

Multidimensional Thinking Paradigm in Multicultural Education (Study of the Thought of Musa Asy'arie)

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Abstract

The multidimensional educational paradigm departs from the understanding that human nature is multidimensional as material and spiritual beings, economic beings, political creatures, social beings, and also religious beings. Likewise, the problems faced in real life are multidimensional in nature including economic, social, cultural, legal, political and religious issues. To deal with these multidimensional humanitarian problems, undoubtedly requires a multidimensional thinking paradigm that is capable of providing multidimensional solutions. One of the application strategies for multidimensional thinking in the realm of education is to implement multicultural education. Therefore, this short article will discuss the multidimensional thinking paradigm of Musa Asy'arie's perspective in the field of multicultural education.

Paradigma pendidikan multidimensi berangkat dari pemahaman bahwa hakikat manusia multidimensi sebagai makhluk material dan spiritual, makhluk ekonomi, makhluk politik, makhluk sosial, dan juga makhluk religius. Begitu pula dengan permasalahan yang dihadapi dalam kehidupan nyata yang bersifat multidimensi antara lain masalah ekonomi, sosial, budaya, hukum, politik dan agama. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan kemanusiaan yang multidimensi tersebut, niscaya dibutuhkan paradigma berpikir multidimensi yang mampu memberikan solusi multidimensi. Salah satu strategi penerapan pemikiran multidimensi dalam ranah pendidikan adalah dengan melaksanakan pendidikan multikultural. Oleh karena itu, artikel singkat ini akan membahas paradigma berpikir multidimensi perspektif Musa Asy'arie dalam bidang pendidikan multikultural.

Keywords: Multidimensional Thinking, Paradigm, Multicultural Education

A. Introduction

"Multidimensional crises can only be solved by thinking in a multidimensional manner, and of course also by changing the perspective that can see humans as multidimensional beings as well. This requires a more complete starting point for understanding humans, not only with a single dimension. Human nature is not a material that can only be fulfilled by money. The same is true not only of spiritual

beings, whose needs can be met with prayer and remembrance. Likewise, humans are not only economic creatures, political creatures, and religious creatures, but also multidimensional creatures."¹

The above quotation describes the core thought of Musa Asy'arie about the multidimensional thinking paradigm. For Musa Asy'arie, multidimensional thinking in order to overcome the multidimensional problematics must depart from the human figure himself as a multidimensional being. Humans not only consist of physical elements of the body, but also consist of psychological elements and spiritual elements. Humans are not only rational beings with the capacity of their intellect to do intellectual reasoning, but also as spiritual beings with the capacity of their hearts to grip transcendental reality.

Therefore, a discussion about multidimensional thinking paradigms must begin with a complete understanding of the multidimensional nature of human existence. When we fail to understand the nature of human existence as a multidimensional being, surely we will not be able to overcome the various complex problems that are plaguing human life itself.

Because, in their interactions with others, humans are also faced with the realities of life that are multidimensional, namely social, cultural, political, legal, economic, and so on. Human interaction with others in social life not only produces positive results, but often causes complex social problems. Multidimensional humans face multidimensional realities and result in multidimensional humanitarian problems as well as social, economic, legal, political, cultural, educational, national and other problems.

Facing these multidimensional humanitarian problems, undoubtedly requires a multidimensional thinking paradigm that is capable of providing multidimensional solutions. For Musa Asy'arie, multidimensional thinking at the social level of humanity is thinking by looking at the problems faced by humans from its various dimensions. Multidimensional thinking is only used to solve complex problems related to universal

¹ Quoted from the paper Musa Asy'arie *Manusia Multidimensional Perspektif Qur'anik* (Yogyakarta: LESFI, 2008), p. 3.

humanity, such as poverty, justice, social welfare, environmental damage, not purely technical problems.²

One of the application strategies for multidimensional thinking in the realm of education is to implement multicultural education. Therefore, this short article will briefly highlight the multidimensional thinking paradigm of Musa Asy'arie's perspective in the field of education, namely multicultural education. At the end of the article, the conclusion will be concluded with a glimpse of the education of the substance of religion to foster the public moral capability of the Indonesian people.

