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Considering Pluralism Reality in Christian Religious Education

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Abstract---*The study aims to consider pluralism reality in Christian religious education. Pluralism in Indonesia is experienced every day by the people in a concrete and close way. On the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, races, languages, groups, customs, religions, and lifestyles, people can learn from one another, thereby enriching one another. We can learn from Islam about obedience in carrying out religious laws, from Buddhism the writer can learn about simplicity is emptying yourself as a servant. In Hinduism, we can learn about self-awareness, from Catholicism, we can learn about submission to church leaders, then from Christianity, we learn about love.*

Keywords---*christian, education, plurality, religious education, tolerance.*

Introduction

Education cannot be present and take place in a vacuum. Education arises from the experience of human life in the context of their place of life. It has a lot to do with issues and realities of life. Unlike time and space move and change, as events and experiences continue to flow, therefore, education needs to respond immediately and appropriately. Therefore, every education must have a story behind it (Kawangung, 2019; Suarda *et al.*, 2018). Often, the story is a conflict, tension, realization of a lack or need for something, or a vision of something better for the community or society.

Christian religious education specifically in Indonesia takes place in the life of a plural society. It is a society consisting of various tribes, races, languages, groups, customs, and religions that vary from one another. History records that Indonesian society is a pluralistic society of religions. There are evidently six official religions recognized by the state, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. There are still other beliefs held by the community that the author knows, namely Marapu, Kejawen, and others.

The question arises in the mind of the author is should the public know more about the ethnicity, race, language, class, customs, and religion of others, or just enough to have a rather tolerant attitude? Should people know each other and help one another? Is it enough for the community to be harmonious without offending one another; or should people be more positive in relationships accepting each other's differences?

Conflicts in this 21st century often occur in Indonesian society. They are related to religious issues. Of course, the conflict in the name of religion is not without reason. According to the authors, this is due to religious education both in public schools, religious schools and even in churches religious education is more exclusive, namely, religious education negates the right to life of other religions and considers it as if their own religion is the most righteous and others. They are considered wrong and misguided. According to John Dewey, this is an intelligent education affair to

ascertain the causes of the existing conflict and who then (rather than favor one) propose an operational plan starts from the lowest and inclusive level than is presented by the practices and ideas of the parties conflict (Antone, 2010).

In this regard, it is important for the church to provide Christian religious education. It is suitable and relevant for educating church members in the context of shared life. To minimize the problems that occur and teach peace, harmony, and balance of life in a plural society as stated in Article 2 paragraph 1 Government Regulation No. 55/2007 concerning religious and religious education. It was stated religious education functions to form Indonesian people who believe in and fear God Almighty and have noble character and are able to maintain peace and harmony interreligious relations.

Research Methods

The research method is basically a scientific way to get data with specific purposes and uses. Human research can use the results to understand, solve, and anticipate problems (Sugiyono, 2013). This study used descriptive methods describing reality with clear words based on sources from various works of literature. Therefore, this study applied a qualitative approach emphasizes its analysis in the deductive and inductive inference process and analysis of the relationship dynamics of phenomena under study using scientific logic (Kawangung & Lele, 2019).

Discussion and Results

Religious and Religious Education in Indonesia

Policies in Indonesia can change depending on the political and government maps doing leadership. Along with the change of leadership, the political education map government continues to experience changes, of course, the policy must prioritize and according to the needs of their people. Since the reform era of the national education system has experienced a change in the system issued by the government. Law No. 20/2003 stated education policy is still national and discourse, whereas before the reform era, there were many educational institutions no formal. It is currently, religious education has not received a special portion of the policy ever issued by government policy. Therefore, religious education at that time was still general.

