



International Conference on Theology, Religion, Culture, and Humanities
Re Imagining Theology, Religion, Culture, And Humanities for Public Life
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The Role of Religious Education in Promoting Religious Pluralism

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Abstract

Given the fact that Indonesian people adhere to various religions and beliefs, an acceptance of religious pluralism is needed. Religious education has an important role to educate students to promote religious pluralism. The goal of this research is to develop religious education for young people amidst the challenges of radicalism and religious fundamentalism. The specific target to be achieved through this research is to get a picture of the role of religious education in promoting religious pluralism. This research applied quantitative method. The research sample was limited to Sanata Dharma University students in Yogyakarta. The result of this study showed that the role religious education in universities to enhance religious pluralism, as well as the pluralist attitude of students, had very good category. The students were taught to become more open to believers of other religions because some lecturers invited students to engage in dialogue or to visit Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), churches, Hindu's temple, Buddhist's temple (vihara) or Confucians temple (klenteng). The role of religious education to enhance pluralist attitude can be improved. The result of this study could become a means to find ways to enhance religious pluralism among

young people. Moreover, the result of this study could become a model for educators to educate young people to enhance religious pluralism.

Keywords: *religious education, religious pluralism, tolerance, university students, Indonesia.*

Introduction

Education in Indonesia is constantly changing and developing. The goal of education is that every student is able to become a person with qualified personality and being responsible for his future. The purpose of education is for the growth and development of the whole person in order to become a person who is mature, and is able to face problems and conflicts in everyday life. Education produces individuals who are more humane, useful and influential in society, responsible, proactive and cooperative, as well as possessing personalities with noble character (Ryanto, 2002: 3).

The education at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, emphasizes four basic values as a pillar of education. The first pillar, loving the truth, is a value that encourages the entire academic community to always strive call for truth through teaching and scientific research that is beneficial for scientific advancement, human welfare and environmental sustainability. Loving the truth manifests in curiosity and intellectual imagination in order to achieve the highest scientific expertise and the implementation of tasks correctly (Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2020)

The second pillar, fighting for justice, is a basic value for the developing a society with dignity and equality in front of the Creator. Fighting for justice manifests in taking sides with those who experience injustice, especially those who are poor, marginalized and disabled. This alignment is based on a comprehensive analysis that can be scientifically justified and in accordance with moral and social demands.

The third pillar, respecting diversity, is a basic value for improving the quality of human relations for the creation of an open and democratic society. Respect for diversity manifests in recognition of the diversity of cultural backgrounds, rich talents, the uniqueness of each person, a willingness to seek cross-scientific cooperation so as to create a creative, productive and critical intellectual community.

The fourth pillar, upholding the nobility of human dignity, is a basic value that reflects sensitivity to basic problems of humanity today. This value is developed through various institutional policies and *tridharma* activities that contribute to solving basic humanitarian problems.

To develop the third pillar of education, respecting the diversity, Sanata Dharma University applies Religious Education to promote religious pluralism. Through Religious Education, students are educated to be able to cultivate an attitude of mutual love and mutual respect to develop a pluralist attitude. The pluralist attitude makes possible living with people of different religions. Therefore, the role of religious education is to develop a pluralist attitude. In pluralistic situation, it is necessary to understand and accept a pluralist attitude, an attitude of tolerance.

Sanata Dharma University is a plural campus considering the backgrounds of students who come from various regions, ethnicities, cultures, languages and even religions. Sanata Dharma University educates students to be excellent in knowledge as well as in personality. Through Religious Education Sanata Dharma University teaches students to have a pluralist attitude, not fanatical narrow-minded, so that they can perceive other religions as ways in achieving salvation as well.

