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Religion Education in Indonesian High School: Moral Contestation between Spirituality and Moral Piety

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Abstract

This study will focus on the study religion education in Indonesian high school. Religion education in Indonesia has become compulsory subject that introduced in national curriculum policy. the basic idea of religion education has purposes to engage and develop moral and "spirituality to God". The concept of religion education in Indonesia become change since in the post reform era 1999. This situation happened when religion education more emphasizes in the level of religious ritual and practice at school system. Indonesian schools have change into more religious schools rather than scientific. Most activities developed by school program from vision and mision, school activities are accomodated the ideas of agamis "religious terminology" taken from majority religion in Indonesia. The purposes of this study is to cultivate and explore the impact of religion education for moral piety and spirituality for senior high school students. This study would like to answers some critical issues as follows, how young generation imagined their religious values in public life? How do they use their religious values to express moral piety in public life? Does religion education can change their spirituality and religiosity in public life? This study will have

conducted through interview, observation, and literature studies. In this article, the transformation and change on religion education in Indonesia at the level of curriculum and methods of teaching is mentioned, and then the contestation of moral values and spirituality amongst young generations will be described.

Keywords: *“religion education”, “moral”, “values”, “spirituality”.*

Introduction

The dynamics and development of religious education in Indonesia are interesting to observe and study. The development of religious education in schools in Indonesia, especially high schools, is occurred a pattern of significant changes. The idea was sparked by the subject of religious education since the issuance of Law Number 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System article 39 article (1) which states that the contents of the curriculum for each type, path, and level of education must contain (a) education of Pancasila, (b) religious education, (c) civic education (Indonesia, Law Number 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System, 1989). The explanatory clause states that:

“...religious education is an effort to strengthen faith and devotion to God Almighty in accordance with the religion embraced by the students by taking into account the demands to respect other religions in the relationship of inter-religious harmony in society to realize national unity...”

Religious education subjects since the enactment of Law Number 2 of 1989 have directed efforts to strengthen faith and devotion to God Almighty. This juridical basis has also reappeared with the issuance of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System as a renewal of the previous regulations. Article 36 paragraph (3) states that the curriculum prepared is according to the level of education within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia by taking into account. a. increased faith and devotion; b. precious moral improvement, c. increasing the potential, intelligence, and interests of students; d. diversity of regional and environmental potentials; e. demand for regional and national development; f. demands of the working world; g. development of science, technology, and art; h. religion, i. dynamics of global development, and j. national unity and national values. (Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, 2003). The strengthening of the juridical

basis for the implementation of religious education began in the post-reform era with the issuance of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system.

Studies that have been conducted on religious discussion education in schools emphasize specific issues related to religious education's issues in public schools and specifically in religious schools (Islamic schools). The issue raised is the issue of Islamic religious education in various studies that have been carried out such as the study conducted by Wildan Miftahussurur explaining that the problem of Islamic religious education in schools arises due to two main factors, internal and external factors. Internal factors are caused by the lack of competence of teachers, the inability to carry out learning actions, and the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure. Meanwhile, the external factor is lack of community and government support in the process of implementing religious education, specifically Islam (Miftahussurur, 2022).

Various studies show that religious education is an important concern among academics, the attention shown in various existing studies focuses on learning facilities, teaching resources, learning materials, teaching/learning methods, and the problem of participants applying the teachings of their religions. The purpose of religious education can be formulated with various formulations, but various problems can arise such as the learning process and social environment that require guidelines or specific policies (Libriyanti, 2019). The gap in religious education is still a gap between the theory taught and the practice carried out by students. Thus, the impact of religious education is to attempt collective awareness in order to improve the morality and spirituality of students who have not been fully achieved. Religious education is impressed as moral learning to form social and religious obedience systematically and structurally that is carried out by the state. The findings from Sinaga's study show that school management has also not provided nice space in the process of religious education services for each student (Sinaga, 2017)

In addition to school management, in the classroom's religious management learning also requires classroom management. Good classroom management will certainly affect the quality level of religious learning in class (Sepriyanti, 2018). The problem faced is precisely the implementation of religious learning in public schools, when it is related to minority religions of these schools and learning must be carried out outside the classroom or even outside effective learning hours by combining several classes from various public schools in an area.

