

Curriculum Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education in Building Religious Moderation at SMA Panca Budi Medan

Nina Ria Purba, Hadi Saputra Panggabean

Abstract

This study aims to develop an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that incorporates multicultural values to foster religious moderation among students. The proposed curriculum integrates principles of cultural diversity and tolerance into PAI learning materials, allowing students to comprehend Islamic teachings while also appreciating and interacting harmoniously with adherents of other religions. Utilizing a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach, this study addresses multicultural education as a relatively new phenomenon in PAI courses, emphasized as an essential competency for both lecturers and students. The phenomenological approach seeks to understand the daily lives and intersubjective experiences of the participants, aiming to reveal the meaning of concepts and phenomena as perceived by individuals. Conducted in a natural setting, this approach permits unrestricted interpretation of the phenomenon, granting researchers the freedom to analyze the data comprehensively. The findings indicate that a multicultural PAI curriculum effectively promotes an understanding of religious moderation among students and heightens awareness of the importance of multicultural perspectives in religion. These results are intended to guide educators and policymakers in creating a more inclusive PAI curriculum, thereby supporting the development of a peaceful and harmonious society.

Keywords: *Curriculum Development, Religious Moderation, Multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI)*

Nina Ria Purba¹

¹Islamic Religious Education, Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi, Indonesia
e-mail: Ninaria658@gmail.com¹

Hadi Saputra Panggabean²

²Islamic Religious Education, Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi, Indonesia
e-mail: hadi@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id²

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Introduction

In the world of education, multiculturalism has become an important topic among academics. The concept of multicultural education was first raised and discussed in the United States and Western countries in the 1960s. At that time, discrimination against minority groups by the majority group became an urgent issue in America. Consequently, civil rights movements emerged aiming to reduce these discriminatory practices. The presence of these movements brought a significant influence on the world of education. Many experts subsequently developed ideas for educational reform that emphasized tolerance and equality, focusing on aspects of ethnicity and cultural diversity (Makmun et al., 2021). Multicultural education is a learning strategy that utilizes students' cultural backgrounds to enhance learning in the classroom and school environment. It aims to support and expand the concepts of culture, difference, equality, and democracy (Hasan, n.d.).

In Indonesia, the discourse on multiculturalism began to grow rapidly at the beginning of the 20th century. This topic is frequently discussed, particularly within the political realm. As is well known, Indonesia is a country with high diversity. Its society consists of various ethnicities with different customs, cultures, religions, and languages. This diversity, as seen a few years ago, can trigger social conflicts. Examples include conflicts between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the government in Aceh, between Muslim and Christian communities in Ambon and North Maluku, as well as between local residents and migrants in Kupang, NTT. Additionally, in West Kalimantan, conflicts occurred between the Bugis, Buton, Madura, and Dayak Malay communities. These conflicts demonstrate that Indonesian society still does not fully understand and accept existing diversity (Bahasa et al., n.d.).

Currently, Indonesia faces not only conflicts but also many problems caused by extremism. According to Hasan, radicalism can be divided into two parts, namely radicalism in the form of ideas (fundamentalism) and radicalism in the form of actions (terrorism) (Junaidi & Suryanto, 2022, p. 30). Indonesia remains vulnerable to extremism and terrorism, especially among teenagers. Therefore, the younger generation is the group most easily targeted and vulnerable to radicalism and terrorism, necessitating efforts to counteract these dangerous ideologies.

Multicultural education has become an important aspect of the modern educational world, especially in higher education, where cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity are part of the academic environment. SMA Panca Budi Medan, as an educational institution committed to advancing quality education, recognizes the importance of integrating multicultural concepts into the curriculum to prepare students to face the challenges of an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Educational institutions play a strategic role in implementing religious moderation education. Institutions that promote harmonious relationships among different groups can reduce existing religious, ethnic, or racial segregation in society (Albana, 2023, p. 51).

In the context of SMA Panca Budi Medan, the development of multicultural education focuses on implementing inclusive values and tolerance that align with Islamic teachings while also respecting the diversity within society. The primary goal of multicultural education is to equip students with a profound understanding of cultural, religious, and worldview differences, as well as to develop a mutual respect for others.