In previous researches, the role of religious education is explored by some researchers: Mesirawati Waruwu et al. writes “The Role of Multiple Christian Religious Education in Building Multicultural Community Unity” (2022). It is library research. The results of this study encourage the spirit to build unity and integrity in a pluralistic society. Jonel Ene and Juliana Barna write about “Religious Education and Teachers’ Role in Students’ Formation towards Social Integration” (2015). This study concludes that Christian faith and religious education have been a coagulant factor of social and cultural continuity. Jenifer Pelupessy Wowor researches “The Role of Religious Education in Promoting Religious Freedom” (2016). This study concludes that religious education has a crucial role in promoting a sustainable environment for religious freedom in a religiously pluralistic society. Hujair Sanaky researches “The Role of Religious Education in Forming Tolerant Individuals” (2017). Sanaky concludes that religious education should enable the growth of the brotherhood in unity, so community can jointly build a new world civilization that is more meaningful for all humanity. It will all be possible if the design of religious education accommodates pluralist and tolerant outlook that is balanced with religious teachers who are tolerant and pluralist as well.

Danny Cohen Zada researches Religious pluralism and the transmission of religious values through education (2018). Geir Skeie writes about Plurality and Pluralism in Religious Education (2009). Deflita Lumi writes about The Role of Christian Education Among Religious and Pluralism Society at the Post Truth Era (2020). Maria Yuliastuti researches Religion and Pluralism in Education (2006).

Most of the research that has been done uses the literature study method. This research was very important because it discussed the role of Religious Education in developing religious pluralism, the attitude needed to build an Indonesian nation that is colored by various religions and beliefs. This research applied quantitative research

method, deepened by interviews to obtain accurate data. The goal of this research was to find out how big the role of Religious Education at the University of Sanata Dharma was in promoting religious pluralism for students.

Literature Review

Religious education is ultimately the attainment of things that are transcendent and the expression of human pursuits, so that all good education can be called religious in nature. There is a specialty in religious education that has a special function in relation to general education. Religious education focuses especially on empowering people in their quest for the transcendent and the ultimate basis of existence. Religious education requires people who are aware of what has been found, relate to what has been found, and express that relationship (Groom, 2010:32).

The role of religious education emphasizes human experience, meaning human experience which can be a meaning in fostering life, so that religious education becomes a role in the process of living the life of every human being. Whereas Divine appreciation is part of the development of life experiences that are lived and lived in the light of the Divine. The process of growth in the life of every human being can be carried out with an awareness of repentance, meaning that the whole life always returns to a meaning of life towards the renewal process of new birth. (Hope S Antone, 2010: 23).

Pluralism is the idea of pluralism, namely awareness of diversity as a necessity that lives and grows in a society (Naben, 1986:232). Pluralism is the state of a pluralistic society related to social and political systems.

From the definition put forward, pluralism is first as a (social) interaction between groups in a society; secondly, it requires respect and tolerance among these groups; third, developing coexistence (co-existence); and fourth, interactions are carried out without the desire for conflict and assimilation. Religious pluralism is the relativity of truth to every religion in the world, as tolerance to maintain inter-religious harmony amid existing diversity. By declaring that all religions are true, the proponents of religious pluralism hope that there will no longer be any religion that claims to be the owner of ultimate truth because in essence, religion is the result of various feelings and experiences of human diversity, so that every religion in this world contains Divine truth. Interreligious chaos occurs because there is no tolerance and mutual understanding between adherents of different religions, so that religious pluralism is the right solution to prevent this conflict and create harmony among human beings in the world. Tolerance is manifested by acknowledging the existence of each religion and not assuming that only their religion is the most correct (Harda Armano, 2010: 37).

According to Zuhairi Misrawi, a pluralist, he said that pluralism is not an understanding that teaches all religions to be the same. However, pluralism emphasizes that in essence religions are different. This difference can be seen in terms of appreciation of religion (shari'a) and more importantly the symbolic and sociological dimensions. The existence of these differences makes pluralism find its relevance to reconcile and build tolerance. He continued, pluralism speaks at the level of facts and reality, not at the theological level. At the theological level, it must be believed that every religion has its own rituals. But at the social level, it takes active involvement among all levels of society to build togetherness (Harda Armayanto, 2014: 329).

