

**AN ANALYSIS OF MULTICULTURALISM-BASED  
RELIGION EDUCATION MODEL THROUGH  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING APPROACH:  
Experience of Some Universities**

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**Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan suatu model-teoritik pendidikan agama yang berbasis multikulturalisme dengan pendekatan experiential learning di perguruan tinggi yang memiliki mahasiswa dengan berbagai macam latar belakang agama. Berdasarkan studi pendahuluan, dipilih tiga perguruan tinggi sebagai kasus: Universitas Brawijaya (Unibraw), Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), dan Universitas Sanata Dharma (USD) Yogyakarta. Penelitian difokuskan kepada empat unsur utama pendidikan agama yang berbasis multikultur, yaitu: (1) Konsep dasar filosofis pendidikan; (2) Konsep dasar-dasar kurikulum; (3) Rancangan manajemen kelas; dan (4) Penciptaan lingkungan pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan dengan teknik pengamatan, wawancara-mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Setelah dilakukan analisis data, penelitian ini menghasilkan temuan sebagai berikut: (1) Perguruan tinggi yang diteliti memahami paradigma multikulturalisme sebagai strategi untuk membangun kesepahaman dan toleransi antarumat beragama; (2) Kurikulum pendidikan agama yang dikembangkan oleh perguruan tinggi yang diteliti adalah suatu kurikulum yang dapat menanamkan keyakinan agama sendiri sekaligus memahami agama orang lain tanpa harus terjebak ke dalam apa yang disebut "negative truth claim"; (3) Pendekatan pembelajaran yang dikembangkan adalah pembelajaran yang dapat menciptakan ketertarikan serta menanamkan kesepahaman antarmahasiswa yang memiliki latar belakang agama berbeda.*

**INTRODUCTION**

In Indonesia, social tension and conflict related to religion issues almost never end; for example, those occurring in Aceh, Poso, and Ambon resulting in the burning and destruction of houses of worship, and the bombing of a number of strategic places such as in Legian Bali, J.W. Marriot hotel and in Australian

Embassy in Jakarta, are caused by sentiment among religion followers. Up to now, in some areas, such a kind of potential conflict may explode anytime.

Why is such a social conflict often related to religion issues? In a sociological perspective, the religion social tension and conflict in general can be understood from the 'nature' of the religion itself as a social reality – resembling to a two-sided coin. On the one hand, it is soothing and integrating; on the other hand, it is causing conflict and dissension (Giddens, 1996: 457). Although the results of some studies show that the position of religion in some social conflicts is merely an additional factor, actually the real problem is political, economical and other matters. Indeed, in a unstable social condition, the religion emotion of the society is easily aroused .

The next question is: why does such a conflict often occur lately when the Indonesian nation is reforming its socio-political system into a democratic and civilized one? The results of an anthropological study made by Parsudi Suparlan (2002: 98-100) show that although the Indonesian Nation is known for its multicultural, ethnique and religion diversity, up to now, cultural and development strategy and cultural “uniformation” is happening authoritatively in almost all aspects of life. This in turn makes the Indonesian Nation unprepare for facing various types of “new” cultural diversities” as a result of globalization, on the one hand, and internal reformation demands, on the other hand.

In order to face the reality, namely the “new” culture, a nation not only merely understand and accept the “diversity” reality, even deny it, but also intensively involve in it, including the willingness to manage the implications either at academic-theoretical work or daily practical levels. In this context, the education, especially religion education, is expected to play an important role as the most effective entrance gate for any effort to the “civilization” of diversity awareness which in turns may avoid the potential social-religious tension, violation and conflict. This perspective is reinforced by recent findings of studies at University of Muhammadiyah Malang. They show that a radical and moderate tendency shown by the students' attitudes towards their religion among other is caused by types of religion education approaches given to them and the intensity of contact with their religion movement when they were studying in higher education (Moh. Nurhakim, 2005).

Although in this context the role of religion education in higher education is centralistic, it is assumed that the approaches and methods adopted are not interesting, since the lecturers, according to the study, are merely dependent

upon doctrinal approach and lecturing method. Although discussion and question-and answer methods at a certain extent were also employed, the students felt that the learning materials were heavy. The students thought that in the lectures they merely accepted information or knowledge, without any relevancy, even direct involvement with the discussed problems or daily realities, including those of the diversity of cultures and people they are facing in their daily lives.