The development of multicultural education at SMA Panca Budi Medan encompasses various essential elements, such as the theories and concepts of multiculturalism, as well as the analysis of social interactions involving diverse students from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. This approach is expected to provide insights to students regarding the application of multicultural Islamic education values within the multicultural context at SMA Panca Budi Medan.

Active learning strategies, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and field trips, are also part of this development to enhance students' understanding and empathy toward diversity. Furthermore, evaluations and assessments that focus on students' ability to

adapt and contribute to a multicultural environment serve as indicators of success for this multicultural PAI curriculum development.

Thus, SMA Panca Budi Medan hopes that this development of multicultural Islamic education can serve as a strong foundation for students to become inclusive, empathetic individuals who are ready to face the challenges of a diverse global world.

Based on this background, the focus of this research is:

1. What is the form of multiculturalism at Universitas Islam Kadiri Kediri?
2. What is the learning strategy of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education at MA Panca Budi Medan?
3. What approach model is used in the development of the Multicultural PAI curriculum at SMA Panca Budi Medan?

Literature Review

Multicultural Islamic Education

The current state of education, particularly regarding dynamic yet sometimes detached students, poses concerns for educators. They describe how some students can become indifferent toward many things: their own circumstances, academic achievements, communities, and even their environment. It would certainly be very encouraging if schools could transform this situation through the active participation of all students (W. Setiawan, n.d., p. 77). Education is a process of developing human resources to achieve social skills and optimal personal growth, as well as fostering strong relationships between individuals, society, and their surrounding cultural environment.

Meanwhile, "multicultural" is derived from the word "multi," meaning "many," "diverse," and "diversity," and "cultural," which relates to culture, courtesy, intellect, and so forth. Multiculturalism implies cultural diversity, differing politeness, and diverse attitudes. Generally, multicultural Islamic education is an educational concept and practice aimed at understanding racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in society. The goal of this concept is for individuals from different communities to coexist peacefully. Furthermore, multicultural Islamic education is an educational practice aimed at building tolerant, mutually respectful, and democratic social interactions among people of different backgrounds. In a broad sense, multicultural Islamic education encompasses not only formal education but also non-formal and informal education.

Multicultural Islamic education is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance, legitimacy, and vitality of ethnic and cultural diversity in shaping the lives of individuals, groups, and nations. This philosophy seeks to institutionalize cultural pluralism into an educational system based on principles of equality, mutual respect, acceptance, and a moral commitment to social justice. Through teaching and learning approaches grounded in democratic values, multicultural Islamic education fosters the development of cultural pluralism.

Additionally, this education is committed to achieving educational equity, developing curricula that cultivate an understanding of various ethnic groups, and eliminating oppressive practices. Overall, multicultural Islamic education represents a comprehensive reform in schooling and basic education aimed at all learners, challenging all forms of discrimination and oppressive instruction, while promoting democratic principles of social justice in classroom interactions (E. Setiawan, 2017).

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that multicultural Islamic education is an education that encompasses various races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions, based on a mutual appreciation between cultures. Multicultural education is an educational pattern that recognizes human dignity in a diverse community. According to several figures, such as Ainul Yaqin, multicultural education is a process of developing individual or group attitudes and behaviors in an effort to mature humans through teaching, training, processes, actions, and educational methods that respect plurality and heterogeneity humanistically. Thus, learners

are expected not only to understand and master the subject matter but also to possess a strong character to act democratically, pluralistically, and humanistically.

According to Husniyatus Salamah, there are several key aspects of multicultural education:

- **First**, multicultural education is a developmental process that strives to improve what has existed from the beginning. Therefore, multicultural education knows no narrow boundaries that often hinder human interaction.
- **Second**, multicultural education aims to develop the full potential of human beings, including intellectual, social, moral, religious, economic, courtesy, and cultural potentials. The initial step in this education is adherence to the noble values of humanity, respect for individual dignity, and appreciation for people who differ in economic status, political aspirations, religion, or cultural traditions.
- **Third**, this education respects plurality and heterogeneity, which are realities in today's society. Plurality is understood not only as ethnic and racial diversity but also as diversity in thought, paradigms, understandings, economics, and politics. This prevents any group from claiming itself as the sole model for other groups, making any forced uniformity contrary to the values of multicultural education.
- **Fourth**, this education respects and upholds cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. This attitude of respect and appreciation is crucial to socialize, especially since advancements in telecommunications, information, and transportation technologies have transcended national borders, making it impossible for a country to remain isolated from global interaction.