A pluralist attitude enables a culture of religious tolerance. Tolerance is an attitude of sharing everything in respect of one another as a whole. Tolerance is an attitude and action in respecting others (Budi Purnomo, 2002: 13-14). Tolerance will manifest itself through acts of appreciation and respect for others. Tolerance leads to respect for other parties in order to create cooperation and harmony in life together (Budi Purnomo, 2002: 18).

Tolerance in religious life is needed in any kind of situation and condition. We are invited to build and develop tolerance in religious life. It is true that religion cannot be tolerated, because religion involves certain dogmas, rites, teachings, and laws. But just as we are invited to hold dialogue between religious communities, we are also called to develop tolerance in religious life (Budi Purnomo, 2002: 20). Tolerance should be seen as a joint effort to cooperate with each other for the sake of realizing a harmonious society and not harming other parties in any form. Tolerance can be described as a dialogue process of sharing views on life, opinions, and general concerns for the realization of a true, just and prosperous society (Chang, 2002:161-164).

A pluralist attitude allows for dialogue between religions. Dialogue comes from the Greek word dialogos which means talk or conversation. (Hardjana, 1993:115). Dialogue can be interpreted as a conversation between two or more people in which there is an exchange of values owned by each party. Furthermore, dialogue is an association between individuals who give themselves to each other and try to know the other party as he is (Hendropuspito, 1983:172).

Interfaith dialogue is an encounter and cooperation that takes place between people of different religions and faiths. Interfaith dialogue can occur between people of different religions and can also occur between people of different churches (Semarang Archdiocese's Council for Pastoral Work, 2014:16). The dialogue that is sought is a dialogue of life and not just a dialogue with words. This live dialogue should be based on truth and honesty (Chang, 2002:164).

In dialogue, adherents of different religions meet and hold joint discussions to seek mutual understanding. The goal is to jointly seek universal truth contained in each

religion. The basis is mutual respect and a willingness to learn from one another. Because both parties are aware that the God they believe in is the Greatest (Hardjana, 1993:115).

Interreligious dialogue will work well if it is experienced as an interpersonal relationship, a deep interpersonal relationship (Budi Purnomo, 2002:24). Dialogue is a positive and constructive relationship between religions. This relationship takes place in relations with individuals and congregations of other religions, which are directed at mutual understanding and mutual enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom, which also includes witnessing and deepening of each other's religious beliefs. Armada Riyanto, 1995:102).

Interreligious dialogue reflects attitudes, ways of thinking, acting wisely and wisely towards pluralism. Inter-religious dialogue describes the way of religion and the mental attitude of religious people so that inter-religious dialogue focuses on the desire and need to understand each other, understand and share religious experiences with fellow religious people. In interreligious dialogue, there is no ulterior motive to blame, insult, and disbelieve other people's beliefs. However, it places more emphasis on accepting the existence of other people as they are and without aiming to change their beliefs, with the process of knowing each other and understanding the rights of each adherent of a religion (Amin Abdullah in Resta, 2015: 51-53).

Starting from the several opinions regarding the dialogue above, it can be concluded that, with dialogue, religious people prepare themselves to carry out discussions with people of other religions, and with people who have other views about the reality of life. The dialogue is meant to get to know each other and gain new knowledge about each other's dialogue partners' religions. This dialogue will in itself enrich and broaden horizons, with the aim of being able to mutually recognize and accept the existence of diversity or differences that exist as a wealth that is used as the basis for living in harmony and peace in a society.

In the diversity of religious life, of course there is the most beautiful color to carve a story of togetherness. As described above, dialogue is one way to reconcile any differences that exist. Dialogue becomes a way to see every difference as wealth that broadens one's horizons. However, in efforts to dialogue there are various obstacles that cannot be avoided. First, the language barrier. Language becomes a very important element in communication or in this context dialogue. Second, the image of other people is wrong. Before having a dialogue, of course each dialogue participant has a pre-understanding of his dialogue partner. Third, self-defense. Each dialogue participant will certainly defend what he has believed and assume that the other is wrong or not true. This means not accepting teachings or views from dialogue partners (Hendropuspito, 1983:174-175).