Therefore, one of important preliminary steps in developing the religion education is to build a theoretical model of multiculturalism-based religion education and an approach to learning religion that may give the students experiences about and direct involvement in problems they are facing, especially those concerning with the diversity of culture and religion.

### **PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGY**

Based on the two main perspectives above, in this present study, an analysis of a theoretical model of multiculturalism-based religion education is made. Moreover, the way the model was practiced by using an experiential learning approach in universities which have multi-religion students background is also explored.

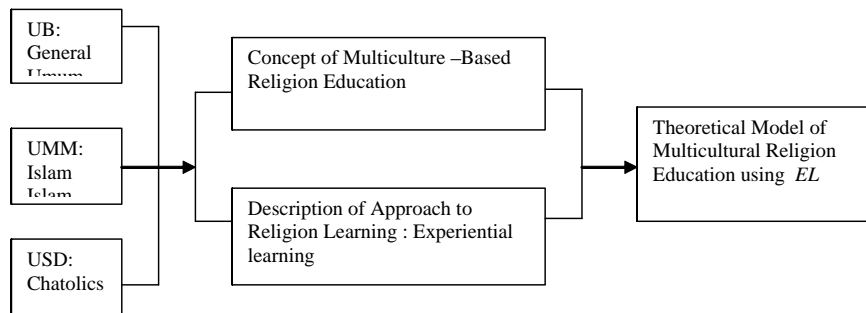
**Table 1. A Unit of Analysis and the Description of the Research Problem Indicators**

No.	Categories	Units of Analyses	Indicators of Problems
1.	Multiculturalism Religion Education Paradigm	Philosophical Base of the Religion Education	Having humanistic point of view; acceptance of religion plurality; relevant vision-mission
		Curriculum concept/base	Existence of discussion of other religions; common ethical or morality materials; included in the syllabus and text-books
2.	<i>Experiential learning Approach</i>	Classroom management Design	cross-religion class/lectures; teachers as facilitators; transferring the tolerance values; interesting-dynamic class
		Creation of Environment	Experiences of living together; cooperation and working together; supporting religious activities

So, the research focus may be formulated as follows. (1) What is the philosophical foundation of the religion education used for the study of religion for multi-religion students? (2) What is the basic concept of the religion education curriculum designed to give understanding among multi-religion students? (3) What is the classroom management arrangement that may arouse the students' interest and may create dynamism and understanding among multi-religion students? (4) How is to create an educational environment conducive for giving experiences of living together in a multi-religion context? For a clear framework of the problems, see Table 1.

In this multi-case study, a qualitative approach was employed. Three Universities were chosen as the case: Brawijaya University (UB) in Malang, University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), and Sanata Dharma University (USD) in Yogyakarta. The data were collected by using observation technique, in-depth interview, and documentation. The "Critical analysis" technique was used in Data Analysis. The informants were chosen from the principals, religion lecturers, and students from various beliefs elements. For the analytical framework employed, see Chart 1.

**Chart 1. A Research Framework**



## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review of literature, some concepts and theories on multiculturalism as a paradigm in the religion education and learning through an experiential learning approach will be explored.

### **Multiculturalism as a Religion Education Paradigm**

The word multiculturalism consists of two words with two senses, namely “multi” which means plural, and “culturalism”, culture, meaning that there is a view admitting that there is a diversity of types of cultures. This sense, however, is not enough. Multiculturalism, as a concept, causes various implications – political, social, economic and cultural ones. For example, it acknowledges rights of life for groups of people in a community (H.A.R. Tilaar, 2004: 82-5).

Moreover, Tilaar divides the word multiculturalism into two parts. First, it is a traditional school with two characteristics: (1) a need for acknowledgement and (2) legitimation for cultural varieties. In the first stage, a new multiculturalism contains essential matters in struggling for different cultural behaviors. Second, it is a modern school that contains various terms for multiculturalism. In this work, the definition is widened to include fields of culture, economy, politics, education, feminism, and the like. The essence of this second school is that the study in this field should be developed based on real demands in the society such as equality, appreciation, welfare, and acknowledgement of rights.