According to Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy in his book *Pendidikan Agama Berwawasan Multikultural*, there are seven primary characteristics of multicultural-oriented religious education:

1. **Learning to Live in Difference:** Multicultural education teaches the development of tolerance, empathy, sympathy, emotional maturity, equality in participation, and forms new social contracts and rules of engagement for interfaith co-existence.
2. **Building Mutual Trust:** Mutual trust is one of the most vital forms of social capital for the cultural strengthening of society, which can be defined as a set of shared values and norms within a community group that encourages cooperation.
3. **Maintaining Mutual Understanding:** Understanding does not always mean agreeing. Mutual understanding here is the awareness that their values and ours may differ and can complement each other, contributing to a dynamic relationship.
4. **Upholding Mutual Respect:** This attitude places human beings in an equal relationship, without superiority. Honoring and respecting fellow humans is a universal value upheld by all religions in the world.
5. **Openness in Thinking:** Intellectual maturity is an important goal of education. Education should provide new knowledge on how to think and act, which ultimately produces a willingness to deepen the meaning of oneself, identity, life-world, religion, and one's own culture as well as others'.
6. **Appreciation and Interdependence:** A decent and humane life is only possible within a caring social order. All members of society must be able to demonstrate appreciation, maintain relationships and connectedness, and build concern regarding the appreciation and interdependence of humanity across various religious traditions.
7. **Conflict Resolution and Nonviolent Reconciliation:** Conflict will always exist in society, but it must be resolved with constructive solutions that prioritize the values of human brotherhood.

Multicultural Islamic education for happiness emphasizes the importance of applying Islamic values within a framework of cultural diversity to create harmony and happiness in society. This concept teaches tolerance, respect, and an understanding of differences, both in beliefs and cultural practices. In an educational environment, this approach encourages

inclusivity by incorporating various cultural perspectives into the curriculum and teaching methods, allowing students to learn about and understand various traditions and worldviews.

Teachers or lecturers in multicultural Islamic education act as agents of change who instill Islamic values such as compassion (*rahmah*), justice (*'adl*), and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*) in daily interactions. They also facilitate constructive intercultural dialogue, helping students develop empathy and appreciation for diversity. Thus, multicultural Islamic education aims not only to enrich students' religious and academic knowledge but also to shape individuals capable of living harmoniously in a diverse society, thereby achieving happiness through healthy, understanding relationships with others.

In multicultural education, it is not enough for teachers or lecturers to merely master the subject matter and teach professionally. An educator must also be capable of instilling the core values of multicultural education, such as democracy, humanism, and pluralism. Consequently, school or university graduates will not only be competent in their scientific fields but will also be able to apply religious values to understand and respect the existence of other religions and beliefs. Therefore, educators must train their skills and collaborate in instilling the core values of multicultural education, including spiritual lessons, into students and institutions (Amalia, 2014, p. 83).

Religious Moderation

Definition and Principles of Religious Moderation

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), moderation means efforts to distance oneself from extremism or to reduce violence. In Arabic, the term moderation is known as *tawassuth* (middle), *i'tidal* (just), and *tawazun* (balanced). Individuals who apply the principle of *wasathiyah* are referred to as the "best choice." These terms share the same core meaning, which is justice—choosing a middle position between various extreme choices (Apriani & Aryani, 2022, p. 15).

The word "moderation" in English is often interpreted as average, core, standard, or neutral. Generally, moderation emphasizes the importance of balance in beliefs, morals, and character, both in the treatment of individuals and in interactions with state institutions (Apriani & Aryani, 2022).

