Jrahi, the surrounding community, and the students. The research results include: first, the teachers inculcate tolerance to the students with intercultural education, that is, by building good rapport amongst human beings democratically. Second, the teachers always gave opportunities to the students to apply teachings of religion through having prayers in congregation, in-depth learning of gospel, and puja bhakti (devotion). Third, it was found that mutual understanding amongst people across religions was successfully built by the teachers, students, and the community.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Religious education is a sub-system of national education which has a very strategic role, so religious education is included in the curriculum of primary, secondary and college education to restore the eastern values that have begun to shift. It is also affected by the development of technology that has gone rapidly, so as to influence the inculcation of tolerance attitude amongst children that has been established from time to time through heredity. Intercultural education through inculcation of religious values that are taught to every student is expected to be able to build tolerance through early ages

The delivery of religious teaching through education is the essential foundation for students to have provisions in community life, while the school is one of the main places for the production and reproduction of religion (Coulby, 2008). The implementation of religious teaching in SDN 1 Jrahi is not only conducted to the religion of a majority of students solely; the minority of which is also given the same portion of the right to have the education. When it is not balanced in giving the right of

education, it is likely to cause tensions across religions or ethnics (Essomba, 2017).

At the micro and pedagogical level, either in the context of formal education and informal, it contains cooperative dimension in the process of learning which requires openness level (Bash, 2014). It demands the teachers be more creative in developing the material of religion when teaching the students. As Hilferty (2008) states that the focus of intercultural education, in particular, promotes cohesion, tolerance, and social understanding as well as an application of media (Strugielska and Pi tkowska, 2016), assures that students are taught skills and values needed to participate in diverse community culturally. Brown (2006) also emphasizes and elaborates that tolerance should avoid controversial talks, e.g. identity and faith.

According to Sobre (2017), the critical culture that is built through intercultural communication, pedagogy as a knowledge system along with teachers and students, either that is taught in a didactic way or that is taught through experience, it has a mission to build social justice. Toyoda (2016) sees the importance of external involvement to build knowledge, experience, awareness, or understanding

and thinking skill in sustaining communication and affective behavior which is in accordance with the intercultural situation. The research in this article focuses more on how to build the tolerance to the level of elementary school with the emphasis on understanding own religion that teaches values of humanity. Teachers of religion use a variety of approaches which departs from the daily life of the children in their interactions.

## 2 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The meaning of self-tolerance is the ability to respect the nature, beliefs, and behaviours of the others. In Islam it is known as *tasamuh* which are understood as the attitude of appreciating, letting, or allowing the views of others that are contrary to our views. Education has a very important role in instilling religious values, traditions, and ritualism that belong to every religion. That is, education should present an internal awareness to every adherent of his religion, otherwise known as intercultural education. Interculturality is assumed as a sustainable effort in self and institutional building, as a way to build a tolerance amongst people of across religions (Pu chi a, 2011).

Intercultural education is defined as a holistic education approach, based on the appreciation of cultural diversity, which aims at giving the equal opportunities to all people, getting used to having dialogs, communications, intercultural competition, overcoming racism and discrimination on the group of minority. Hence, the intercultural teaching and learning have more emphasis on horizontal relationship, going forward together, and learning each other (Aman, 2015). According to Coulby (Holm and Zilliacus, 2009), interculturalism should be integrated into all subjects and provide multiple perspectives for a deeper understanding. Intercultural education has two main discussions, namely: first, inclusion and participation, which stress on their similarities. Second, learning to live together which implies in the feeling of being one community with each-other respect and regular dialogs (Batelaan, 2003).

The model of the process of intercultural competence by Deardorff (2004) consists of three components, including cognitive, affective, behavior, while the development of intercultural competence at school is divided into three sub-categories: first, a partnership by tolerance constructed and sharing of experiences and new learning points. Second, students can learn to

appreciate diversity in society, so as to be able to realise solidarities and appreciate their colleagues, and third, society as the media to build intercultural education (Santos and Simões, 2014). Fourth, it is to strengthen communication and prevent from the misunderstanding (Hernández-Bravo, and Cardona-Moltó, 2017).

Establishing intercultural education as what is meant earlier takes hard work and creativity of the teachers to show their empathy towards the students (Zembylas and Papamichael, 2017) as in the three areas of difference (race, religion, and culture), it will be very sensitive and tends to be conflicting. Therefore, the importance of being developed in educational programs on two things: first, the problem of prejudice, that is seeking the root of prejudice, both race, and religion. Second, look for effective ways to change behaviour to overcome prejudices that occur among learners.

