

Building Nationalist Character Through Multicultural Education Practice in Selamat Pagi Indonesia (SPI) High School

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Abstract: This study aims to comprehend the uniqueness of a high school (SPI) that implements multicultural education model on its learning activities. Most of high school in Indonesia attended by homogenous student because they originated from the same area where the school located. The learning method also emphasizes theory and comprehension of general knowledge's and give more task for its students. On contrary, SPI has diverse student from various area in Indonesia, and most of the students come from poor families. The learning method highlights entrepreneurship practice based on the student's diverse skills. The aim of the study is to understand the educational strategy that intends to develop students' character with the value of dignity and appreciation toward diversity. The theory of moral education and multiculturalism are used to comprehend the multicultural education practice in this school. The research method used is descriptive-qualitative with case study. This study took place in Batu-Malang, Jawa Timur. Data obtained from students with diverse ethnicity, religion, and rural background, headmaster, and several teachers who had adequate information about school management. The results of this study indicate that the values of diversity, community, and tolerance continuously infused.

1 INTRODUCTION

This study was initiated based on awareness of the shifting tendency in Indonesian people which choose radicalism to solve problem related to their religious or group conflict. Radicalism, presumably, was doctrinized to students since they were in high school. This study intends to seek for education model which embedded the value of tolerance and multiculturalism which could reduce the risk of disintegration due to radicalism.

Previous study about radicalism and intolerance has been conducted by Ahnaf (2012). He shows that the early indication of radicalism had actually formed since students received education in high school level. Radicalism idea was spreaded from Islamic extracurricular activities which strengthened by the alumni preaches about radical perspectives in Islam. Study from Maarif Institute (2016) also revealed that the indication of radicalism in Indonesian high school students was in a worrying level. The survey shows that 40.82 of students were

willing to attack another group which insulted Islam, while 12.24 percent said no.

Based on the findings, it is essential to raise a question about the learning method in many high school in Indonesia, whether school has successful to produce an intelligent and critical student who are able to solve problems when the nation of Indonesia experienced disintegration, or has it been creating intolerant and radical young generation? The reality of education in Indonesia shows that learning activities are oriented to achieve curriculum target and theoretical comprehension instead of building emotional intelligence to student. Sesmiarni (2015) argued that Indonesian students were required to learn many disciplines without further opportunity to analyze and having critical thought about particular issues. Consequently, student was not able to give a positive respond in many social problems in Indonesia. One approach to overcome the problem of intolerance and radicalism in many education institutions in Indonesia is by developing a model of education with orientation to morality enhancement and the development of democratic value which

suitable with the national identity. The study from Sesmiarni (2015) also shows that such education model could be accomplished by embedding values which could form student personality based on ethical and moral taught from the family, school, and society. Nevertheless, this study is attempted to trace humanist education model based on pluralism and multiculturalism values.

Moral and character education is one approach to overcome many problems in society such as violence, criminality, and bad influence or radicalism in student. Study from Bebeau et al. (1998) stated that American people are changing due to ideology and behaviour shift, and these conditions produce findings about the importance of highlighting moral education. They show that American youth issues like violence, drug abuse, and unwanted pregnancy are not the only problems. More acute problems also occurred on education and development for teenagers, so it is necessary to develop a model of moral education for the whole component of society. There are four components to illustrate moral development, namely: moral sensitivity, moral assessment, moral motivation and moral characterization. Those four components should be continuously embraced. Discussion about moral education in Sociology was initiated by Durkheim (1973). Durkheim's thinking about moral education is closely related to the role of education which has social function as the cultivator of the value of discipline, social affiliation, and autonomy.

Given the background, authors conducted a research in an education institute which embraces pluralism in school, whose education practice has set as a model to develop multiculturalism values in education institute. The research problem in this study are: (1) How is the academic atmosphere built in school so that the values of multiculturalism are understood by the students? (2) How does school manage the academic atmosphere and develop students' characters through multicultural education?