In Arabic, moderation is known by the term *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, which has a meaning equivalent to *tawassuth* (middle), *i'tidal* (just), and *tawazun* (balanced). An individual who practices the principle of *wasathiyah* is called a *wasith*. In Arabic, *wasathiyah* is also interpreted as the "best choice." All these terms carry the same meaning, namely justice, which in this context means choosing a middle path between extreme choices. The word *wasith* has even been absorbed into the Indonesian language as '*wasit*' (referee/umpire), which has three meanings: 1) a mediator or intermediary (e.g., in trade, business); 2) a peacemaker or arbitrator in a conflict; and 3) a match official or leader of a game (Apriani & Aryani, 2022).

By analogy, moderation can be likened to a movement from the periphery toward the center or axis (centripetal), whereas extremism is the opposite movement, moving away from the center or axis toward the outermost and extreme edges (centrifugal). Like a clock pendulum, there is a dynamic movement that does not stop at one extreme outer side, but rather moves toward the middle.

Moderation in religion is an approach that emphasizes balance, tolerance, and justice in religious practices. This concept encourages religious adherents to avoid extremism and fanaticism, and to practice religious values in an inclusive manner that is open to differences. Moderation emphasizes the importance of positioning beliefs in the middle, between rigid and liberal interpretations, with the aim of achieving social harmony and strengthening solidarity among religious communities.

A moderate approach to religion also invites individuals to be just (*i'tidal*) and balanced (*tawazun*) in addressing religious and social issues. This means taking a middle position that

considers various viewpoints, while avoiding actions or rhetoric that could divide society. In this context, moderation can be regarded as an effort to create the "best choice" based on principles of justice and humanity.

Moderation also involves active efforts to build dialogue and cooperation among religious communities. Through constructive dialogue, moderate religious adherents seek to understand and appreciate the beliefs and practices of other religions, and work together to achieve common goals, such as peace, welfare, and social justice.

In an increasingly connected and complex world, moderation in religion becomes increasingly vital. By prioritizing the values of moderation, we can create a more harmonious and peaceful environment, where differences are respected and unity in diversity is upheld. Moderation is not just a middle ground, but also a path toward a deeper understanding and greater appreciation of humanity and spirituality.

Moderation in religious practice must be interpreted as a balanced attitude between practicing one's own religious teachings exclusively and respecting the religious practices of other individuals who hold different beliefs inclusively. This balanced attitude or middle path in religious practice can prevent us from extreme overindulgence, fanaticism, and revolutionary attitudes in religion. As previously discussed, moderation in religious practice serves as a solution to the presence of two extreme poles in religion, namely the ultra-conservative or extreme right pole on one side, and the liberal or extreme left pole on the other (Apriani & Aryani, 2022).

One of the fundamental principles in religious moderation is maintaining a balance among various aspects, such as the balance between reason and revelation, physical and spiritual, rights and obligations, individual interests and the public good, necessity and volunteerism, religious texts and the independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) of religious figures, ideal ideas and reality, as well as the balance between the past and the future. The essence of religious moderation is to view, respond to, and practice all the paired concepts above fairly and in a balanced manner. In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), "just" (*adil*) is defined as impartial, siding with the truth, and not arbitrary. The concept of a "*wasit*" (referee), which refers to someone who leads a match, also reflects an impartial attitude that sides with the truth.

The second principle, balance, reflects a viewpoint, attitude, and commitment to always prioritize justice, humanity, and equality. A balanced attitude does not indicate a lack of interest in opinions. Those who are balanced remain firm yet not arrogant, because they always uphold justice without stripping away the rights of others or harming them. Balance can be understood as a way of acting with full consideration—neither excessive nor deficient, neither extreme nor weak. In another formulation, there are three conditions to adopt a moderate attitude in religion: possessing broad knowledge, being capable of controlling emotions so as not to exceed limits, and always being cautious. In simpler terms, these three conditions of religious moderation can be summarized into three things: knowledgeable, virtuous, and cautious.

In the verses of the Qur'an, there is a verse that discusses religious moderation, namely in QS. Al-Baqarah: 143:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

Meaning: "And perhaps We have made you (Muslims) a 'just/middle community' that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger (Muhammad) will be a witness over you..."

In Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 2 states that national education is education based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which also encompasses religious values and Indonesian national culture while remaining responsive to the changing times. This article clearly affirms that Pancasila is the ideological foundation for the implementation of education in Indonesia, including Islamic education.

According to Abudin Nata, Islamic educational institutions can incorporate the good concepts and values found in moderate Islam into their educational objectives, thereby producing moderate Islamic education. Abudin Nata details ten basic values that serve as indicators of moderate Islamic education, which he refers to as *Rahmah li al-Alamin* (a mercy to the worlds) Islamic education:

1. **Peace Education**, which respects human rights and promotes friendship among nations, races, or religious groups.
2. **Education that develops entrepreneurship** and partnerships with the industrial world.
3. **Education that pays attention to the prophetic message of Islam**, such as humanism, liberation, and transcendence for social change.
4. **Education that teaches religious tolerance** and the value of pluralism.
5. **Education that teaches moderate Islamic theology** which forms the mainstream in Indonesia.
6. **Education that balances the development of intellectual, spiritual, and moral insights**, as well as practical skills.
7. **Education that produces scholars (*ulama*)** who are intellectually bright and intellectually advanced in scientific fields.
8. **Education that provides solutions to current issues** in education, such as dualism and learning methodologies.
9. **Education that emphasizes the comprehensive improvement** of educational quality.
10. **Education that is capable of enhancing proficiency** in foreign languages.

By paying attention to these values, Islamic educational institutions are expected to make positive contributions toward shaping individuals of noble character, open minds, and sustainable contributions to society.

If discussed further, several other characteristics required as prerequisites for moderation in religion can be identified, such as the need for comprehensive knowledge regarding worship rituals. Deep knowledge about the procedures for performing rituals within a religion will enable adherents to choose alternatives when necessary, without diminishing the importance or undermining the practice of those religious rituals. This approach aims to facilitate religious practice by considering its feasibility as far as possible. However, this condition requires a strong commitment because it assumes that adherents must truly understand religious texts thoroughly and contextually.

The Importance of Religious Moderation in Education

Education plays a significant role in shaping a tolerant environment toward all religious beliefs. The implementation of moderation within the religious context in education aims to foster mutual understanding among students with diverse religious beliefs. The learning materials or curriculum used in schools should encompass the values of pluralism and religious tolerance.

By applying religious values within the context of education and through a strong commitment from educators and institutional management, it is expected that a sense of togetherness and cooperation among students can be established. Consequently, character, morality, and a civilized culture that respects religious diversity can be continuously forged.

Moderation in a religious context is essential and must be taught to students so that they can become individuals who embrace differences, possess empathy, and remain tolerant in the future. The role of the teacher in providing a deep understanding of an Islam that respects diversity becomes highly crucial in the educational environment.

Research Methodology

The method applied in this research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. This study selects the phenomenological approach because it pertains to a relatively

new phenomenon in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program, which is receiving increasing attention and encouragement as a vital part of education in the modern era. The phenomenological approach in this study aims to understand the daily lives of participants as well as the subjective reality they experience (*lifeworlds*). Phenomenological research endeavors to uncover the meaning of concepts and phenomena experienced based on the consciousness possessed by various individuals. By conducting phenomenological research in a natural setting, no restrictions are imposed on the interpretation or understanding of the investigated phenomenon, granting the researcher the freedom to analyze the collected data comprehensively.

Result

The Phenomenon of Multiculturalism at SMA Panca Budi Medan

The phenomenon of multiculturalism at SMA Panca Budi Medan represents a condition where various cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds coexist within the campus environment. SMA Panca Budi Medan, like many other educational institutions, has a diverse body of students, lecturers, and staff coming from various backgrounds. The phenomenon of multiculturalism at SMA Panca Budi Medan can be observed through the following aspects:

- **Student Diversity:** SMA Panca Budi Medan possesses students with various religious backgrounds, languages, and distinct habits. Students at SMA Panca Budi Medan also originate from various regions, and some even come from abroad.
- **Social Interaction:** Students, lecturers, and staff from different backgrounds interact within academic and non-academic activities, such as discussions, seminars, and student organization activities.
- **School Policy:** SMA Panca Budi Medan maintains policies that support...

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