B. Multidimensional Thinking in the Realm of Multicultural Education

In Musa Asy'arie's view, talking about education, in principle, the implementation of education must be based on the concept of humans as multidimensional beings. But the problem is, one of the obstacles in applying the multidimensional thinking paradigm lies in the realm of education which still views humans from one point of view: one-dimensional humans. Whereas the thinking tradition is built based on a multidimensional human concept, not a one-dimensional human concept, whether a single material dimension, a single spiritual dimension or a single pragmatic dimension. Thinking singular and partial in essence contrary to the concept of multidimensional humans.

The challenge for the civilization of multidimensional thinking is more due to the reality of our education so far, which in fact is held based on the concept of one-dimensional human beings. In fact, there is a tendency for education to become part of industrial society that thinks industrial singularly in pursuit of financial profit. Meanwhile, religious education tends to fall into one-dimensional humans as well, who pursue formal religious life. The result is a clash between the tendency of one industrial dimension to the tendency of one formal religious dimension.³

"As long as our education is not carried out", emphasized Musa Asy'arie, "based on the multidimensional human concept, we will face great difficulties in cultivating multidimensional thinking. Therefore, we must first build an education that

² Quoted from the draft manuscript Musa Asy'arie, *Berpikir Multidimensional: Keluar Dari Krisis Bangsa* (Yogyakarta: LESFI, 2008), p. 1.

³ Musa Asy'arie, *Berpikir Multidimensional*, p. 12.

is held on the concept of multidimensional humans, at least through multidimensional thinking management training, as an implementative step for educational ideas based on multidimensional human concepts.”⁴

In connection with multidimensional thinking in the realm of education, Musa Asy'arie proposes the application of multicultural education in the context of the Indonesian nation. The reality of Indonesian society which is very plural in its various aspects, both from the aspects of ethnicity, culture, language, education, social status, skin color, race, between groups, as well as religion and belief, needs to be addressed wisely. Moreover, the reality of life of the Indonesian people, which is very plural, often causes conflicts between fellow children of the nation. After the reform era, conflicts that occurred often had political tendencies and ended up in the desire of a community to break away from the territorial unity of the Republic of Indonesia.⁵

Furthermore, in the perspective of some experts, when we enter the era of contemporary informatics today, at least we face three challenges that must be anticipated by the world of education.⁶ First, human success in relatively increasing the level of economic capacity of the wider community. The agrarian era economy is slowly but surely being shifted towards an industrial economy. Issues related to consumerism, materialism, and hedonism are actually closely related to the spectacular economic growth and development thanks to the industrial revolution. Without economic success at a certain level, what is called consumerism, materialism, and hedonism would not be possible as we encounter in the current era.

Second, easy access to information. The interconnectedness and interconnectedness of 3Ts (telecommunications, transformation, and technology) accelerates the reach and penetration of foreign cultural influences and and certain life styles that come from outside with the existence of the 3T, the boundaries and fences of culture and religion, as understood in the classical, scholastic, and premodern era, are difficult to maintain. With 3T's facilities and influence, committed Muslims everywhere find it difficult to explain what actually happened in Saudi Arabia, when they without

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Musa Asy'arie, *NKRI, Budaya Politik Dan Pendidikan* (Yogyakarta: LESFI, 2005), p. 198-199.

⁶ M. Amin Abdullah, *Pendidikan Agama Era Multikultural Multireligius* (Jakarta: PSAP, 2005), p. 73.

the slightest hesitation brought troops and war machines from the United States and its other allies. culture and religion. There is no need to be far away, in everyday life, we also enjoy news, music, films, certain types of sports that come from outside our own culture.

