# BEING INCLUSIVE THROUGH MULTI AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: A REFLECTION FROM THE PRACTICE OF MULTI AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN EDUCATION

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#### **ABSTRACT**

n the context of embracing and promoting of respecting diversity, education and school has pivotal role to conduct the inter-religious and multi-religious dialogue in preventing of violence and minimize of prejudice, hatred from religion because of no dialogue and no understanding of each. From sociologist perspective, the manifest function of education is the cultural transmission of values. According to Henslin (2008), "the cultural transmission of values in reference to education, the ways in which schools transmit a society's culture, especially its core values" (Henslin, 506). In this paper, I would like to explain my small research and reflection from my experience when I include in managing of diversity in one private school in Yogyakarta. As the inclusive-multicultural school, the school has program in embracing of religious diversity not only for students but also all school members (staff, teacher and parent). To analyze the practice of inter-religious dialogue among teachers and students, I use Abu-Nimer (2000), Swidler (2008) theories to understand the impact, obstacles and benefit of inter and multi religious the school's program which has dialogued of the religion teaching and values among the students, teachers and also staff. In additional, I also use the theory by Sterkens (2011) to explain the religious education model and religiosity program that run in the school. I use qualitative method to study this issue by interview students and teachers, collect some references from books, journal and website to sharpen and to strengthen the data and information. The aim of this paper is to understand and explain that being inclusive and open minded people, it could be many ways, including through multi and inter-religious practices in education.

Keywords: Inclusive, dialogue, respect, tolerance, diversity

#### INTRODUCTION

Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.- John Dewey

According to Suhadi, "school is the little miniature from the society to manage of norm, value, structure, responsibility and behavior conduct from the element of religiosity" (Suhadi: 2016,iii-iv). From Suhadi, I can conclude how school has the significant role in managing diversity of pluralism that comes from the student's background. School has the opportunity to make the positive dialogue of inter and multi religious among the students and other of the school member like teacher, staff and parent. As the archipelago state that has the rich

cultural and religious diversity, Indonesia's educational role through school has the strategic agent to promote of respect and tolerance of the differences.

Why education through school has the important role in promote of plurality regarded with the Indonesia context that has the plural society, because from Henslin (2008), he coined another manifest function of education is the cultural transmission of values. According to Henslin, "the cultural transmission of values in reference to education, the ways in which schools transmit a society's culture, especially its core values" (Henslin, 506). Another important aspect from education, Henslin also noted that "school also bring about social integration" (Henslin, 506). It means, from school, they promote a sense of national identity by having students salute the flag and sing the national anthem when they have assembly and national ceremony that regularly is held in many schools in Indonesia. Another point of view from the functionalist sociologist, Talcot Parson (1940) he coined that education has function of gatekeeping or determining which people will enter what occupations.

Related with the context of embracing and promoting of respecting diversity, education and school has pivotal role to conduct the inter-religious and multi-religious dialogue in preventing of violence and minimize of prejudice, hatred from religion because of no dialogue and no understanding of each. From the strategic role that I mentioned above, in this writing I would like to explain my experience from one private school in Yogyakarta as my reflection when I include of managing diversity in the school that has program related with inter-religious and multi-religious dialogue.

Using qualitative research by interview of the religious education teachers and students to get the data and information about the beneficiaries and obstacles from the inter-religious and multi-religious program that the school has held since 2011 when the school established. Because I am part of the school member that include in running the diversity program in the school, I am aware of the limitation of this writing is bias and subjective interpretation. In order to make it objective, I have been done withdrawl that Norman K. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) had been suggested on their "Handbook of Qualitative Research".

# **Problem Statement**

The problem statements that led my inquiry on the study of inter and multi religious program as the inter-religious dialogue in the school that guide me in this research, such as:

- 1. How do the multi and inter-religious program implement in the school?
- 2. In what extend the program has been impacted to the students and teacher? How do the beneficiaries and obstacles that face and happen?