Government Regulation No. 55/2007 concerning religious and religious education was a derivative of the national education system. Based on government regulations, religious education is education provides knowledge and building the attitudes, personalities, and skills of students in practicing their religious teachings. It is implemented at least through subjects at all fields, levels, and education types. Religious education functions to form Indonesian people who have faith and are devoted to God Almighty and have good character and are able to maintain peace and harmony interreligious relations. Whereas, religious education is education that prepares students to be able to play a role in mastering the knowledge of religious teachings and/or becoming religious scholars and practicing their religious teachings. The purpose of religious education is to develop the ability of students to understand, live, and practice religious values that harmonize their mastery in science, technology, and art.

Christian religious education

According to Martin Luther (2011), Christian religious education is education that involves all members of the congregation, especially young people. In order to learn orderly to be more aware of sin and rejoice in the freeing words of Jesus Christ. Equipping with the source of faith, especially the experience of prayer, Firman wrote, Bible, and various forms of culture so that the congregation is able to serve each other including society and the state and take part responsibly in the Christian fellowship, namely the church (Boehlke, 2009). According to Yohanes Calvin (2000), Christian religious education is the build of the believer's mind and children with the Firman of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through a number of learning experiences carried out by the church. Thus, there are believers a spiritual growth that stands for God the Father Jesus Christ in the form of acts of love towards each other (Boehlke, 2009; Gepu *et al.*, 2018; Suyasa *et al.*, 2016).

Based on the explanation of the above reformers, it can be concluded both thinking Christian religious education as a means of equipping someone with the piety of the Christian faith whose vision is to make an educated Christian who can manifest his faith in the arena of life and serve others in the sphere of church, society, and country.

Thomas Groome (1998), stated Christian religious education is a political activity with pilgrims at a time that deliberately together pays attention to God's activities in the present, to the story of the Christian faith community,

and the vision of God's kingdom, the seeds that have been present among humans (Groome, 2010). The specificity of what Christian educators do comes from the story of the Christian communities, with the earliest expression in Jesus Christ, and the perfect vision of the God Kingdom brought about by the story. However, the most important thing to note from Thomas Groome (1998). The affirmation is Christian religious education takes part in the nature of education is generally politics. It might mean that is obtained from the past or by being proposed for the future, being ignored from the past and by being rejected for the future, Christian religious educators are conducting political activities. It is inevitable from political nature and the choice is towards building the future of society through involvement in the present as Christians in it.

Lewier (2009), a Christian religious education lecturer at the Faculty of Theology at UKIM, defines Christian religious education as a deliberate effort by the church to foster and educate all its citizens (children, adolescents, youth, adults, men, and women) to reach the level of maturity in the faith, hope, and love, to carry out His mission in the world while waiting for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lewier, 2009). Education is a deliberate effort. It means all efforts in the field of Christian religious education must be accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Head of the Church and the Great Teacher who has entrusted the task of teaching to His church in the world through Christian Religious Education.

Based on the definition from some above experts, it is natural the writer is fascinated by Gerrish (1973) thoughts, and it is no exaggeration, we stated that Gerrish (1973) contribution to education is the foundation stones must doctrine in the teaching life of Christian religious education present. Wherein, Education Christianity is intended to increase the spiritual potential and build a person to become a person who has faith. It is obedient to God and has good character, including ethics, morals, and character as an embodiment of religious education. Increasing spiritual potential includes the introduction, understanding, and inculcation of religious values as well as the introduction of these values in the life of a plural society in Indonesia. Thus, we understand Christian religious education as an effort of the church to develop in a balanced way between the intellectuals and the piety of all congregations through the help of the Holy Spirit in order to understand and live the love of God in Jesus Christ. It is expressed in daily life for others and communities in the environment in their life (Kuri *et al.*, 2018; Subawa *et al.*, 2019).

Living together in plural society

Newbigin (2000), stated *pluralism* (*pluralism* is an understanding or outlook on life that recognizes and accepts the existence of plurality or diversity within a group) is an attitude that accepts well the diversity and different lifestyles in a society and an attitude that believes that diversity enriches human life. Pluralism in Indonesia is experienced every day by them concretely and closely. Indonesians are accustomed to saying that we live in a pluralistic society, not just a society that is actually diverse in a variety of cultures, ethnicities, races, languages, groups, customs, religions, and lifestyles, but also plural in the sense that pluralism. It is celebrated as an agreed and respected case.