Third, the information revolution above emphasizes the fact that there is a growing awareness of "other people", outside ourselves and our own groups, who have the same rights and obligations as we have. The plurality of faith and culture in the era of globalization is increasingly being recognized and felt by various religions. Therefore, the conventional boundary between "faith" and "culture", especially when viewed from an anthropological approach, seems to be getting thinner. Faith, religion, theology, or islamic thought seem to be mixed up as part of tradition. Thus, each cultural tradition has "faith" in its own form which is bound by the dimensions of space, time, and language. Progress in the economic field, the information revolution, and a plurality of faiths united in one term "modernity" are fundamental problems facing religious communities in general and Muslims in particular.⁷

In an era when the community of followers of religions was formed around 2000 or 1500 years ago or even further than that, religious adherents at that time could not imagine how someone could have breakfast in Jakarta, lunch in Tokyo, and dinner at Beijing on the same day. It is also inconceivable what the experience of contemporary Indonesians is that within one week they can watch or listen to lectures on 5 different religions freely and quietly on television screens in their respective homes. This fact shows a brief formulation expressed by the famous scholar Abraham Heschel, No Religion is an Island, that is, no religion is an island for itself anymore.

Not to mention that it must be added with lectures about followers of the faith. Twenty-five years ago it was inconceivable in our minds how today malls and supermarkets can appear like mushrooms in the rainy season. The Muslim human ere modernity needs to understand the fundamental structure of modern life so that he can carry out and implement religious teachings calmly without being overshadowed by fear, anxiety, resentment, and feelings of guilt, both in a form that is too brave to face

⁷ Charles Kimball, *When Religion Become Evil* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), p. 25.

and live the culture modernity without reserve (relativistic-nihilistic) or too afraid to face the culture of modernity, which raises a fundamentalist-exclusive attitude.

Likewise, since the beginning of the third millennium we have faced a global and national world that exhibits social anarchism, national disintegration, conflicts between religions, internal conflicts of religious communities, ecological problems, and even terror in the name of religion. Since the devastating tragedy of the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, the Bali bombing tragedy on 12 October 2002, the indiscriminate attack on the Taj Mahal Hotel, Mumbai India, on 26 November 2008, acts of terrorism that are not so big, like the explosion of the JW Marriot and Ritz Carlton Hotels on July 17, 2009,⁸ until the emergence of the phenomenon of the radicalism movement that is robed of religion as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS which loudly pledges to establish an Islamic state, *daulah islamiyah* or *khilafah islamiyah*.⁹

The question that has to come to the surface is what kind of education is able to answer the variety of contemporary problems which are increasingly complicated?

For Musa Asy'arie, these problems must be faced through the means of multicultural education. Because without multicultural education, destructive social conflict will continue to be a serious threat to national integrity and unity. The question is what exactly is meant by multicultural education? Therefore, we need to briefly examine the history of the emergence of multicultural discourse and multicultural education.

Historically-sociologically, multicultural discourse first appeared in the 1970s in Canada and Australia, then spread to the United States, Britain, Germany, and other developing countries including Indonesia.¹⁰ Etymologically, multiculturalism is formed from the word multi (many / plural), culture (culture), and ism (flow / understanding). Meanwhile, in terminology, multiculturalism means the awareness of accepting other groups equally as a unit without distinguishing differences in culture, ethnicity, gender,

⁸ This discourse on terror and social anarchism can be seen in Zuhairi Misrawi, *Pandangan Muslim Moderat* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2010), p. 73-128.

⁹ A discussion of the Khilafah controversy can be read in a broad manner in Komaruddin Hidayat (ed.), *Kontroversi Khilafah, Islam, Negara, dan Pancasila* (Bandung: Mizan, 2014).