Other difficulties that can cause the dialogue to reach a stalemate include, first, the issue of knowledge. Knowledge and understanding of other religions that are balanced often lead to a lack of respect and culminate in mutual suspicion. Second, intolerance. A big difficulty when dealing with dialogue participants who do not have an intolerance. Dialogue will not run smoothly, because there is no attitude of mutual respect and respect for one another. This intolerance is often influenced by political, economic, racial, ethnic and various other inequalities.

Third, lack of confidence in the values of interreligious dialogue. Faced with this difficulty, some participants in the dialogue considered dialogue to be a sign of betrayal of faith. In fact, dialogue is not meant to look for weaknesses in the other party and attract them to change religions. Dialogue is meant to be able to achieve a better attitude of mutual understanding and mutual respect between religious communities (Armada Riyanto, 1995: 117).

Starting from the two figures that the author raised about their opinions about challenges and obstacles in dialogue, it can be said that every struggle to create peace and increase tolerance requires an attitude of openness and mutual acceptance from various religious parties. There is an attitude of openness, in order to be able to understand every thing that is different and there is a sense of mutual acceptance, so that every difference is seen as a wealth.

Method

This research applied quantitative method, using statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2015: 7). This study uses a descriptive research method, which describes facts about variables, symptoms, or circumstances (Arikunto, 2013: 234). The author distributed questionnaires about the role of religious education in promoting religious pluralism. The questionnaire used a scale model of one to five. This study used an *ex post facto* research design. This research was conducted in June 2022.

The respondents in this research were students who had taken the Religious Education course at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. The instrument of the research regarding the role of religious education and religious pluralism totaled 40 questions. Analysis of the validity test showed that all questions were valid. Based on the output in the SPSS program version 23, the results of the Cronbach's Alpha value were 0.963, higher than the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70-0.90. Therefore, the data results obtained perfect reliability. The collected data were analyzed and presented in the form of frequency descriptions and statistical descriptions. Frequency descriptions were analyzed using the 2016 Microsoft Excel program, while statistical descriptions were analyzed using SPSS program Version 23.

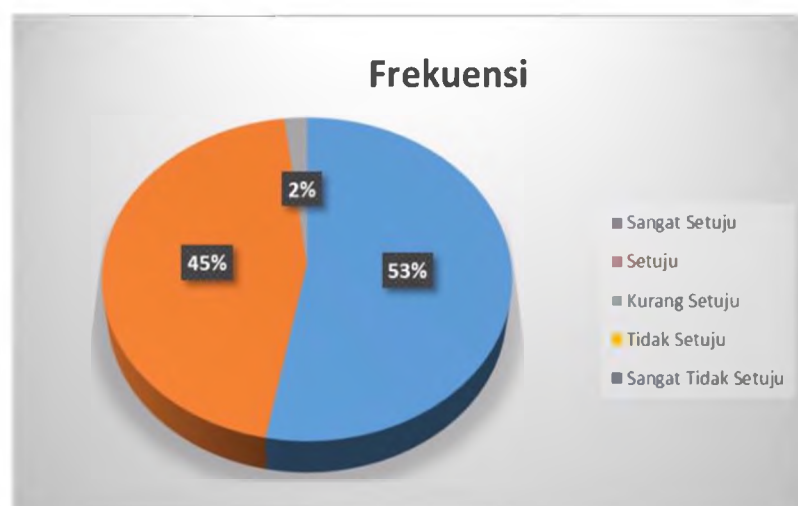
Result and Discussion

The overall results

Through a questionnaire distributed to 102 respondents, the overall results were obtained as follows:

Frequency Description

Criteria	Interval	Category	Frekuensi	%	Keterangan
5	169 - 200	Very good	54	52,9	Very agree
4	137 - 168	Good	46	45,0	Agree
3	105 - 136	Poor	2	2	Less agree
2	73 - 104	Bad	0	0	Disagree
1	40 - 72	Very bad	0	0	Very disagree



The table and pie chart above showed the overall data: 54 students in the very good category (53%) and 46 students in the good category (45%) and 2 students in the poor category (2%). Therefore, the conclusion showed that Religious Education had a role in promoting religious pluralism.