The witness of the church always takes place in a pluralistic society. In recent years, new perceptions of plural societies have emerged and had quickly built the character of new ideologies. People who live in the 21st century are astonished to witness the emergence of various cultures, ideologies, and streams or new understandings of religions in Indonesia. As a result, every human being must share the world of residence with people who have an ideology, doctrine, religion and culture that are different from what is known and possessed so far. The probability is the astonishment arises due to alienation of ideology, religion, doctrine, and culture beyond what is possessed. For Indonesia, ideology was born not from a system of theorizing ability solely, but it was from the experience of the nation and the struggle to deal with concretely pluralism. The experience of this struggle has given rise to Pancasila provides a forum for existing religious and cultural divisions, but also summarizes all these differences in a national unity (Hadinoto, 1993; Suryasa, 2019).

As one of the plural societies in the world, the concept of Indonesia has pioneered one direction that can provide the best solution. It is expected to be a mainstay for humanity in the future. It is clear that hope will disappear if they are no longer value plurality as dynamic wealth (Titaley, 2011). Thus, we stated pluralism in Indonesia is a great potential that can advance this nation. On the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, races, languages, groups, customs, religions, and lifestyles, people can learn from one another, thereby enriching one another. We can learn from Islam about obedience in carrying out religious laws, from Buddhism the writer can learn about simplicity is emptying yourself as a servant. In Hinduism, we can learn about self-awareness, from Catholicism, we can learn about submission to church leaders, then from Christianity, we learn about love.

Basic tolerant life attitudes

The symbol of Unity in Diversity (Bhineka Tunggal Ika), it is very clear that Indonesia is a sea of plurality. It looks beautiful like an emerald strung from various islands scattered in Indonesia with various cultures, tribes, races, languages, classes, customs, religions, and lifestyles of the people. It should be noted, the community, in reality, must recognize and accept diversity forms a natural unity. It is difficult to be fragmented and becomes a part that seems to have been united. Although the differences cannot be brought together due to they are prone to disrupt the harmony and balance of life together. It does not mean that people stop to respect those differences or plurality. Therefore, we below will discuss a little about the basics of religious life tolerance. Thus, people do not only talk about differences but also the principles of diversity can be developed together.

Having seen Islam, according to Masdar Mas'udi pluralistic is a destiny that cannot be avoided by humans. Whereas, Nurcholis Majid stated plurality in the order of life is God's order and law over the human community and is God's prerogative to explain why people's life differ from one another in various ways (Budyanto, 2001). Having viewed Christian, J.B. Banawiratma stated that religious plurality and faith are real. Budyanto (2001), stated plurality is not an unintentional reality, or reality and destiny must be taken for granted without any purpose, plurality is God's will from the beginning of human life, for the good and welfare of humans.

We live in diversity is God's gift, which is a beautiful life and a blessing for humans. However, to avoid problems are prone to disrupt harmony and balance in living together, all people must be smart to blend in, even though multicultural. Pluralism is experienced in concrete every day and closely. Due to they are life and live together with the largest Muslim in the world. Therefore, the same is good and different is also beautiful. The words pluralism or plurality may not be in the Bible, but the reality of pluralism is clearly seen there. The world of the Bible is marked by diversity or diversity of cultures and religions. Haran, where Abraham's parents lived and settled had various religions of their own. In contrast to the land of Canaan, where the family of Abraham and Sarah immigrated. The understanding of the Divine is related to the prevailing views in the tribes in the early days. Each tribe, race, community, and religion has a different God and even God for all different needs or events. However, it is unlike context the self-identity of a group of migrant Hebrews and the concept of God are formed and organized, in the midst of a diverse context the Hebrew-Jews believe in one God who is the source of life and all needs, the power behind every success, victory, the source of all blessings, which holds orders and decisions (Antone, 2010).