¹⁰ Mun'im A. Sirry, *Dilema Islam Dilema Demokrasi* (Bekasi: Gugus Press, 2002), p. 280.

language, or religion.¹¹ So that the essence of multiculturalism is the willingness to accept other groups as a whole, regardless of differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, language, or religion.¹²

Meanwhile, multicultural education is an effort to cultivate the wisdom of understanding, awareness (mode of thought), attitudes, and behavior (mode of behavior) of students towards cultural diversity and society. As a conceptual framework for multicultural education, multiculturalism is usually defined as a social-intellectual movement that encourages diversity values as a core principle and reinforces the view that all cultural groups are treated equally (equal) and are equally respected. Multiculturalism is an effort to minimize conflicts of interest, by placing particular / group interests into the context of positive interests that are in line with "shared culture", so that they do not lead to negative interests, namely interests that are sought to be achieved by injuring values of brotherhood, justice, democracy, and the like.

In this context, multiculturalism carries at least three main ideas, namely; (1) equality which includes equal dignity and equal respect; (2) the concept of diversity which views plurality as an indisputable reality, even within one group that is claimed to be the same, there is also diversity; (3) integration that needs to be understood within the framework of collective identities, give and take, influence each other and interact, so that there is no closure, segregation and clashes between cultures. In the religious context, integration can be carried out through strengthening the social function of religion: the function of upholding justice, welfare, mutual harmony, *ta'aruf* and *ta'awun*, as well as through inclusive diversity.¹³

Meanwhile, according to Musa Asy'arie, multicultural education is a process of cultivating a way of life to respect, be sincere, and tolerant of the diversity of cultures that live in the midst of a plural society. With multicultural education, it is hoped that

¹¹ Ali Maksum & Luluk Yunan Ruhendi, *Paradigma Pendidikan Universal di Era Modern & Post Modern* (Yogyakarta: Ircisod, 2004), p. 243. The broad discourse of multiculturalism can be seen in Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

¹² Compare also with Haryatmoko, *Dominasi Penuh Muslihat* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2010), p. 111-115.

¹³ Masngud et.al, *Pendidikan Multikultural* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2010), p. xi.

the nation's mental elasticity and flexibility in facing the clash of social conflicts, so that national unity does not easily break and crack.

In the Indonesian context, which is known for its content which is full of diversity, multicultural education is very strategic for managing diversity creatively, so that conflicts that arise as a result of social transformation and reform can be managed intelligently and become part of the enlightenment of the nation's life in the future.¹⁴

Multicultural education is actually a response to the development of diversity in the human population and demands for equal rights for each group. The importance of multicultural education will be felt when exclusive and fundamentalist understandings emerge in society which results in interactions in community life becoming disharmonious, rigid, and tense, even capable of triggering conflicts, both horizontal and vertical conflicts which usually lead to local and national conflicts.

In the last few years since entering the 21st century, the Islamic mosaic that has appeared in the public sphere of the Indonesian nation is indeed very nuanced. All these phenomena are of course very positive in building a culture of diversity in religious discourse under the umbrella of Indonesian and humanitarianism. However, his anxiety is that it is uncommon for the plurality of religious discourses that appear in the public sphere in fact, causing friction, clash, and conflict, both between internal religious groups and between external groups of different religions.

This phenomenon is due to religious discourse that appears to the surface of the public space, often presenting a religious panorama with rigid, puritanic, rigid, absolutistic characteristics, and intolerance to various religious differences of opinion, literal understanding of the text of the Quran and hadiths, and flying banners. hatred, enmity, and violence not only against internal Muslims but also against external non-Muslim groups.

This fact is also worried by Musa Asy'arie, that the religious education provided in our schools generally does not bring a good multicultural education to life, in fact it tends to be opposite. As a result, social conflicts are often exacerbated by the existence of religious legitimacy taught in religious education in conflict-prone regional schools. This makes conflicts have roots in fundamental religious beliefs so that violent

¹⁴ Musa Asy'arie, *NKRI, Budaya Politik dan Pendidikan*, p. 198.

social conflicts are increasingly difficult to resolve, because they are understood as part of their religious vocation.