The issue of education in general discusses a lot about the changes and sustainability of religious education in the process of meaning and religious identity of education. Religious education is an important lesson for society and the younger generation. The emphasis of religious education is on three main functions: religious education to build prophetic morals, religious education to form wisdom for students,

religious education as a teaching effort to understand religious teachings, and religious education as an effort to form patterns of the application of religious teachings in the life of society or community (Brennan, 2005). In general, the teaching of religious education in Indonesia, they are Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, and Confucianism, it teaches values and understanding based on the third functional category, which is studying religion in schools with the aim of understanding the teachings of the religion they adhere to properly.

Controversial issues about religious education emerge and develop outside of schools and are sometimes to a small extent discussed in schools' teaching. Religious issues that have become public consumption since the last 15 years have appeared and are recurring. First, the issues of religious sentiment are not to greet or wish for other religions' days, because according to the teachings of other religions it is considered unlawful. Second, the narrative that is disseminated in the preaching media through social media and the internet is a matter of cultural behavior that clashes with religion, for example, "wearing a bun will be cursed" (source: consultsyariah.com site; channelmuslim.com; umma.id), 'klepon cake which is considered un-Islamic" (Yuniar, 2020) (Hanifah, 2020). Controversial issues related to religion and schools have strengthened since the emergence of terrorism narratives, radicalism, and fundamentalism that were reported in various online media in late 2002. The social situation and political developments, locally, nationally, and globally, have had an impact on the development of controversial issues related to religion, especially at school. However, from an international perspective, teaching related to controversial issues can make a concrete contribution to the development of skills and attitudes, as well as an understanding of academic literacy, as well as developing active participation for the community in public spaces and making decisions. In the context of religious education, the process of teaching controversial issues is considered to be able to increase students' awareness to better understand their beliefs and values well (Nazar, 2020). This study will focus on how religious education in Indonesia is in the process of forming knowledge for students, especially how students place their religious values in the public space and how the theological thoughts given by each religion can shape spirituality or moral obedience. So far, religious education in Indonesia is still understood as part of the process of finding forms between moral values and spirituality.

Method

The approach of this study uses a qualitative approach. Sources of material were obtained through literature studies and interviews with high school students as respondents. The analysis used content analysis and interpretation. This study will focus

on students' views of religious teaching and education in senior high schools of Yogyakarta.

Results and Discussion

Roles and Functions of Religious Education

Various opinions about the role and function of religious education emerged from local, national, and global perspectives. From a global perspective, religious education is interpreted as an effort to provide social and religiosity functions and roles for students to better understand their religious beliefs and teachings to build a more democratic society (Anderson, 2017). The role and function of religious education in schools are to provide balance in education to develop spirituality, morals, and socio-culture, as well as national values (Council, 2023). According to Chris Ward, religious education aims to help students reflect on the experiences and mysteries of life, and contribute to increasing their religiosity and spirituality (Ward, 2023). Another view states that the religious education referred, places more emphasis on Islamic religious education having the aim of fostering student morals. The students are taught to behave under the existing *syariat* to support the moral aspects which can later be beneficial to the community (Ariesta, 2019). Much of the discourse on the role and function of religious education in various studies and literature is dominated in the narrative context of Islamic religious education as in a study conducted by Ramadania, Sitika, and Darmayanti explaining the role of Islamic religious education in the family and community environment. The results of this study indicate that the role of religious education (Islam) as a foundation in the family to shape children's behavior and morals so that they know the boundaries of good and bad, has the function of forming people who believe in and are devoted to the God Almighty, and become the main foundation and play a role in moral education to build Indonesian society (Sinta Rahmadania, 2021). The aspect of diversity in religious life in Indonesia has led to a perspective on religious education that has specific aspects such as the role and function of Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic religious education, and Confucianism has a different emphasis. In a study by Jamsah Sigalingging and Joice Ester Raranta, they described the role and function of (Christian) religious education in trying to build synergy between the church and the family. Christian religious education teaches the relationship between humans and God, as well as the real importance of life (Jamsah Sigalingging, 2022). In the context of (Hindu) religious education which has been formulated by the Hindu religious association (Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia-PDHI), it has roles and functions to shape the character of students in forming good student personalities and being able to reduce the morals faced by students today. (Hindu) Religious education has an important role in assisting students in the formation of