The context of Jesus Christ is also marked by diversity and plurality. Like other Jewish people, Jesus grew in the faith traditions of his community namely, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Zealots. There were also Greeks and Romans with influences in education and philosophy. In this pluralistic context, Jesus teaches the embracing of love and forgiveness of God. Jesus also taught a new identity is for everyone as children of God who loves. Even Jesus also expanded the meaning of faith. Faith is not something that is placed on a particular religion (Antone, 2010). So, from the unique situation in the context of pluralism in Indonesia, the most important thing is how beautiful diversity can still be a gift of God, not bringing disaster, conflict and division. Thus, together to live a life of mutual respect, a life of mutual help, life in peace and welfare, so that, diversity is a blessing for the Indonesian people.

Approach to diversity

Many writers, scholars, historians, and theologians have observed various approaches to the diversity of religions and noted the approaches are a common response to the diversity of any kind, not just religious pluralism. They are not only religious responses to other religions but human responses to the issue of diversity. In the broader scope of these responses, John Hick, an English philosopher, highlighted three typologies namely, exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Hick stated, exclusivism is the view that one particular tradition teaches the truth and forms the path to safety or freedom. Hick explained prevalent among many religions, this attitude was the initial stance of religions that sought forms in seemingly inhospitable environments (Antone, 2010; Rahmawati *et al.*, 2018; Mishra, 2016).

Hick described inclusivism as a response to a limitation of primitive exclusivism. This position forms a space for others and differs while simultaneously trying to maintain the superiority of his own faith. However, he holds one particular tradition as presenting the highest truth while other traditions only reflect some aspects of that truth. Therefore, this view regards its own tradition of faith as central and normative (Antone, 2010). Pluralism is a way of avoiding the arrogance of exclusivism and the instability of inclusivism. It seems to end on exploiting the status quo of religion and not dealing with ethical contradictions between religions. He holds that the major religions in the world embody different perceptions and conceptions of the real or the highest, and each religion independently, the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness toward centeredness on reality is happening. Thus, the traditions of the major religions are seen as alternative soteriological spaces in which they find salvation, deliverance, and fulfillment (Antone, 2010).

Diana L. Eck has another way of analyzing three approaches to the other. *First*, exclusive responses included community, tradition, understanding of reality, meeting God, are the only truths, leaving others aside. *Second*, inclusive responses included, there are indeed many communities, traditions and truths, but the way of seeing things is the culmination to another. *Third*, responses are pluralist. Truth is not exclusively or inclusive of a particular tradition or community. Therefore, the diversity of communities, traditions, and understanding of truth, and a vision of God is not an obstacle to overcome, but an opportunity for engagement and energy-powered dialogue with one another. It does not mean giving up commitments. It seems to be open to commitments to give and receive joint discovery, understanding, and transformation (Antone, 2010).

Daniel L. Migliore is a contemporary theologian. He tries to look specifically at Christian responses to people of different faiths and religions and arrive at five classical approaches. *First*, it is the exclusive view which confirms that the Christian faith itself. It is the truest so it implies that all other religions are wrong. In this view, the finality of Christ is completely closed and dialogue with other faiths is a betrayal of God's revelation in Christ Jesus. The weakness of this view is the difficulty in distinguishing between Jesus the Christ and human ideas or understanding of Him (Antone, 2010). *Second*, it is the developmental view that respects all other religions as preparation for accepting Christ in whom all faiths find fulfillment. In this view, the finality of Christ is seen as occupying the highest point in a ladder of religious belief or belief moves upward. However, its weakness lies in its gradual evolutionary assumptions about world religions, which only change the relationship of Christians with other religions (Antone, 2010).

Third, it is the transcendentalist view that considers all believers, including those from other religions to have access to God's transcendental grace even if Christ is unknown or not recognized. Having viewed everyone who lives in Christ as an anonymous Christian. The challenge is how to think about the feelings of Christians when a believer from another religion adopts this view and says that a Christian is an anonymous Hindu or Anonymous Buddha (Antone, 2010). *Fourth*, it is a dialogical view which considers that when Christians and other religious people must take faith commitments seriously. It is also necessary to enter into an open dialogue with others. Therefore, Christianity can act as a critical catalyst, helping other religions bring out the deepest and best in themselves while being challenged and clarified in the process of specification and perfection of the revelations of Christ (Antone, 2010).