The fact shows that religious education is still taught by denying the right to life of other religions, as if only their own religion is true and has the right to live, while other religions are wrong, get lost and are threatened with life, both among the majority and the minority. This narrow spirit of religious education, of course, is fundamentally opposite to the spirit of multicultural education, and will weaken the unity of the nation.¹⁵

Musa Asy'arie's anxiety, found its resonance in a recent study conducted by Douglas Pratt in his brilliant work *Religion and Extremism Rejecting Diversity*. As the title suggests, Pratt presents a fundamental thesis that the rejection of differences and diversity of races, ethnicities, cultures, even beliefs and religions lies at the heart of religion itself. This means that rejection of others and violent conflict is often rooted in religious ideology which is interpreted narrowly and based on the identity of competition with other parties who are different.

Pratt, of course, realizes that the discourse of text and religious principles can be read and framed in an open, dynamic and accommodating manner to others. However, unfortunately, in various phenomena of extremism and violent conflict that have surfaced at the national, regional and global-international levels, it is often religious. Various acts of violence are actually legitimized by the perpetrators through religious doctrines themselves.¹⁶

In the context of the Indonesian nation, the true fundamental character of the Indonesian nation is moderate, humanistic, inclusive, polite, tolerant of various perspectives, being open to differences, spreading the aroma of peace, grace, love, compassion and beauty not only to fellow people Muslims but also non-Muslims. Furthermore, in fact, Indonesia is a multi-faced nation in all its aspects, including language, customs, culture, skin color, ethnicity, and religion. If all these differences are

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199-200.

¹⁶ In his brilliant work, Pratt emphatically writes: *This book argues that the rejection of diversity is what underlies religious extremism, too often grounded in religious ideology*. More broadly, see Douglas Pratt *Religion and Extremism Rejecting Diversity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

addressed and managed in a constructive manner, it will undoubtedly produce its own local wisdom for the Indonesian people to face the various global problems.

The paradigm that exists in multicultural education can be an alternative answer to overcoming rifts and conflicts, both local, national and international. In the coming years, clashes between groups, countries or nations can be reduced by a change in attitude through education that instills multicultural values through government and community policies with mutual respect, working together to fight common problems, such as economic cooperation, fighting poverty, and also fighting ignorance for the welfare of the nation and even the international world.

In Amin Abdullah's perspective, broader multiculturalism education should emphasize social education which is often referred to as civil society, not just individuals. Issues of transparency, public accounting, accountability, public debate, solidarity, tolerance, democracy, public piety and pluralism are key words that can be used as a social contract. In the concept of social contract as a component of multiculturalism education, it is assumed that all individuals and groups have the same platform, rights and obligations, even though they are of different races, ethnicities, groups, religions and beliefs.¹⁷

So multiculturalism education rests on the foundation of humanity. Humanity becomes a big umbrella that covers as well as the binding rope for various differences in aspects of race, culture, ethnicity, language, gender and religion. Why should humanity? Because to borrow Karen Armstrong's words in *The Great Transformation*: Every single person was a replica of reality in the divine world. Therefore every human being carries within him a spark of holiness which must be respected by all parties.¹⁸

It is at this point that the multiculturalism educational paradigm breathes a spirit to all components of a multi-cultural, ethnic, linguistic, gender and religious society to learn how to live and work together with others, learn to live in differences, develop tolerant, sympathetic and empathetic attitudes towards other parties, building mutual trust as a very important social asset, as well as maintaining mutual understanding and mutual respect for the various differences that surround each of us.

¹⁷ Amin Abdullah, *Multikultural Multireligius*, p. 141-142.

¹⁸ Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2006), p. xvi.

Therefore, optimism for tranquility, peace, prosperity, harmony, and even cooperation among our different neighbors but bound by the universal principle of human sanctity will spread if all of us are able to apply the principles of multiculturalism widely, both at the level of formal education and education individually as well as at the informal and social levels.