personality that leads to positive things (Setyaningsih, 2018). Meanwhile, in the context of (Buddhist) religious education, several thematic studies show the role of (Buddhist) religious education in shaping student character so that they have learning motivation and discipline. In teaching Buddhism, the character indicators that are placed consist of six characters, namely Ragacarita, Dasacarita, Mahacarita, Vitakkacarita, Saddhacarita, and Budhicarita (Hananuraga, 2022).

The relationship between religious education and moral piety

Religious education ideally expects efforts to form character, strengthen values, and increase students' understanding of the religious teachings they believe in. The relationship between religious education and moral piety leads to a linear relationship. Moral piety can be realized or formed with good religious education. The correlation study conducted by Intansakti Pius X and Kana explains that the role of (Catholic) religious education in the formation of religious character for students at the Junior High School level is considered to have a positive contribution. The existence of religious education in schools is a hope for the community to form a spirit of religiosity among students (Intansakti Pius X, 2020). However, another study showed quite different findings related to the relationship between (Catholic) religious education in senior high schools in Yogyakarta, that (Catholic) religious education has not been able to develop inclusive values. In addition, (Catholic) religious education is less able to guide students to be able to develop inclusivity values at school (A, 2016). Some of the students' views related to the role of religious education are specifically adapted to the needs of the subjects. For example, the results of interviews with Hinduism students of class XI at Senior High School in Yogyakarta explain the purpose of Hinduism education according to him:

“...(Hindu) religious educations aim to build student character in the field of religiosity, in (Hindu) religion the teachings of philosophy (*Tattwa*) are taught. In these lessons, 3 approaches are taught in gaining knowledge or the search for truth called *Tri Pramana* which contains *Pretyaksa Pramana* (with direct observation at the scene), *Anumana Pramana* (by looking at the existing symptoms), and *Pramana Religion* (with reliable sources and instructions)...” (interview, Hinduism student of class XI, written March 14, 2023).

The view of Islamic students says that the purpose of Islamic religious education aims to be our basis/foundation as humans in behaving in the world. Meanwhile, the Catholic religion is to know more about the journey and the story of God as a savior. Also as a moral education according to what the God wills. For Christianity, the aim is to

educate and shape one's character (result of interview with class XI students, 14 March 2023).

Related to the experience of spirituality and morals, how the relationship of religious education has an impact on the moral piety of students can be seen from the results of the following interviews. **Question: has religious education in schools changed your daily life? (can you give an example if yes, and if not give reasons why?)**, the results of interviews with Muslim students of class XI at a Senior High School say that:

“...yes, for example like *tadarus* in every Friday morning and *infaq* every Friday and teachers who always encourage students to pray in congregation because they will get 27 times the reward and so on..”.

The answers of the Hindu religious students said that:

“... Not really. Because I also studied Hinduism outside of school. I use Hinduism learning at school as an additional point of view because it is accompanied by teachers, fellow students, and others that I do not have the right to choose and so on so the perspective that exists in religious education at school gives me a new point of view which will then be I explore deeper outside the school. With references from outside the school which are very broad and varied, I can analyze these points of view, describe, and give deeper meaning for later I can learn and apply them. For example, if the teacher mentions something new to me about Hinduism, then I will look for reliable references, such as an *Mpu* outside of school to ask about it, then I will analyze it more deeply and then apply it. So, yes, religious education at school changed my daily life but not directly but as a trigger for searching for factors that changed my daily life...”