Statistical Description

N	Valid	102
	Missing	7
Mean		179.1275
Std. Error of Mean		1.86996
Median		183.5000
Mode		200.00
Std. Deviation		18.88562
Variance		356.667
Range		77.00
Minimum		123.00
Maximum		200.00
Sum		18271.00

With the distributed questionnaires, statistical results were obtained using SPSS program version 23.0, the responses totaled 102 students. Responses obtained an average value of 179.1275. The median was 1883.5 and the mode was 200. Meanwhile the highest score obtained was 200 and the lowest score obtained was 123. It could be concluded that the overall results of the role of education in promoting religious pluralism were very good.

The Role of Religious Education

From the analysis of the frequency descriptions of the subject matter of the role of religious education, most of the results fall into category very good with a total of 56 students and a percentage of 54.9%. 37 people with a percentage of 36.3% fall into category good, 9 people with a percentage of 8.8% fall into category poor. From these results among the 102 respondents, 56 of them had a role in religious education in developing a pluralist attitude. This result was also supported by the mean which showed the number 123.3039. It can be concluded that the overall data on the subject of the role of religious education was very good.

Data on the knowledge of religious education showed that of the 102 respondents, there were still 6 Sanata Dharma University students who were poor in acquiring knowledge of religious education. The average value of the knowledge aspect was 123.309 which showed that this aspect was very good.

Through analysis of the frequent descriptions of the aspects of forming attitudes, the most results fall into category very good with a total of 73 students and a percentage of 71.6%. 25 students fall into category good with a percentage of 24.5%. 4 students fall

into category poor with a percentage of 3.9%. This was supported by the results of the statistical description to get a mean value of 18.4608 with very good criteria. This means that Sanata Dharma University students could form good attitudes.

Through the results of the analysis of the frequent descriptions of the aspect of helping appreciation, it showed that the most results were in category very good with a total of 67 students with a percentage of 65.7%. 28 students fall into category good with a percentage of 27.5%. 7 students were in the category poor with a percentage of 6.9%. This means that 102 respondents 67 people were very good that religious education helps to appreciate their attitudes. This was supported by a mean value of 18.1667 which was in the very good category.

Through the results of frequent descriptive analysis from the aspect of objectives, it showed that the most results were in category very good with a total of 73 students with a percentage of 71.6%. 25 students with a percentage of 24.5% fall into category good. 4 students in category poor with a percentage of 3.9%. This showed that Sanata Dharma University students get good goals in religious education. Supported by a mean value of 18.1961 which was in the very good category.

Through the results of descriptive analysis of the material aspect, it showed that most of the data results fall into category very good out of a total of 51 students with a percentage of 50.0%. 42 students fall into category good with a percentage of 41.2%. 8 students fall into category poor with a percentage of 7.8%. It means that Sanata Dharma University students agreed with the material that has been obtained. This was supported by the mean value of 17.2549 which was in the very good category.

Through the results of descriptive analysis of the process aspect, it showed that the most results fall into category very good with a total of 50 students and a percentage of 49.0%. 26 students fall into category good with a percentage of 25.5%. 20 students fall into category with a percentage of 19.6%. This means that Sanata Dharma University students can apply the process of religious education in their lives. This can be seen by the mean value of 16.2353 which was in the good category.

Through the results of the descriptive analysis of the evaluation aspect, it showed that the most results fall into category very good with a percentage of 51.0% and the number of students was 52. The remaining 37 students fall into category good with a percentage of 36.3%. 12 students fall into category poor with a percentage of 11.8%. This showed that Sanata Dharma University students had the ability in evaluation. This was also supported by a mean value of 17.1667 which was in the very good category.

Religious Pluralism

From the frequent analysis of the subject matter of pluralist attitudes, the majority of results fall into category very good with a total of 78 students with a percentage of 76.5%. The remaining 21 students with a percentage of 20.6% were in category good, 3 students were in category poor with a percentage of 2.9%. From these results it can be seen that of the 102 respondents, 78 of them had a good pluralist attitude. This can be supported by a mean value of 55.8235 which was in the very good category.