The problem statement that guide me to study further of inter and multi religious program that runs in the school has aim to make sense of people's practices and also to build knowledge about the school's pivotal role in promoting of dialogue and transmitting the value of inclusive for embracing of diversity.

## **Research Statement**

"Inter-religious dialogue through school's program has impacted the positive understanding of other religions for both students and teachers."

# A Lesson Learned From SMP Tumbuh Yogyakarta: Inclusive-Multicultural School

Every school, both private and public in Indonesia has autonomy to manage their school through based school management. Although for public school they have dependency regarded with the financial and human resources, and also with strict model that school must run according to the government standard but in somehow public school still have chance to develop for the innovative program that difference with other public school related with manage diversity on religion issues. Although we have heard there are some issues of "homogenization" religion in public school related with the school program that must be followed by the students. Vice versa, in my opinion if there is "homogenization" of one religion, it might be happened also of "heterogeneous" religious by letting and embracing of diversity through the school program which is managed by the school management. In which depend on the school's vision and mission that influences to the school character.

The school characters both public and private that made the different stories, how school responds, understands and applies of religious education and religiosity program. SMP Tumbuh Yogyakarta as the private school that has the different story how school understands and applies of religious education and religiosity program.

SMP Tumbuh Yogyakarta is an inclusive-multicultural school that aims to facilitate students with a kind of learning that shapes "hands on, mind on and heart on" characters.

Hands on, meaning that the school facilitates and encourages students to be lifelong learners who interested and enthusiastic to learn.

Mind on, meaning that the school encourages students to develop curiosity, exercise their inquiry, think critically, solve problems, and be challenged to develop innovation.

Heart on, meaning the school encourages students to be reflective and to cultivate their awareness on the ever changing world and to care for the environment.

#### Curriculum

The curriculum used is the national curriculum, i.e. educational unit level curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan-KTSP) with the competency standard of middle school (SMP) graduates according to Permendiknas No. 23 Year 2006. In addition, the school also applies Cambridge curriculum as enrichment in Mathematics, Science and English subjects. Besides that, school has combined and developed of national curriculum to meet with school's vision-mission in managing of diversity.

## **Learning Methods**

Learning methods that are used in the school are:

• Inquiry learning approach. A learning process that encourages students to think critically, to conduct research, and to be reflective through a series of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The issue of homogenization of religion might happen in some public school in Yogyakarta, the school usually has the strong program that only emphasize to one religion. The school program related with prayer, hijab and so forth, this program is happened is not balance in other religion.

learning activity cycles: tuning in, finding out, sorting out, going further, reflection and taking action.

- Active learning. All forms of learning that enable students to be actively engaged and involved in the learning process. Interactions occur among students and between students and teachers.
- Cooperative learning. A learning strategy that underlines team work attitude; an attitude of working together and helping one another in structured cooperation in a group of two people or more.
- Teaching in differentiation. The application of a learning strategy that responds to the needs and abilities of students, especially SEN, gifted and talented students. The strategy facilitates the best learning process possible for the students according to their potential.
- Interdisciplinary Unit Programme/integrated learning (IDU). IDU is a program that develops a learning approach by making connections among subjects.

#### **Inclusive-Multicultural School**

SMP Tumbuh beliefs that every child is unique, in the atmosphere and school's environment is varies of the background (socio-economic, religion, ethnic, culture, academic competence and SEN (Special Educational Need) student). The school has philosophy education for all, and has many programs. To facilitate of SEN student, school applies differentiated instruction.

For the school, Inclusion is an educational and social philosophy. SMP Tumbuh applies that in an inclusive-multicultural model, everyone is a valuable and meaningful part of the community, whatever differences and uniqueness they bring. Inclusive education means that every child, regardless of their ability or disability, sex, socio-economic status, ethnicity, cultural, language and religion background, comes together in one school community.

SMP Tumbuh implements that inclusive-multicultural education is an approach that focuses on the response of how to transform an education system so that it can also respond to the diversity of the students that enables teachers and students to feel comfortable with all those differences, and to see them more as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than as a problem.