Christian students' answers said that:

“yes, my decision is not only based on logical thinking but religiously. For example, I have trouble doing tests, but I don't cheat because that's wrong
...”

Catholic students' answers said that:

“...Yes, I am becoming a more forgiving person, especially to my adversaries. Besides that, as a student, I am also more peaceful when applying religious teachings in my life ...”

Questions related to the religious subject matter: **are religious education subject matter relevant? (if you have explained and if you have not given the reasons)**, the answers from Muslim students said that: “

“...Yes, because the subject matter of religious education in schools is very closely related to everyday life, for example, such as material regarding adultery that we are prohibited from even approaching, regarding the prohibition of using banks that contain usury so that we can remind

parents and relatives, to the material on prayer procedures and washing the corpse which makes us remember that death can happen to people at any time regardless of age, and so on. The issues raised in religious educations are regarding the procedures for association according to Islam and adultery/approaching adultery (dating). For example, the procedures for association according to Islam, namely between women and men who cannot be too close (to intentionally touch), and regarding adultery, namely dating. That dating is an act of approaching adultery, even though it has been explained in the Al-Qur'an surah Al-Isra verse 32 which means: "And do not approach adultery; in fact, adultery is an abominable act. And a bad way." (Q.S. Al-Isra: 32)...."(interview, written by a class XI student of Islam, March 14, 2023).

Answers from Hindu students said that:

"... Not yet. During my study of Hindu religious education in schools for many years I found quite a lot of irrelevance of Hindu religious education in schools with the actual Hindu religion. For example, the mention of Lord Shiva as the "God of Destruction" or "God of Destruction" instead of the "God of Destruction" in several Hindu religious educational books which are widely used by schools and can even be found mentioned of it in general mass media such as the compass. .com (source: kompas.com; Three Supreme Gods in Hinduism, article October 17th , 2022). The next example is the caste that is widely taught in Hindu religious education in schools. The material that wants to be achieved from caste chess is color chess which does not mean 4 levels/social strata but 4 paths (professions) that are taken. Another example is the obligations of a wife, husband, and children which are written down strictly and irrefutably in the 11th-grade Hindu Religion education book in the chapter 5 section of the obligations of husband, wife, and children. The source used in this section is the Manawa Dharmasastra book which is part of the Veda Smrti which can simply be said to be an example of the application of the Sruti Veda which should be applied by looking at the situation, conditions, and not violating the Sruti Veda. One example of twisting the statement contained in that section is the statement that "a wife must be faithful to her husband" which can simply be interpreted as not having an affair (having a relationship without the consent of all parties in an ongoing relationship) to "a woman must be faithful to one husband only" although in the Veda itself, polyandry (a wife has more than one husband) is not prohibited. Even in the Mahabharata Epic in the Itihasa Book, it is stated that Dewi Draupadi married the five Pandavas, which means she practiced polyandry. Dewi Draupadi is often used as a symbol of a loyal woman. This shows that a woman's fidelity in a relationship is not based on the number of partners she has but on the existence of consent (agreement) of all parties involved in the relationship (which is Dewi Draupadi does not practice polyandry without her and her husband's consent). So that what is contained in the Hindu Religious education book is not following the actual Hindu Religion. In addition to the two examples above, there are still many discrepancies between Hindu religious education in schools and actual Hinduism which can be examined by comparing the teachings contained in Hindu religious