And then how is the theoretical relationship between multiculturalism and religion education? Compared with above-mentioned fields, relating multiculturalism and religion is still rare. Many people consider that multiculturalism is incompatible with religion, since religion has an absolute truth and the truth is from God. Whereas, multiculturalism necessitates relative truth or belief truth for other people. In this regard, many concepts and theories on religion education state that students should be given doctrines about their own religion without any necessity to understand other religions. Learning other religions is a mistake. Moreover, dialogues inter-religions or interfaith are improper, even these may weaken their faith.

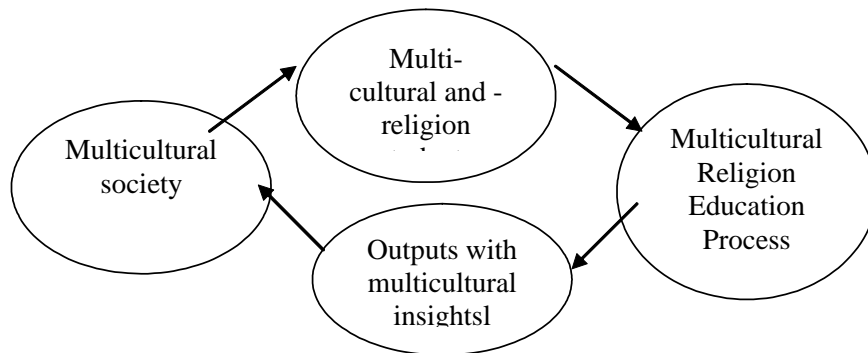
Different from the thesis above, the basic concept of multiculturalism in relation to religion adopted in this study is a acknowledgment to the existence of other religions and its implications such as acknowledgement and respects to the rights of the followers in expressing and committing their belief. So, attitudes of tolerance, respect, cooperation and dialogic relation among followers of different religions become causes that should be accepted as the realization of acknowledgement to other religions. This thesis is in line with the opinion proposed by Muhammad Ali about the concept of ‘pluralist-multiculturalism’, meaning the religion understanding that respects religion diversity and cultural

expressions (Muhammad Ali, 2003: xviii). But, it is necessary to emphasize that an evaluation on right-wrong matters about other religions should be placed in another study, namely theological study.

To support the second thesis, concerning with the religion education based on some recent studies, it can be stated that among university students, it is necessary to give them understanding that may build an inter-religion agreement. In order to reach such an agreement, it should not reduce the students' belief in their religion even into a statement that "all religions are right" (Moh. Nurhakim, 2005). Therefore, to the best of my knowledge, the multiculturalism-based religion education paradigm adopted in this present study will not lead to a view that "all religions are right".

It is the theoretical base that will be developed in this study. It means that this study tried to build an alternative model of multiculturalism-based religion education using an approach that may create an environment that enables students with multi-religion backgrounds to find their own pluralistic life (read: experiential learning). In Chart 2, the design of the cycle of the multiculturalism (multi-religion) based religion education paradigm is presented.

**Chart 2. The Cycle of Multiculturalism-Based Religion Education**



***Experiential Learning as an Approach to Religion Education***

Andragogical theories state that learning for adults will be better done through either inner or outer experiences from the individuals themselves. They are free to choose their own experiences as the environment results in one's reactions to his/ her mind and feeling. Andragogy comes from humanistic views, where behavior is viewed from a purposeful intention, namely a reaction to internalize

experiences in relation to human basic and environmental needs (Tim Penyusun, 2005:1).

Based on the view, the learning process in adults, including university students, merely provides facilities for their learning and give more demand on individual responsibility and participation. The role of an educator is to create learning condition and processes that enable them to develop themselves by absorbing knowledge they possess as much as possible in line with their needs, experiences, and their environmental demands that may cause differences in their learning achievement.