As emphasized by Musa Asy'arie, all areas of education must be touched by the multicultural spirit:

"Education, whatever its form, must not lose its multicultural dimension, including religious and scientific education, because the reality in life is essentially multidimensional. Likewise, humans themselves are essentially multidimensional creatures. Therefore, the approach to humans and to solve existing humanitarian problems, cannot be other than by using a multidimensional approach. And, in it is multicultural education."¹⁹

C. Conclusion: Substantive Religious Education

In addition, because the majority of Indonesian people are religious, it is also necessary to have a substantive religious education with the aim of building the public moral capabilities of Indonesian people. It includes concepts, values, and attitudes that enable individual learners to make ethical and moral choices in their interactions with others and their environment.

In an era when facts are often distorted, unilateral interests are hidden, tendencies and opinions are often monopolized by groups that have vested interests, religious education must be at the forefront of equipping Indonesia's young generation with ethical and moral values. Without having a strong ethical foundation, they will find it difficult to distinguish between twisted facts and truths, which are important and redundant in today's ocean of information, between humanity, between right and wrong, and between wealth achieved by deceptive practices and by honest practice. Moral and ethical standards will help them understand the right choices when faced with these situations.

¹⁹ Musa Asy'arie, *NKRI*, p. 202.

The majority of Indonesians derive their moral capacity systematically from the teachings of their religion or belief. Because religious education is inspired by religious teachings, it must be built on the essence of religious teaching itself, namely building a relationship between the Creator and creation, as well as the relationship between creation and others. When simplified, this means that the essential principles of teaching religious education are respect for life and tolerance — the essence of spiritual capital.

Respect for life — as mandated by religion — begins with an appreciation for the being that lives life itself, namely humans, as well as for the Creator of that creature. Our relationship with the Creator is an inspiration to appreciate His creation.

The second goal of religious education is to teach tolerance. Religious education must transmit knowledge and values related to the common mandate between religions, namely fostering relationships with others so that individuals realize that they are part of a larger community called humanity. The teaching of human togetherness and also its differences is imperative in religious education, so that it can show the true meaning of religious education, namely tolerance, peace, seeking and promoting good things, emphasizing and advancing positive things, and a useful life.

Schools must be a source of hope for tolerance towards diversity, not a source of inspiration for intolerance. In higher education, students must be encouraged to be willing and able to build bridges of communication, both verbally and in practice with others of different religions. Religious differences must not be interpreted as a threat, but rather as part of the plurality inherent in human creation: freedom and responsibility.

Religious organizations on campus should be encouraged to continuously exchange information that builds and supports one another.²⁰ It must also be admitted that the Indonesian nation has a dual face in terms of plurality, namely natural plurality which includes differences in race, ethnicity, culture, language, skin color, beliefs and religions, as well as structural plurality which includes economic disparities, social status, and education. If natural plurality is to be respected, then structural plurality must be addressed.²¹

²⁰ Elwin Tobing, *Indonesian Dream* (Jakarta: Kompas Media Nusantara, 2018), p. 155-157.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

In the context of religious education, for Musa Asy'arie, education in Islam is not only aimed at developing conceptual abilities in a Muslim person to become a scientist and professional worker, developing the task of the caliph to prosper life on earth, but also to form a person who has character. and noble character, to realize the demands of his nature as 'abd, the servant of God who obeys his laws, both the laws of common sense that exist within him, the laws of nature that govern the life of the universe, as well as universal moral and humanitarian laws social life.²²

In other words, an educational revolution is needed to produce quality human beings, both in faith, Islam and goodness. Because only with the formation of quality human beings, plurality and changes in harmony and balance of an intelligent life will automatically be maintained, and in turn justice and prosperity will be realized for all Indonesian people.²³

²² Musa Asy'arie, *Revolusi Kebudayaan Tanpa Kekerasan* (Yogyakarta: LESFI, 2002), p. 45.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

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