Management in the learning process to build the concept of intercultural education is, of course, cannot be separated from the effort to make choices from the perspective of managing the diversity of his or her religion and the religion in the community. According to Stoer and Ortesao (2000), there are two perspectives on the theoretical level: first, conventional approaches that recognize the diversity of cultural identity, each of which has the right to bring their symbols and symbols to the public sphere. The concept of unity, in this case, is structured by cultural diversity or later known as unity in diversity. Second, the perspective of confessionals, in which case there must be the arrangement of the management of the ascriptive symbols in the public space. Where symbols are allowed to be brought into the public domain are common symbols.

Durkheim sees the role of an educator as a figure capable of influencing students to be ready for social life, as education is the most influential socialization medium (Cladis, 2008). Besides, the role of the community is inevitably needed for the students' intellectual development and individual personality. It is due to the existence of people as laboratory and macro sources to enrich the process of education, as expected from intercultural education which will create tolerant human beings who are familiar with dialogs, ready to get along with people, interactive, cooperative, fulfilling each other, appreciative, respectful despite the difference in their religion (Johnson, 2006).

Parsons sees that there are two types of values that students must acquire as individuals in their development, which are particular values and

universal values (Abercrombie et.al, 2010; Jary and Jary, 1991). The particular value will be obtained by individuals when socializing in their family environment (primary socialization), the family background will greatly affect the particular value studied by individuals, and the results will vary between individuals and others. When the individual (student) enters the wider social environment (school and community), a value previously obtained is not obtained in the family.

Being an acceptable individual in a diverse society of cultures and religions certainly, needs to present an internal awareness first as a follower of religion. Hence the importance of the cultivation of religious and moral education at the elementary level students which will have an impact on social change (Ramp, 1999). The basic principles of religious education according to Dewey are: first, religious education in a plurality context needs to put pressure on religious experience. As the substance of religious education, the religious experience will provide a foundation for the growth of inclusive and tolerant attitudes towards learners (Dewey and Alexander, 2013).

Secondly, religious education should not always be formally conveyed in the classroom, since religious experience can also be obtained through various other forms of natural experience, as long as it directs the individual to obedience to his God. So this is where the role of teachers is very important to deliver their students in applying his life experience religiously. Dewey (1996) sees the role of teachers in two ways: teachers should create environments that allow students to be open, focused on religious experiences and teachers helping students to convey their experiences into symbolic and verbal expressions that their peers can understand. Third, the Deweyan model of religious education emphasizes the importance of interconnecting with other disciplines in the religious teaching curriculum.

### 3 METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach, it is to examine the condition of the natural object in which the researcher is a key instrument, while the type of research used is a case study, with the aim to obtain a complete and in-depth description of the role of religious teachers in building a tolerant society through intercultural education from an early age. The data of this study consist of primary and secondary. Primary data is data obtained from direct

informants namely principals SDN 1 Jrahi and religious teachers who served from Islam, Buddhist, and Christian. In Webster's new collegiate dictionary, the informant is an original speaker who speaks by repeating words, phrases, and sentences in the language or dialect as an imitation model and source of information. This is working with informants starts from ignorance (Miller, 1991). Data collection techniques use observation and interview. As expressed by Ritzer (1975) observation is usually used primarily to observe the actual behavior. Data analysis of this research using Miles-Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

### 4 RESULTS

Jrahi Village is one of the villages located in Sub-district of Gunung Wungkal, District of Pati with a diverse population of religions, 70% Islam, 15% Buddhist, 10% Christian and the rest are believers. While the house of worship consists of five mosques, two monasteries, and four churches. Places of worship between religions with other religions close together, but they respect each other when religious activities are held in each place of worship.