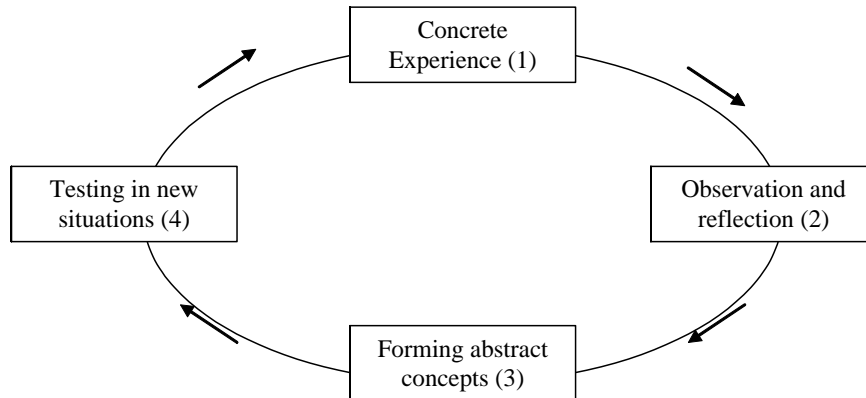
Carl Rogers, a prominent figure in humanism, differentiates two types of learning, namely cognitive and experience. The former refers to academic knowledge considered as less meaningful, while the latter refers to applicative knowledge considered to be more useful. The difference lies at how experiential learning leads to individual needs and desires. The quality of experiential learning is shown by personal involvement, initiative from the individual, evaluation from the individual and influences as internalized in the individual him-herself (Tim Penyusun, 2005: 1-2).

Every person possesses a natural tendency to learn. Therefore, the teacher's role is just a facilitator, namely to (1) create a climate positive for the learning process; (2) clarify the purpose of the learning process and of individuals; (3) organize and create learning sources; (4) keep the balance between intellectual and emotional components of learning and (5) share feelings and thoughts with individuals without any domination (Tim Penyusun, 2005: 2).

It can be realized if the learner (1) participates actively in the whole learning process and is able to control himself or herself; (2) is especially faced with direct social, practical, personal or research problems; (3) is making self-evaluation which is important to measure his or her development and success. Concerning with the religion learning for university students, it is more appropriate to use andragogical theories with a learning approach from one's self-experiences than to use a lecturing approach where the students merely listen to the teacher. It is called an experiential learning approach.

As a learning model, the experiential learning approach can be described as a process where individual experiences are reflected and from it, new ideas or knowledge will arise. This cyclic process of the experiential learning can be visualised as follow (Tim Penyusun, 2005: 2).

**Bagan 3. The Proses of *Experiential Learning***



## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the data and their discussion will be presented. The data were obtained from three universities namely: Brawijaya University (UB) in Malang, University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), and Sanata Dharma University (USD) in Yogyakarta. The data were focused on four research problems: (1) philosophical basic concept of education; (2) basic concept of the curriculum; (3) classroom management design; and (4) the creation of educational environment.

### **THE RELIGION EDUCATION AT BRAWIJAYA UNIVERSITY (UB)**

As a state university, UB offers the Religion Education course for all religions: Islam, Christian, Catholic, Hindhu and Buddha. The lectures are presented traditionally and separately for each religion and taught by authoritarian lecturers. To provide students with knowledge to live among plural society, culturally and religiously, the students are introduced to some principles and ethics in tolerance and aspects in other religions as shown in the curriculum and textbooks (Uswatun dkk., 2002; Tim Dosen PAI, 2007).

#### **The Philosophical Foundation of the Religion Education**

One of the objectives in the religion education for all students who believe in various religions in this University is to provide the students with readiness to



live together with followers of other religions peacefully. From the results of the interviews with the lecturers and those holding the lectures of religion, it was found that the philosophical perspective is that the religion education is intended to create the following 'understanding' among multi-religion students.<sup>1</sup> Theologically, the foundation of multi-religion education is taken from the concept of brotherhood among human beings under the foundation of the teachings of the religions themselves. Although God give revelation to all human beings, God also give freedom to each human being to choose his or her own way of life based on rational consideration blessed to him or her. Therefore, from the beginning of the creation, God have not merely created human beings as one member of religion (Islam, Christian, Catholic, Buddha, or others.) It is in line with the explanation given in Al-Maidah, verse 48. This principle of freedom prevents any authority from forcing someone to believe in a religion, even the prophet was forbidden to compel someone to believe in Islam, as stated in sura Yunus, verse 99.

Based on the interviews with informants, it is stated that differences in religions among human beings are as a consequence from the freedom blessed by God. "The differences in religion should not hinder human beings to make social interactions and to help each other as long as under the field of humanity". Sociologically, religion plurality is a reality, a law of nature (*sunnatullah*) that is impossible to avoid. As a result, accepting plurality with all its consequences is a necessity. It is this perspective that will be used as a foundation in holding the multireligion education at Brawijaya University.