education in schools with actual Hinduism. Meanwhile, the issues raised in Hindu religious education in schools that were encountered raised major issues (large scale) such as global warming, environmental pollution, or massive natural exploitation which resulted in damage related to the discussion of jagadhita (the universe) or Buana Agung or Dewi Parwati (also known as Dewi Pertiwi or Ibu Pertiwi, whose name was later adapted into Indonesian), namely Ibu Pertiwi which means earth; the goddess who rules over the earth; homeland (source: KBBI). Another example of a major issue raised is a criminal case (generally the latest as in class II learning is the murder case of Brigadier J or better known as the "murder case by Ferdy Sambo) such as corruption, murder, rape, torture, and others related to a discussion of sad ripu (namely six enemies consisting of kama (lust), lobha (greed), krodha (anger), mada (drunkenness), matsarya (envy), and moha (confusion), sad atayai (namely six cruel killings consisting of agnida (burning), wisada (poisoning), atharwaguna (using black magic), jasaghna (rage), drtikrama (raping), raja pisuna (slandering), sapta timira (i.e. the seven elements that can cause the mind becomes dark which consists of surupa (look), dhana (wealth), guna (intelligence), kulina (lineage), yowana (youth), sura (drunkenness), mattress (courage), and others. , Hindu religious education the schools I have met so far have also raised issues on a smaller scale such as cheating, lying, stealing, harming, indiscipline, and so on..." (interview written by a class XI student of Hinduism, March 14th, 2023).

Christian religion student answers say that:

"... has been and will always be relevant because religious education teaches the basic values of everyday life which must be used as guidelines for social life. For Christian religious education materials that are taught about social norms, family, living in society, the importance of worship, religious history, and on."

The answer the Catholic religion students said:

"...yes because all of the material suits me as a high school teenager. For material in Catholic religious education that is taught, among other things, about Justice, youth life, the teachings of my god, the life of my god that is relevant in today is life, etc."

Value Contest: Between Religion and Morals

The effect of forming a religious spirit and religious behavior in formal educational institutions (schools) depends on the characteristics of the religious education provided (Elihami & Syahid, 2018). Values in religious education in general in Indonesia emphasize the values expected by the religious goals and beliefs that have been set. In this phase, there is a contestation of values to be mandated to students, religious values as a basis for understanding religious theological teachings and concepts, and moral values that are expected to support life and good behavior in society. So far, religious studies are in two mutually contesting spaces, where the role of religion is to build spirituality and religious

piety to get rewards from God. On the other hand, values are taught to build a more wise, good, civilized, and ethical society. However, the transformation of these values that are learned in schools through education, learning, methods, and established curricula has not fully become part of the life process for students. In general, religion provides values that direct the spiritual life of human relations with God, and God with humans. The values in religious learning that appear prominent and synergize with other religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Islam are, first, religious values, religious values can not only be emphasized in religious learning content but also in the practice of religious values. A religious person is a reflection of a person who is not only obedient in maintaining his relationship with God (worshipping) but can also carry out religious values in harmonious relations between humans and their environment. Second, discipline, the conception of discipline is directed at learning discipline, enthusiasm for learning, and efforts to build a harmonious life. Third, respecting others directs a life of mutual respect for one another.

Conclusion

Religious education in schools in Indonesia is interesting to review. Based on the results of studies that have been conducted, religious education in schools in Indonesia has an important role and function for students to shape the character and values of life for students. Religious education has an important impact and influence on students in the process of understanding religious values and religious functions in students' moral and spiritual lives. In general, religious education directs students to have a high level of spirituality and good moral piety in practicing their religion and beliefs. The moral contestation that occurs in religious education can be seen from the process and teaching materials of each religion that emphasizes certain issues. Will he become a pious person religiously and push religion into the public space as a form of belief to be expected for others to follow or religion will become a part of oneself to increase faith and piety? The results of this study indicate that the relationship between religious education and efforts to change students' behavior has a significant role. It's just that the context of behavior change can be based on the form of teaching in each religion. Will the emphasis be on spirituality or moral piety?

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