Fifth, it is a relativist view that seeks to realize the historical particularity of religions and tries to identify the theocentric core that they share. With this emphasis, finality is focused on God in the midst and in whom a global theology can be made possible (Antone, 2010). B.J. Banawiratma distinguished the existence of four paradigms: exclusive paradigm, which is the view. It is only his own religion that is right, others are wrong. An inclusive paradigm, having seen there really is truth and salvation in other religions, but in the end, what is right is my religion. The inclusive paradigm is the assumption that all religions are the same. It's just a different way. Then, the last is the dialogical pluralist paradigm (Budyanto, 2001). Dialogical pluralist characteristics according to J.B. Banawiratma is every religion has its own specificities, without having to reduce the beliefs of others and to confuse one another. Therefore, every religion must be prepared to dialogue sincerely to enrich each other's traditions (Budyanto, 2001).

Based on some expert's approach, it is not wrong to say that the approach models differ, but in the explanations of the experts about the approach according to the authors more or less the same. Therefore, the approaches are not unique to Christians but are also common to people of other faiths. These responses, for the author, seem to be a social and political response from people towards diversity, plurality, novelty, and alienation. Moreover, they are not only behavioral but are really related to attitudes based on these reasons. We choose the pluralism approach. It is true that this approach originated in the West and hopefully, this approach challenges local churches to plan Christian religious education that is more precisely related to the context of pluralism in Indonesia.

We want to say the church needs to plan Christian religious education that is more precisely related to the context of pluralism in Indonesia. It also means to humbly acknowledge the limitations of human effort and ability. One's perception, conception, articulation, and analysis are built by one's physical and psychological abilities as well as their culture and context. Finally, due to the acquisition of limited knowledge, human knowledge is also limited. Keep in mind that what you think, understand, and feel, must always be a little at a time. No one can claim that the one has arrived at the final and absolute end. Whatever is felt and understood as the best that must be had, let it happen, thus, in a certain time and let it be submitted for review and evaluation when the time is needed.

Conclusion

History is colored by religious wars, but people must be careful in examining. It is not religious diversity that causes wars, but the intolerant spirit that fills a religious group believes. It has the power to govern. It can be stated ideally religions are bestowed upon humans to convey love from God. Love should be reflected in establishing relationships with others even with all creation. Based on Government Regulation No. 55/2007, we understand all religions have an equal position and the task of society is not to interfere or convert other religions but to deepen their own religion and learn from other religions, thus, when meeting with others in the depth of their religious appreciation. Each will produce a peaceful dialogue. We are very impressed with R. Pannikar who analogizes the religious pluralism such as light with an unlimited number of colors, which appear only white. When the white color falls in the prism of experience, the light spreads into various colors. The divine light spread in countless diverse traditions, doctrines, and religions, which differed from one another. Green is not yellow, Hinduism is not Buddhist and it is now not clear between green and white. However, through a particular color that is the religion of people can reach the source of the white light. Similarly, each tradition is given the possibility of achieving its goals, fulfillment, and salvation, provided there is a bright light, not just darkness (Budyanto, 2001).

We knew religious education should be like sports education, in the classroom all students learn to measure soccer, volleyball, badminton, and basketball. Although, students learn all sport types when leaving the classroom students to remain with their choice of exercise without reducing their hobbies at all. The same is good, the difference is beautiful, so it is smart to blend in even though. It is multicultural. However, we want to advocate the syncretism of religions, of course not. Syncretism mixes various elements from various religions like a hodgepodge who mixes a lot of vegetables and then produces a new religion. It is completely different from the existing religions. Precisely we want to invite to be able to respect the integrity of other religions.

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