At a deeper level, for SMP Tumbuh, inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that makes it possible for each individual to feel accepted and acknowledged. Inclusive-multicultural principles encourage all elements to get involved in the learning process and all students to be able to learn actively and effectively together. The way to interpret of difference is uniqueness that must be respected and appreciated as the added values that enrich the true meaning of life.

## **Student of SMP Tumbuh**

The total numbers of students of SMP Tumbuh for this academic year 2015-2016 From year/grade 7-9 are 61 students with the 30% of SEN students. SEN students get differentiated learning depends on their needs with their individual and group program. The number of gender is balance between male and female students. The composition of student's accordance religion and ethnic, Java and Islam is majority. The composition of Catholics and Christian-Protestant is balance, then the minority is Hindu, there are only 2 students.

Both of them are Balinese. The common mother tongue that use is *Bahasa* Java. Majority and minority is not the consideration to decide the policy. The school and student are in common sets out the essential agreement and discussion to solve and prevent the problem.

Distribution of the population according to ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic factors varies widely. One of the reasons for this is because the school provides scholarship programs and education subsidies.

The academic competence of students are varies. From gifted and talented, regular students until the SEN student with a variety of special needs ranging from students with hearing impairment and students with Mental Retardation with various cognitive potential according to the Binet scale. The autism spectrum students are ranging from student with Asperger's Syndrome and autism with some difficulties. The school also has students with traumatic bullying experiences. Other SEN students are with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) that has difficulties of pay attention so the teacher is supported by the teacher assistant during the learning process.

## Inter-religious and Multi-religious Program

Teaching-Learning of Religious Education

As the private school that has vision-mission in inclusive and multicultural values and the school uses the national curriculum in the course, according to Sterken (2011), the framework and instruction of teaching and learning the religious education is mono religious. But to respond and a school strategy from the main streaming mono-religious model of religious education according to the regulation by the educational ministry, the school has done the modified curriculum and method of teaching and learning.

According to Sterkens (2011), the curriculum that is designed by the school especially with the religion subject is taught in mono religious model. The mono religious model is explained by the table below;

Teaching-Learning	Based on student's religion		
Teacher	From the same religion and teacher with the religion subject must have the basic standard competence from the school of religion. The religious education teacher's background is from each religion that taught in the school. The education of the teacher's background usually comes from the theology discipline.		
A pedagogic aim	To internalize the tradition, religion teaching and values, according to the basic standard from the government. But broader aim, teacher also emphasizes of respect of other religions without disfiguring.		
Normative basis	Follow the instruction of national curriculum. But also develop and enrich the lesson plan and teaching learning activity.		
Approach of learning	Doctrine, dogmatic, discussion and contextual		
Learning method	Collaborative, active, inquiry and interdisciplinary with other subjects		

Domain	Cognitive: student's knowledge of religion Affective: emphasize on the attitude, empathy, sympathy, respects, responsibility, honesty and other emotion feelings. Psychomotor: manual or physical skills (skills) through the ritual of religion	
Time	2 lessons in a week (1 lesson is 40 minutes) is the	
	basic requirement from national curriculum	
Curriculum	Modified syllabus and lesson plan accordance school	
development	standard and fulfilled the basic standard of national	
	curriculum	

In order to make the strategy in matching with inclusive-multicultural values of the school the religion, religious education teacher develops the syllabus and lesson plan not in majority content based and doctrine. But the teachers apply the some approaches of learning in the class with dogmatic, discussion and contextual based. According the teachers from the interview, I conclude that their reasons such are:

- 1. There are some topics in religion subject that must be taught in doctrine way, because there are the theme are principles and absolute truth claim that must be followed. Another reason, because of the school joins the national standard examination/assessment of religious education (Ujian akhir sekolah berstandar nasional/UASBN Pendidikan Agama), there are the basic competences and the target that must be taught by teachers. Although, truly UASBN is not must to join if the school don't want to join the assessment under the standard of Religious Ministry. From the principal, SMP Tumbuh decided to join the UASBN in order to measure the student's competency related with religious education in cognitive when the school applies the different method in teaching and learning activity.
- 2. For the contextual topics, the teacher teaches through discussion because students are more interesting and enthusiastic to discuss the contextual and relevance topic. Like the Quran the Islamic teacher emphasize the students understand the interpretation and its context not just ask the students to commit memorize the verses of Quran. In line with this situation, it also happens in another religious education like in Hinduism, Christian and Catholic.