Through the results of a descriptive analysis of the frequency of the aspect of accepting other people's views, the most results were obtained in category very good with a total of 76 students with a percentage of 74.5%. The remaining 24 students fall into category good with a percentage of 23.5%. 2 students were in category poor with a percentage of 2.0%. From these results it can be seen that Sanata Dharma University students accept other people's views well. This result was also supported by a mean value of 18.5784 which was in the very good category.

Through the results of the descriptive frequency analysis from the aspect of respecting the opinions of others, the most results were obtained in category very good with a total of 79 students with a percentage of 77.5%. The remaining 20 students fall into category good with a percentage of 19.6%. 3 students fall into category poor with a percentage of 2.9%. From these results it can be seen that Sanata Dharma University students respect the opinions of others well. This result was also supported by a mean value of 18.5490 which was in the very good category.

Through the results of a descriptive analysis of the frequency of aspects of dialogue with other people, the most results were obtained in category very good with a total of 80 students with a percentage of 78.4%. The remaining 19 students fall into category good with a percentage of 18.6%. 3 students fall into category poor with a percentage of 2.9%. From these results it can be seen that Sanata Dharma University students have the ability to dialogue well with those with other views. This result was also supported by a mean value of 18.6961 in the very good category.

Interviews

In interviews, students revealed that Religious Education was very beneficial because it taught knowledge to increase their faith. Respondents realized that Religious Education taught them to respect other people's religions. They believed that the teachings in every religion ought to teach good values and how to respect other people's religions. Several respondents revealed that Religious Education helped them to grow in

personality. Those who were previously very introvert, now they could express their ideas to others and certainly made them a better person.

Religious Education encouraged them to appreciate the values of tolerance towards other people's religions and beliefs. One respondent said that an attitude of openness ultimately had a positive impact on himself, namely being able to minimize the spread of hoax issues about a certain religion. By having a high tolerance attitude, they would not easily be able to believe hoax news. They revealed that the role of Religious Education was very important to give good hope and even to bring their lives closer to God as well as to avoid the bad things.

Some students were not disturbed by other people's religious symbols. Several respondents did not mind congratulating other religious holidays as an expression of respect for other people's religions. By learning Religious Education, they discovered the importance of the knowledge of other religions. With good religious knowledge, it was not easy for them to offend or disrespect other people's religions.

The experience of having religious dialogue and visiting places of religious worship could foster a pluralist attitude. They were given a good opportunity to get out of their comfort zone and go to meet and know the life of other religions. They also experienced sharing life together, practicing prayer and meditation together. When we had good intentions, our presence was welcomed and well received. There was mutual openness, so that it was enriched in appreciation. Interreligious dialogue as part of dialogue of life increased pluralist attitudes and concern for one another. By having a dialogue, people were open to sharing experiences of religious life, so that harmony was maintained. By acknowledging and accepting freedom of religion, a pluralist attitude towards others was fostered, without feeling disturbed by differences. This harmony was created because there was openness to build an attitude of dialogue, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity, together hand in hand to support each other in fostering the diversity in Indonesia.

At certain times the lecturer invited guest speakers to develop students' insights into religion and personal character. In the classroom the lecturer uses the method of experience sharing, not only giving dogmatic material, so that the experience of spiritual dryness could also be overcome.

Conclusion

The results of the research showed that Religious Education had important role in promoting religious pluralism. Among the 102 respondents, there were 54 students included in the very good category (52.9%), and 46 students included in the good category (45%). Interviews with several respondents confirmed that religious education

played an important role in developing a pluralist attitude. In Religious Education class, it is necessary to provide opportunities to have interreligious dialogue, to invite religious leaders from different religions, to have joint activities with people of other religions or to visit places of worship of other religions. As a suggestion, this research can be continued by developing course material for Religious Education so that it can be used as a model for other universities in Indonesia.

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