### **Basic Concepts of the Curriculum**

According to those holding the religion course, however, although principles of tolerance interfaith followers are taught to cross-religion students, it is limited to moral messages or common ethics to make the students respect one another, where this respect is universally taught in each religion.

In the curriculum of the Religion Education at Brawijaya University, there is one course on the Interfaith harmony. In the sub-course, the competence that is expected to be mastered by all students is to "enable the students to communicate well, to have self-help attitude, and to be tolerant in order to develop a harmonious life among religions followers".

**Table 2. Description of Sub-course on Interfaith Harmony<sup>1</sup>**

No.	Religion	Sub-course Syllabus Interfaith Harmony
1.	Islam	Islam is a religion that blessing for the whole nature; ukhuwah Islamiyah dan ukhuwah insaniyah; and, togetherness in religion plurality
2.	Christian	Introduction; three forms of inter-faith relationship (exclusve, inclusive and pluralism); pluralism according to the Bible; and, hindrances for pluralism in Indonesia
3.	Catholic	Problems in religion; the meaning of religion in life; interfaith relationship (harmony in life)
4.	Hindhu	Religion is blessing for all creatures; the nature of togetherness in religion plurality
5.	Buddha	Definition and Nature of religion; basic principle by practicing Pancasila Buddhis; Brahmavihara; Prasasti Asoka; dan, Saraniyadhama Sutta well

Although tolerance principles to other religions were introduced, its portion was limited. Based on the statement made by Rechel Veronica, a student of Christian, it is said that discussion about other religions is not done specifically, but at a glance.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning with the interfaith harmony in campus, Syamsul Arifin said, serious problems, even conflicts, never existed. Even, when a question on whether a Moslem student may give a happy Christmas<sup>3</sup> or other congratulation to other non Moslem celebration, no problem arose.

Therefore, the material on interfaith harmony is limited to aspects of creating harmonious social relations, and it does not lead to the shallowing of a faith or belief.

#### **Classroom Management Design**

Although all students have been introduced to the tolerance in religion and principles of interfaith understanding, the learning process in religion education is still committed separately, according to the students' religions. The implementation of the learning process is in line with the schedule where for Catholic, Christian, Hindu and Buddha, the lectures are held on Friday.

In University of Brawijaya, the religion education is divided into two parts, namely regular classes and additional classes held out of the classroom.

In the regular classes, with the two credits in one semester, classical methods consisting of lectures, discussion and assignments, were adopted. The lecturing and classical methods usually make the students unable to absorb taught materials maximumly. They were bored with and could not concentrate to the materials conveyed. As a result, they want to be taught using various methods especially discussion and assignment which include for instance intensive question-answer activities.

Concerning with non regular classes, the activities involved tutorial and mentoring Programs. The tutorial program held by UPT-MKU (Technical Implementation Unit- General Course) on the Religion Education, gave an emphasis on contemporary religion problems under the perspective of course (in line with the students' faculties). This program was held once a week and discussion methods under the supervision of the lectures were employed. Meanwhile, to provide the students with skills to commit the religious rituals (such as prayers (sholat) and reading the Koran), a mentoring program was held. This program, in the form of small group discussions, was guided by senior students and managed by the Units of Religion Activities of the Unit of Students' Activity under the supervision of the Vice Rector III Students' Affairs.

In order to build understanding among interfaith students in the learning process, a class or specific lecture on religion was not designed, but this objective is included into academic and non academic processes in the university naturally. All interfaith students should join in the activities in the lectures. It is more effective, since the students felt that they were not influenced or dictated.

### **Creating the Religious Environment**

In order to support the learning process in the religious life in campus, the university, in certain extent, provides the students with facilities and infrastructures for religious and rituals activities such as the mosque Raden Patah. Besides for worship, this place is also used for various kinds of students activities and additional religion studies. But for students whose faiths are Catholic, Christian, Hindu and Buddha, no special place is provided for them. They sometimes are given chances (together with their lecturers) to visit places of worships existing in the campus.

The main reason why no places of worships, except the mosque, are provided in the campus is, according to the informants, for the sake of effectiveness.

The mosque is used for prayers at least five times a day, while an effective day for non Moslem is just Sunday. But, for non moslem students, units of religious activities and their rooms are available. For example, for Christian students, they may do their activities maximumly under the PMK (Persekutuan Mahasiswa Kristen or Christian Students Partnership). The university, up to now, has not held common religious activities. Common activities are just done in academic or non religious activities.