## Inter and Multi Religious Dialogue through Poster and Picture

According to Swidler (2008), kinds of dialogue it can be through ideas and words (Swidler, 12), inter and multi religious dialogue also conduct in public sphere in school's area. School understands that religion is everyone rights that must be respected. There is no minority and majority accordance of religion. In respecting of plurality and promoting of plurality, the school public space is constructed in creating of plurality. The school uses the school's environment as the public arena for the religious life.

The school environment is the place of the life all school member. The atmosphere of school and class is the condition that affects and supports for all activity in the learning process. The environment, including the facilities that is tangible and the atmosphere is nontangible that we can observe and feel it.

The school has vision in the management diversity, so the school creates the place and situation around the "public" area of school. As the

inclusive-multicultural school, to support the heart of diversity, there are some pictures and posters are displayed on the public wall of school area. There is no specific symbol of religion in the school, but there are the posters that symbol of diversity place on the wall. Such as the posters and pictures below



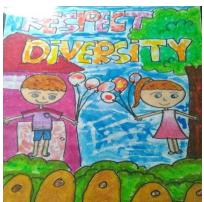


The poster has the statement that all major religious traditions carry basically the same message that is love, compassion and forgiveness. The poster is hung on the wall near the stair the way to enter the school so everyone who passes this area could see clearly the poster that sounds the universal

values of many religions.









Another poster that displayed on

the wall near the school corridor has the title "Sikap positif terhadap keragaman", and it shows some photos of school activity that related with diversity. Some banners are displayed on school corridor that has the message of respect in diversity. The school has the regular event of exhibition during the end of semester 1 and 2, and most has the message of diversity.

This picture "respect diversity" is drawn by the students, this picture also exhibited when the school has exhibition in the end of semester II. This picture also being the cover of student organizer book that every students possess the SO (student organizer) to organize all their task and responsibilities

regarded to the school. From this picture, it speaks that diversity (religion, cultures, character, ethnic and so forth) must be respected although different.

# **Inter and Multi Religious Program**

According to Abu-Nimer (2000), ritual from religion has "powerful means of communication among member of the same religion" (Abu-Nimer, 18). Moreover from Abu-Nimer through interfaith dialogue, "rituals create a mode of dialogue" (Abu-Nimer, 10). In parallelizing with Abu-Nimer, the school applies the multi and inter-religious in the school program and school life which is conducted with many ways and events.

The school has policy to celebrate all religious festivities together with all the teacher, student and staffs. Although no adherent's religious festivities implementation remain to be done for six recognized religions in Indonesia. The school has the celebration program and event of multi religious in one year academic by assembly together, event activity and potluck party. The school program of multi religious usually conducts are;

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Religion	Religious festivities	Domain		
Confucianism	The Imlek year	Cognitive and Affective		
Islam	Eid Al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha	Cognitive, affective and		
	and Break fasting	Psychomotor		
Catholic-Protestant	Christmas, Easter	Cognitive, affective and		
		Psychomotor		
Hinduism	Nyepi day and Galungan	Cognitive, affective and		
		Psychomotor		
Buddhism	Vaisak day	Cognitive and Affective		

The prayer usually uses in school event is multi religious praying. The leaders of prayers are the religious education teachers, students and parents involve together. This multi religious model has aim to accommodate of plurality of religion in school and apart of school in diversity management. The budget as finance support is same for all religious festivities. It means school has been treated all religion same not discrimination. The contribution and donation for the celebration of Eid-Adha and Easter day is the same applies for the entire student not only Muslim and Christian student both all students included.