A plural society with good interaction building is characteristic of Jrahi society. This has greatly influenced the intercultural education process already implemented in SDN 1 Jrahi. In addition to the teacher maple, SDN 1 Jrahi also prepares a religious teacher (special) consisting of six teachers, namely: Suharto, Sukani and Hermintono (Christian teacher), Sunarti (Buddhist teacher) and Ahmad Baidhowi also Badar (Moslem teacher). Students of SDN 1 Jrahi numbered 118, with details: 82 Moslem students, 24 Buddhist students, and 12 Christian students. All students from grades 1 to 6 get rights in religious education, with duration of every 3 hours (KTSP) and 4 hours (Curriculum 13). Students will enter the respective religious space with the teacher who has been scheduled. In addition to that every day during Duhur prayer time, for students of grade 3 to 6 are given a chance to worship for 15 minutes, for the Muslims performing prayers Duhur congregation in the mosque adjacent to the school. While the Buddhist to Paritha perform puja bhakti and Christian get deeper al-Kitab also do'a. After that continue instructional until 12:45 and then the students go home.

Teachers' learning methods are diverse, looking at the number and grade levels of the classes. As

applied by Mrs. Sunarti (Buddhist teacher), before entering the class to observe in advance of the interaction done among the students, for example, which often become the communication material of students "snack" (snack), then she when in the class always advised students, if they have snacks to share with their friends without distinguishing their respective religions. The universal values taught by Mrs. Sunarti will have an impact on students' religious experiences in interacting with peers that can build a tolerance to learners.

Religious learning conducted by Mrs. Sunarti is also more to the development of student creativity by using props, for example, religious learning begins by showing pictures, then students are asked to explain and make questions so that students are more critical and understanding with what is delivered by the teacher. As learning in 1st grade, in understanding the students' teachings are invited to sing, also bring props in the form of colorful folding paper, then students are asked to make stupa from the paper. Children are also invited to see directly the objects of learning religion and other religions. Here students are invited to understand the teachings of their religion in a simple and fun, but the substance of religion remains up to the students.

As for Mrs. Sukani (Christian teacher), the delivery of religious materials to the students, starting with the lecture method, then followed by the assignment. As for how to build awareness of mutual respect among the followers of other religions, for example, in Ramadan asked not to eat in any place, this is a form of respect for other students who are Muslims. This student activity is a form of mutual understanding that is able to deliver a positive attitude in accepting the presence of fellow friends of other faiths.

As for Mr. Badar (Moslem teacher), in the process of learning bring internal awareness in advance with internalizing of aqidah and morals. As taught in the sources of religion that is the Qur'an and Sunnah, which has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad for his ummah, that the Prophet was sent on this earth to complete the noble character. In addition, in the Qur'an itself has been explained that God created man from various tribes, nations, and religions, nothing but to know each other (see al-Hujurat verse 13). Dewey (1996) argues that education is the way to a democratic society and that democracy is capable of supporting the growth of individuals and communities and ensuring the rights of minorities.

## 5 DISCUSSION

Religious education applied in SDN 1 Jrahi is an intercultural education using conventional approach. This can be seen from the efforts of the school that gives the right of students to obtain a religious education by providing room facilities in each religion. Here teachers have the authority to build religious values on every student that is in accordance with the teachings of his religion, of course, the human values that exist in the message of religion is always emphasized. In addition, every day before *Dhuhur*, for students Islam is given the opportunity to perform prayers in congregation in a mosque adjacent to the location of the school. This activity is the process of habituation in students. While Christian students invite to pray and deepen the Bible. Similarly, Buddhist students perform *puja bhakti*.

A good cooperation between family, school, and community in building harmony among religious people in Jrahi can be implemented by providing tolerance internalize from all lines. Especially the process of religious learning in SDN 1 Jrahi, may be able to become a provision for learners through the socialization they get in the school environment with the guidance of their respective religious teachers.

Intercultural education which is attributed by SDN 1 Jrahi produces five important things: first, the internalization of religious teachings by prioritizing human values that must be built as taught in religion. Second, while maintaining a culture of togetherness in the midst of diversity through religious learning that has been carried out from generation to generation. Third, the SDN 1 Jrahi provides an opportunity for teachers to creativity to contextualize the teachings with social reality amid the diversity of students and teachers. Fourth, internalize of universal values through the religious experience of the interaction between teacher-student and pupil with the students, peers. Fifth, it deals with building mutual understanding amongst religious people, both teachers, students, and the society.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

Education is held with the aim to provide exemplary, build willingness, develops student creativity by empowering all components of society through participation in the implementation and quality control of education service quality. Intercultural education conducted in Jrahi Village is one example



of an educational model that is able to embrace from various religions (Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) and to build religious experience for students when interacting in school environment either with educator and also among peers who later able to grow inclusive and tolerant attitude to the students.

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