### **THE RELIGION EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF MUHAMMADIYAH MALANG (UMM)**

Concerning with the religion education, UMM gives this course for four semesters for the regular classes. Moreover this institution also has a specific religion education program integrated with personality and leadership education, called *Program Pelatihan Pengembangan Kepribadian dan Kepemimpinan* (P2KK) (Personality and Leadership Development Training Program). This program is designed for all new students and is a religion education for the first year students (freshmen) including non moslem students. It is intended to provide the students with good attitudes in religion, personality and leadership. In its implementation, all students were given opportunities to learn and stay together in dormitories (lodging houses) for at least five days in the first semester, and it is informally continued in next semesters when students are studying in UMM. It is this program which is used as a base of discussion for the multiculturalism-based religion education and for the experiential learning approach in this study. Moreover, some data were based on the students' lectures in The Faculty of Islamic Religion, especially the moslem students. But they were also introduced to the course World Religions (the former of Religion Comparisons) as a part from an approach to understanding others' belief and religions.

#### **The Basic Philosophy of the Religion Education**

UMM as a Higher Education Institution affiliated to one of Islamic mass organizations not only accepts moslem students but also (some) non moslem students. The reason why this institution accepts students with various backgrounds is to grow a multiculturalism-based educational principle.

According to Dr. Syamsul Arifin, M.Si, this concept hopefully may create an educational system that holds high values or humanistic attitudes, tolerance,

respect and honor with one another among the civitas academica. Moreover he states that the concept of multicultural education is closely related to ethics, especially social ethics, since the essence of multiculturalism is “how one may understand, accept and work together with other persons regardless of all existing differences. Therefore, efforts to facilitate the development of attitudes reflecting such understanding, acceptance and cooperation may be done through the building of ethic that may raise some awareness among individuals”.

The concept of multiculturalism as a learning approach may create various materials contained in the religion course intended to implant tolerance values. According to his perspective, this approach is able to appreciate the student diversity and also to promote some awareness of the diversity.

Such a kind of model is always made use of by Syamsul every time he is teaching the religion course in UMM. Especially, in a class where non moslem students exist, he is always giving maximum explanations about general religion materials which can be accepted by any students. For particular matters, for example faith and religious service, of course it is difficult to have such common understanding.

### **The Basic Concept of the Curriculum**

In this religion education, the UMM institution does not merely give learning materials on the teachings of a religion but also on knowledge about other religions through comparisons and studies of religions specially intended for the students of Islamic Religion Faculty. According to Faridi, a lecturer of Studies of Religions, the objective is to provide the students with understanding about various religions existing in the world. It is hoped that the students who have joined in this course may have some awareness of the importance of religiosity tolerance attitudes.

The concept of religiosity tolerance in interfaith students is a method to create the harmony among the people living in heterogeneous environment. In Islam, this concept is intended to arrange a social relation system among the people. Islam, Faridi said, is a religion that respects and holds high interfaith tolerance attitudes.

The seriousness of the UMM in giving the study of religions course is shown by inviting some leaders of religions, for example in 2003, the Islamic Religion

Faculty invited a resource person, the clergyman Suwignyo, M.Si from Gereja Jawi Wetan (GKJW), Malang. This activity was intended to give knowledge to the students about Christian as a part of series in learning materials of Studies of Religions.

Hopefully the students could get knowledge about other religions and they might have high commitment to their religion and also have respect, appreciation and tolerance to other religions.

### **Classroom Management and Creation of Environment (Exsperiential Learning)**

The design of the multicultural class not only train the students to develop some awareness of tolerance attitude, but also demand the leacturers to master the material coruse from various perspectives or understandings related to religion. A. Fathoni felt that teaching interfaith students gave him certain challenges, namely he should master materials of the teachings of Islam and also be familiar with teachings of other religions in order to be able to compare them.

In the religion learning process using an experiential learning approach, the students play more active individually. Each class contained 30 up to 40 students with various (heterogeneous) backgrounds. They were guided by three teaching assistants and three instructors. Each instructor taught a material in his expertise in each class.

The teaching asistants are from seniour students, while the instructors are lecturers of religion at UMM. They adopted an experiential learning-based religion learning model and they served as facilitators, namely facilitating various activities held by the students in order to produce active and dynamic learning processes.