2 METHODS

This study applied descriptive-qualitative method with case study. Research design is based on qualitative strategy where primary data gathered through in-depth interview and non-participatory observation. Research setting is daily activities of SPI student in school and in dormitory. The first subject of this research is the headmaster who provided many substantial information about the school. Aside from the headmaster, two teachers and an

academic staff who guarded the school were also listed as research subjects. Research subjects from students consist of six students chosen from every grade and two alumni's who work at tourism business division. Students and alumni's chosen for their diversity in religion, culture, background origin, and language spoken. Total amount of the informants were 12 persons. The amount of students registered in the school are 174. Data analyzed by reduction and categorization for classification based on the themes of this research.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Compare to other high schools in Indonesia, SPI is a very distinct school. Firstly, this school was established based on the vision and mission which embrace pluralism, stated as following: (1) To increase faith to God according to each student's belief; (2) To increase humanity, solidarity, democracy, and social justice in daily activities; (3) To create creative and productive students based on student's skill. Secondly, this school also carries social mission by providing education at no cost. The academic culture is designed based on humanity, solidarity, and social justice.

Learning strategy applied in school is innovative because its distinction compares to conventional education model which applied in most schools in Indonesia. It is regarded as innovative because students not only learn in class, but they also have outdoor learning activities. Their learning activity is not limited in the classroom, but they could have a class session in the school fields. The learning material is developed by teachers according to students' need. This experience is considered more fun for students because they receive lessons which directly related to tourism business practice managed by school. Innovative education model attracted students' attention to involve in learning activities appears as a promising strategy to build inclusiveness for students from different environments. In accordance with research from Ahmad and Szpara (2003), student adaptation in United States of America (US) performed in various ways. Getting education in secular school helps Muslim immigrants in US to adapt and accept multiculturalism within American environment.

Based on school vision and mission, teachers treat students equally regardless their religion, belief, and ethnic. As an effort to maintain harmony in such diversity, teachers attempt to preserve synergy between students by asking them to make

group project which consists of students from various backgrounds in the beginning of their first academic year. Students are required to work on group projects whose formation is continuously changing to avoid boredom and students could mingle in the community without bringing ethnic, religion, or language background.

Learning method which blends students from various culture, religion and language apparently is supported by students. For example, Moesa, a student from Central Borneo, and Monalisa, a student from Papua, tell their learning process in the school. Moesa felt comfortable in the school because he has a better chance to know his friend from different areas in Indonesia. Monalisa who felt lucky for being able to learn many languages from various regions in Indonesia. Study from Stefanek et al. (2015) shows similar things about the experience of SPI students. In their research about individual and contextual prediction about friendship preference reveals that in order to develop intercultural friendship between students, acculturation related to their cultural affiliation need is necessary.

However, several students felt hesitant and afraid to be a part of the school community, especially students originated from outside Java. The fear came from their lack of experience about living in Java. Three aspects that felt by students from outside Java could be listed as follows: (1) living environment difference; (2) language difference; (3) weather situation. They also lack confidence because they perceive education in Java is far better than education system in their origin place. The same situation as a minority experienced by Asian students who came for US for the first time and had to go to school. Based on the research by Ngo (2010) those Asian students felt alienated and perceive themselves as outsider in their new community. To decrease the marginalized feeling, the school emphasize the feeling of belonging and pride to culture through daily activities in school. In SPI, the use of Indonesian language in students' daily activities is a way to acknowledge the pride as an Indonesian and the brotherhood as Citizen of Indonesia. Indonesian language in fact could overcome the conflict happened between students from different ethnicity, religion and language. School also build prayer house for all religion so the feeling of tolerance between student could be developed.

The previous discussions had described the development of the academic atmosphere in school which had designed by school institution. Therefore, this section seeks to explain information related to

action taken by the teacher to manage and preserve the academic atmosphere to build students with pluralism character. The tolerant attitude should be maintained in school by respecting students with different religion, ethnicity, culture, and language. Teachers manage the atmosphere by designing a study plan for students to act tolerant in performing their daily activities.

One method pursued by the school in implementing a tolerant and respectful way of life for students is by assigning senior to accompany new students in school. The companion function includes accompanying new student to interact with school community from a different background. Senior companion also supervises new student in performing their religious practice according to their belief. Companion may give sanction to a student who dismisses religious practice, proved by their presence mark in the prayer room. A student who skips prayers will receive a penalty in several forms such as cleaning toilet or lap running in the school yard.