The approach of learning in the school program of multi religious conducts in historical, discussion and contextual not in doctrine, the message of humanity is emphasized so the student will understand the context and purpose if the celebration, rituals and etc. From the explanation above, we can see how school tries to accommodate of multi religious program as part of respect diversity of religion and diversity management in the public life.

The school beliefs that religious education must be re-interpret from the national curriculum, according to the school policy and conduct, the coercion of religiosity is forbidden. The approach of religious education is encouraged the student to willingly engage of study. Although in some ways school, teacher and student must follow the national standard but the ethic of religiosity must be respected and applied. This approach is chosen in order to school prevents of the failing understand and put of religion in public and private matter. In the name of religious education school should not hurt of religiosity freedom expression of students.



The first photo is the activity of multi-religious praying for some religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Catholic and Christian. The activity of related with that photo when the school conduct of praying together before year 9 students faced of national examination (UN) 2016, the students gathered together, motivated each other and also prayed each other through multi-religious. The next photo, told when student celebrated of Imlek festivities as the Tionghoa's new year day in the Klenteng Hok An Kiong Muntilan Magelang last 12 February 2016. During the activity in the klenteng, the praying also held in inter-religious prays from Muslim, Christendom, Hindu and Confucian. For the complete narration, I will put the teacher's lesson plan activity in the attachment from this paper.

From the domain of school program related with celebrating religious festivities together, in my opinion more in cognitive (knowledge) domain. From Swidler (2008), that activity is part of the cognitive dialogue or "dialogue of the head"(Swidler, 10). Regarded to the multi and inter-religious praying, what Swidler (2008) noted as kind of dialogue through praying or sharing spiritual experience. (Swidler, 12)

In every morning before start the lesson, the school has program "morning carpet" as the morning praying and sharing the motivational (insight) stories from and for the students. Every student has responsibility to share their motivational story and lead the morning praying in rotation. Every student has chance to lead the praying according to their religion. From this situation I conclude what the inter-religious dialogue has been practice among the students. From Swidler (2008), he explained the four dimensions of inter-religious dialogue, in my opinion, the inter-religious dialogue that is practiced by the students during the morning carpet as the dialogue of heart. According to Swidler, because of that activity is seek the essence of praying, "open

ourselves to receive the beauty of other" (Swidler, 10). It happened because the students express their gratitude and joy through praying with their friends.

#### **Beneficial and Obstacles**

From the interviews and observation which are conducted from the students (11 students from year 9 and 3 students from year 8) and the teachers (four religious education teachers), the data will be presented through the table below.

The respond and impact of student's attitude for the multi and interreligious model that has been done and practiced into school program such as follow:

## For and From the students

Aspect	Benefit	Obstacle
Attitude	<ul> <li>Most of students answer that the multi and interreligious model increases their awareness of diversity of religion interpretation.</li> <li>Respecting and mutual understanding is happening when they see that every religion has the same universal message that is humanity, love, caring and compassion.</li> </ul>	Friends from other schools and relatives have been questioned the way of students celebrate the other religious festivities. Some of their friends think and give the opinion/comment that they are freak. Because of they join in the religious festivities which are done in school.
Perspective	<ul> <li>All students answer and aware that the model of multi religious encourage them of tolerance and open mindedness.</li> <li>There are no in-group accordance of religion in the school. If there is group student usually accordance of hobby.</li> </ul>	Some of students get the prejudice from their friends from outside/other school for the way of thinking and perspective.