Dolpinus Muktis, one of students from Papua, said that in ritual religion activities, non moslem students were not asked to join in, although the activities were included in the agenda of the P2KK. However, when moslem students were practicing their services, there were many non moslem students who saw the ritual activities and they were allowed to ask questions.

Moreover, in the P2KK learning activities, developing togetherness and social spirit was given an emphasis. The involved students were trained and made them accustomed to work and live together and to respect and appreciate

one another. To reach this objective, problems given in the learning material were often solved in groups. Each group consisted of students from various programs, origins, races, religions and the like.

### **THE RELIGION EDUCATION AT SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY (USD)**

The most prominent characteristic of the Religion Education in this institution is that all religions namely Islam, Catholic, Hindu and Buddha are taught to the first semester students without considering the number of the students and the existence of the students who follow the religions. The next characteristic is that the education of the five religions is done by inviting lecturers who are teaching and also believing in the religions.

#### **The Philosophical Foundation of the Religion Education**

The model of the multi-religion course held in USD is designed as a religiosity education aimed at producing persons or outputs respecting diversity in this country (Ign. Esti Sumarah et al., *Widya Dharma*, 2006:100). This model of the multi-religion course is expected to enable the students to improve their knowledge and understanding, instead of their own religion, but also other religions and also insights about diversity in Indonesia. This model is selected based on a belief that in order to grow tolerant attitudes, one should understand the urgency of plurality and be familiar with other religions existentially (Sudiardja, 2005: 4).

The students are expected to have tolerant attitudes, appreciate differences and respect one another and realize the importance of harmony and peace. In other words, the application and development of this kind of religion education model are based on, among others, a principle that followers of each religion should learn to understand others' religiosity niches, so there is a chance to have such understanding and tolerance between one and each other. This principle also emphasizes that it is not necessary to be worried about the tolerant attitude that will degrade religiosity that has been possessed (Abdillah, 1996: 73).

#### ***The Basic Concept of the Curriculum***

In one semester, each lecturer is given a chance to present the material or religion he or she is teaching twice for each class. Therefore, for the semester,

each class would get five materials on five religions (Catholic, Protestant, Islam, Hindu and Buddha) twice respectively.

Principally, the materials presented in the first session include: the figures of belief from each religion, vision mission struggled by the figure, values promoted by the figures; groups of students/ followers spreading the belief and values to be struggled by the figures; while in the second session, religion pluralism, tolerance and interfaith dialog in the perspectives of the five religion is presented. In short, the materials presented by the lecturers are shown in the following table:

**Table 3. A Summary of the Religion Education Materials at USD**

Topics	Sub-Topics
1. Introduction	1. General Explanation 2. Lectures on religions
2. Explanation about religions in Indonesia	1. Figures of belief from each religion 2. Vision and mission they struggle and values they promote 3. Groups of followers spreading the faith 4. Values that have been struggled by the figures
3. Religion Pluralism, tolerance and interfaith dialogue	1. Religion Pluralism: reality of pluralism, attitudes toward the pluralism, interfaith tolerance 2. Interfaith dialogues: related to dialogues of life that focus on universality values of religions in the contexts of humanism, justice, gender, human rights problems, etc., dll.

Besides the materials mention above, some lectures also discussed about certain social issues such as poverty, environment and religion radicalism from the point of views of religions.

#### **Classroom Management (Experiential Learning)**

Multi-religion (multiculturalism) in USD is shown in the following two steps. First, the students were not grouped on the basis of their religions, but purposefully spread in pluralistic units of classes. Second, the management of the Religion Education decided to invite competent lecturers of religions and have faith in the religions they are teaching.

According Mrs Nina, the first step is taken based on the basis of the Church



Council Vatican II stating that principally all human beings are brothers and in the real world out of campus, the students never live separated one and each other by religions<sup>2</sup>.

In practice, the presence of the resources or lectures of religions who also have faith in the religions they are teaching also gave certain benefits for either the lectures themselves or the students. A lecturer of the Hindu religion, for example Drs Budi Rahardjo Sag, MA, said that he is very glad to be able to take part in the process of Religion Education at USD because he could directly give various answers, clarifications and explanations to various questions or misunderstanding about the teachings of Hindu from the students.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas, students also felt that they were lucky since they can ask questions or ask for clarifications on various unclearness and general perceptions about the teachings of religions of which they are the followers.