Tolerance towards different belief has been practiced by students in this school. It is shown by student openness toward friend with different belief prayer. Therefore, every student could learn and understand various prayers practices performed by students with different religions. The tolerant action also reflected on a continuous obligation to perform religious practice for students. In a commemoration day of a religion, students with different religion are required to act respectful, such as in Ramadhan, Eid Mubarak, Christmas, and much more. Growing tolerance between student from diverse cultural and religion background is never a simple thing. Research by Johnson (2011) about the relation between multicultural education and racism in student shows that the bigger student experienced multicultural education, the lesser their racism action. This study also covers the program and curriculum of multicultural education in the US which closely related to ethnical and cultural diversity.

Managing diversity in school also pursued in school boarding house, where students are obliged to mingle with another student regardless their origin, ethnicity, and religion. The school implemented the method of fair and equal treatment for all students to build a student character who accustomed with the difference in custom, culture, or religion. Character building started when students first enrolled in school by living together in boarding house. The boarding house is a facility for students to interact with the other who previously hold different

customs, culture or religion. The school will anticipate any possible friction in an educative way such as supervised learning and praying activities during their stay in the boarding house. Any violation in boarding school will receive sanction, and senior companion should warn students who violate the rules. Study from White (2004) about boarding school in Australia reveals that student who had ever experienced living together in the dormitory are more likely to be able to receive new culture, including diversity brought by their friends from different background. White also shows that boarding school is a determinant factor in encouraging student self-dependent to embrace diversity and cultural pluralism.

School also develops PAKSA principle, an acronym stands for Pray, Attitude, Knowledge, Skill, and Action; to build tolerant student character. Through PAKSA, students are expected to be obedient in worshipping God (Pray), behave according to the norm (attitude), having proper knowledge (knowledge), having an adequate skill (skill), and know the right thing to do (action). In PAKSA, student's attitude is scored in which its accumulation could determine how they will pass to the next grade or how they could graduate from school.

Based on the findings, this research ignites further discussion about multicultural education. Firstly, is about the role of school and its academic atmosphere as a socialization agent of pluralism and multiculturalism value promotion. Through those values, students integrated in a common understanding about the prevailing moral system. Macionis (2008) in his research about the function of school describe that school is responsible to spread cultural norms and value, including developing cultural innovation to embrace diversity and nation unity. The concept of moral education by Durkheim provide guidance to teacher to raise the student's awareness about the importance of self-consciousness and collective consciousness, where the collaboration of both created a stable community. Durkheim explains that students in school are given knowledge about live in a society where complex of idea and sentiments became intellectual and moral framework distinctive of the entire group (Ballantine and Spade, 2008). Based on Durkheim thought the role of the school becomes very important, especially as an agent that teaches values that shapes the students 'character. Winter (2012) studied about the importance of moral education as one effort to increase student

participation in education and encouraging the growth of democracy and nationalism to students.

Through multicultural education the value of multiculturalism become essential to deliver to students, especially to those who live in an area with high polarization and differentiation. Tilaar (2003) stated that multiculturalism is vital for identity development of groups in society for a state. A civilized nation is a nation which could maintain their diversity instead of excluding the minority or upholding a dominant sub-ethnic. Multicultural education contains important universal values, such as (1) social justice; (2) strengthening democratic value; and (3) recognition of human rights (Tilaar 2003). In upholding multicultural values, every school community should acknowledge the existence of the group, cultural group, or diverse identity of society, acknowledge equality in a various ethnic group, respect different norms, tradition, the social structure which applied differently in different societies and presenting local wisdom.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that: (1) academic atmosphere in school applied multiculturalism values based on humanity, fraternity, and social justice. Based on those values, students will be able to comprehend and apply moral value to preserve social unity. (2) To maintain academic atmosphere and build students' character who understand the multiculturalism values, school applies different strategy: (a) design a curriculum and fun learning method to integrate students through formation of project group consists of heterogeneous background; (b) continuously develop tolerance feeling between students by respecting students' religious belief and using Indonesia language in daily activities in school; (c) establish a boarding house for students with the main goal is to blend students from various cultural, ethnicity, religious, or language background, and (d) embedding the value of respecting other according to the principle of PAKSA (pray, attitude, knowledge, skill, action).

The finding of this study might not be able to answer the problems of radicalism which experienced by students in religion-based school and might also not be able to explain how to exclusively impose problems in different school because the research was conducted in only one location. Another limitation of this study is the method

choose to describe academic atmosphere and interaction of school communities, the finding is not able to present a comprehensive data such as about the advantages and disadvantages of learning program which has been developed by the school.

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