In summary the model of multi and inter religious has the positive impact of student in respecting diversity and reduce the fundamentalism from their religion. But the obstacle, they get the label of "freak" because they celebrate the religion festivities which are not their religion. Here, although the students face their obstacle when they meet with their friends from other school, but for the students, it is not make a problem for them. Their respect and understanding through celebrate other religion festivities and rituals what Abu-Nimer called as the "open the window into the meaning system of the other" (Abu-Nimer, 18). From Abu-Nimer, by participate other ritual; it gives the experience and opportunity to understand other's world view. (Abu-Nimer, 18)

For and from Teacher

Aspects	Benefit	Obstacle
Perspective	All the teachers including	Especially for Islam teacher,
	the religion subject teachers	he told that he had difficulties
	answer that the model of	and challenges to face the
	multi and inter-religious has	student's with the lack of
	the positive impact and	religion/ Islamic knowledge
	increase tolerance among	and value. For the Islam
	students and colleagues.	teacher said that condition
	The issue of workplace is	make some students lazy to do
	private matter and never be	the praying because of they
	the source of conflict. The	seen some of their friends are
	friendship among teachers	not praying especially for the
	and students is beyond	program of Friday praying in
	religion. There is no the	school. He said that there
	prejudice of religion and	were some Muslim students
	bringing the issue and	escaped from the Friday
	dialogue of religion in	praying because the teacher
	contextual.	just pushes the Muslim
		students not to force.

In summary according to teacher's perspective, the multi and interreligious program has more in positive impact for student and teacher in order to increase of tolerance among them. Although there are some challenges that faced by the Islam teacher that inclusive-multicultural atmosphere is not encourage for the "non-standard" Muslim students lazy to increase their religiosity because there is no forcefulness to do their worshipping in school.

# **CONCLUSION**

From Cabezon (1998) that he inspired from Dalai Lama's idea, he noted through scholarship education in interreligious studies will open and contact to other religion. If individual has been beyond boundaries to open their mind, it has beneficial to respect of other religions. (Cabezon;1998, 89-95) I agree with Cabezon, In my opinion, my reflection being included to facilitate students through school's program in multi and inter-religious model has contributed to the inclusiveness in responding of diversity. The school program that has run from Swidler's perpective, as part of the dialogue of head when they celebrates of religious festivities together. Another program like "morning carpet" in the morning praying when students have chance to lead in rotation from Swidler's perspective as the dialogue of heart, when they seek the joy, the beauty and the gratitude from religion no matter what the religion is. Some events that school usually conducts are multi religious praying, in my opinion also a part of dialogue of heart that share the spiritual experience, seeking the wisdom and harmony among the different adherent. From Abu-Nimer (2000), to bridge of hatred, exclusion, revenge and prejudice we can use dialogue. (Abu-Nimer,16) In addition, Abu-Nimer also asserted that through participating of religion rituals could open the window of the world view of other adherent to understand other religions. (Abu-Nimer, 18) Parallelizing with Abu-Nimer, in my opinion what the school has been done through their

religious program has been given the meaning to students and teachers in knowledge, understanding in which impacted respect and tolerance for other religions and minimize of the prejudice. Although, we cannot neglected the obstacles that face by the students when they meet with their friends from others school as the "freak" respond. It means, inter-religious dialogue from this context should be developed in broader way and scope. So, inter-religious still a long process that we must do for the reason of transforming the global peace and tolerance. Another obstacles that teacher face through the school's vision that teacher forbids to coercive students to worship but only to suggest has impacted to those students that has non-standard according their religion is lazy to worship, in another context school face the issue of secularization. To discuss in this issues, it needs many discussions and research among the school management, teacher and parent that secularism is different with multi and inter-religious dialogue. In which what Abu-Nimer insisted that after the dialogue, we will away from hatred, exclusion and prejudice (Abu-Nimer, 15) In my reflection after 5 years included this management diversity, something I noted from my students that what we have done, give the meaning experience and understanding in respecting and tolerance of religiosity and diversity. Although we still have many limitations and long journey in conducting of more manifestations of multi and inter-religious dialogue.

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Photos: taken by Sari Oktafiana

Lesson plan and worksheet of the outing to Klenteng Hok An Kiong is written by Sari Oktafiana, the task from many subjects are compiled from many teachers.