Dr. Syaifan Nur MA, a lecturer of UIN Sunan Kalijaga who teach the Islam course at USD, for example, stated that when he was presenting the material about Islam, there were many students who enthusiastically asked questions and asked clarifications about popular topics such as prohibition of eating pork, polygami, gender justice in general in Islam.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, there was a Moslem student, Amel, who stated that by having a chance to directly ask questions or to get explanations from competent and authoritative persons,<sup>3</sup> she could correct some misunderstanding about other religions.

Although there were some lecturers who adopted lecturing methods, some others began using other learning methods such as sharing stories and experiences and showing films, then discussing them.<sup>2</sup> For instance, Mrs. Nina had so far been trying to use a number of learning methods to teach Catholic religion she was teaching. One of the ways she did was to use maximum roles of learning media by showing certain audio-visual presentations or double visions. The last thing to do to convey messages to her students is that there are many kinds of approaches and paradigms that can be used to approach and understand religion and divine phenomena through certain pictures or presentations that can be seen differently by different people.<sup>2</sup>

### **Creating the Religious Environment**

As a Catholic University, USD never provides specific facilities of whoships for non-Catholic students. However, Amel, a moslem student, stated that

during certain academic activities such as the student orientation, the committee provided certain rooms for praying. Moreover, moslem students are allowed to establish a Unit of Moslem Student Activities and to hold religious activities such as having breakfasting together during fasting days.<sup>2</sup>

Up to now, efforts to create an environment conducive to grow tolerant attitudes and full appreciation to plurality and differences have been done in the classrooms. Those responsible for handling the religion education in USD have not made a specific design of special learning programs out of regular ones that may give a chance to students to directly learn and to have multicultural life experiences.

But, some efforts have actually been made, although it is not an integral part from the implementation of the religion education In USD. SO far, there has been a unit of activity in this university, namely *Kampus Ministri*, that has indirectly played important roles in creating an environment conducive for a multiculturalism-based religion education, especially through its live-in program. This institution gives some chances to a number of students with different religion backgrounds to take part in the live in program or to stay in a number of certain locations or communities for some times to directly experience life processes including various religiosity processes. For example, some times ago, the Kampus Ministri offered a live in program in a number of pesantrens and other places of worships. <sup>2</sup> This kind of program clearly may help provide environments conducive to multiculturalism-based religion education processes.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The religion education in the three universities in a certain extent gives understanding to the students about other religions in order to make them to have tolerant, dialogic and cooperative attitudes needed by interfaith students. It is based on a perspective that theologically and sociologically, human beings and life are plural. Therefore, the religion education in the three higher education institutions are designed based on the multiculturalism.
2. In arranging the religion education curriculum, the formulation and weight are different, they introduce tolerance principles inter-religion followers and include knowledge on other religions. But in UB, aspects of introducing other religions are not specifically given. Then, discussions on

tolerance are included in the text-books or modules, and lecturers with authority in the field of certain religion and interfaith is invited.

3. In order to hold interesting and dynamic lectures, learning methods such as FGD (Focused Group Discussion), Games, Case Study and Participation Research, besides lecturing methos, are employed. To create an agreement and involvements among cross-religion students, in some lecturing time, “General Lectures” (among cross-religions students) such as in UMM through the P2KK program and the Live in Kampus Ministi program in USD are offered. Meanwhile in UB, Tutorial and Mentoring programs held by each religion separately are offered.
4. Concerning with creating an environment specifically designed to give life experiences among cross-religions students, there are differences among the three higher education institutions. In the University of Brawijaya, it is given to the leaders of each religion, meanwhile, in UMM, the case is included into the P2KK program and in USD into the “Live In” program.
5. From the findings in point 1 up to 4, theoretically it can be concluded as a model that: (1) the multiculturalism paradigm in the three institutions can be understood as a need to build interfaith agreement and tolerance. A multiculturalism-based religion education model taken from this case is to implant religion faith itself while understanding other people’s religions without being trapped into what is called “negative truth claiming”; (2) the learning approach oriented to involvement in the learning process and to give inter-student life experiences may create an interest and dynamism in learning, and may implant agreements among multi-religion students

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