DERADICALISING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION Teacher, Curriculum and Multiculturalism

Irham

Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi, Indonesia irham.muu@gmail.com

Sansan Ziaul Haq

Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia ziaulhaqsansan25@gmail.com

Yudril Basith

UNUSIA Jakarta, Indonesia yudrilbasith23@gmail.com

Abstract

This articles discusses deradicalization attempts in religious educational settings. It closely examines the roots of religious radicalism and offers the deradicalisation models in religious educational institutions. The discussion contributes to the current scholarship on the role of religious education in deradicalization programs and how create an Islamic educational institution that corfims and applies principles of multiculturalism. The paper particularly addresses the roles of teacher, the curriculum aspect of learning, and the translation of multiculturalism into Islamic education. Managerial aspect will be also included in the discussion. It further argues that the implementation of principles of multiculturalism reserves as an important element in confronting radical narratives, both from within and without Islamic tradition. It stands as an attempt to create moderate Muslim subjects who persistently uphold principles of inclusivity and transformative learning through opened-deliberation -rather than indoctrination- in educational settings.

[Artikel ini mendiskusikan upaya deradikalisasi dalam konteks pendidikan agama. Hal ini dilakukan dengan membahas akar persoalan radikalisme agama dan berupaya menawarkan model pendidikan dan lembaga pendidikan yang penting dalam upaya deradikalisasi. Diskusi artikel ini tentu saja akan berkontribusi perdebatan akademik mengenai peran lembaga pendidikan agama dalam program deradikalisasi dan bagaimana mencetak lembaga pendidikan yang mencerminkan dan menerapkan prinsip-prinsip multukulturalisme. Secara khusus, artikel akan mengulas peran guru, aspek kurikulum, dan penerapan multikulturalisme dalam lembaga pendidikan Islam. Aspek manajemen lembaga juga akan dibahas dalam artikel ini. Artikel ini kemudian berargumen bahwa penerapan prinsip-prinsip multikulturalisme merupakan elemen penting dalam mengkonter narasi radikal, baik dari dalam maupun dari luar tradisi Islam. Penerapan multikulturalisme tersebut merupakan salah satu upaya untuk mencetak Muslim moderat yang secara konsisten menjunjung tinggi prinsip inklusivitas—ketimbang indoktrinasi dalam konteks lembaga pendidikan.

Keywords: Deradicalization, Radicalism, Religious education

Introduction

The post-Indonesian reform period clearly demonstrates the rise of radical expressions among Indonesian Muslim and the proliferation of radical organisations in the landscape of a neither secular nor Islamic state Indonesia. There have been theories on the emergence of radicalism at individual and societal levels. The theory of economics deprivation for instance argues that radicalisation emerges because of poor-economic condition. Another theory plays an emphasis on the failure of education to create tolerant subjects. And, religious educations tend to deliver

¹ Ömer Taşpınar, "Fighting Radicalism, Not 'Terrorism': Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* Vol. 29, No. 2, 2009, pp. 75–86.

² Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malečková, "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2003.

intolerant massages.³ This is particularly true to religious education that bases its curriculum to a textual-based approaches to religion while neglecting diversities of religious understandings.⁴ This model of education mainly imagines there is only "one true" Islam.

Wasisto Raharjo Jati argues that the expansion of transnational Islamist networks explains the massive radicalisation of contemporary Indonesian Muslim. The Middle-Eastern religious conflicts, mainly the Israelis and the Palestinians conflict, further accelerated the feeling-threatened by the Western powers. In many instances, some radicalised Indonesian Muslim join the wars in the Middle East on behalf Islamic solidarity (*ukhuwah*) and *jihād* (wars) against enemies of Islam.⁵ Also, at ideological level, contemporary radical movements are indeed an extension of Wahhabism and Salafism.⁶

Poverty and inequality reserve as fertile grounds for the seeds of religious radicalism. The poor are vunerable to radical ideologies that provide alternative system and they particularly maintain economic inequality as the failure of the state to generate social welfare.⁷ Thus, radical ideologies often call for regime change and a total transformation of the state.⁸ Particularly important, Islamic radical ideologies emphasis

³ Didin Syafrudin et.al., *Potret Guru Agama Pandangan Tentang Toleransi dan Isu-Isu Kehidupan Keagamaan* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2018).

⁴ Tiyas Nur Haryani, Muhammad Ikhsanul Amin, Nur Hidayatul Arifah, "Islamic Education in Supporting Deradicalization: A Review of Islamic Education in Pondok Pesantren," *Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2018, pp. 264–267.

⁵ Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Radicalism in The Perspective of Islamic-Populism: Trajectory of Political Islam in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam,* Vol. 7, No. 2, 2013, pp. 283.

⁶ Juan Stemmann, "Middle East Salafism's Influence and The Radicalization of Muslim Communities in Europe," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2006, pp. 1–16.

⁷ Ahmad Darmadji, "Pondok Pesantren dan Deradikalisasi Islam di Indonesia," *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2011, pp. 244.

⁸ Sulistiyono Susilo & Reza Dalimunthe, "Moderate Southeast Asian Islamic Education As a Parent Culture in Deradicalization: Urgencies, Strategies, and Challenges," *Religions*, Vol. 10, No. 45, 2019, pp. 6.

the call for resistance against liberalism, democracy, globalization, and capitalism.⁹ As Muhammad Zuhdi argues, Islamic radicalism is a way of thinking that refuses democracy, human rights and pluralism.¹⁰

This article tries to offers a glipse on the relation of education and radicalisation and the importance of religious education in the efforts of encountering radical narratives and ideologies. It particularly pays attention to the roles of teachers and curriculum to circumcise radical ideologies and the translation of multiculturalism in Islamic education. The article further argues that Islamic education is indeed vulnerable to radicalisation. Thus, deradicalization at educational institution requests the involvement of two important components of education: teacher and educational curriculum. The translation of multiculturalism to the minds of teacher and curriculum reserves as a promising agenda for deradicalizing Islamic educational institutions.

Islamic education and Radicalism: An Indonesian Islam Experience

Education is essential in many cultures and religions. Education is a pillar with which ideas, values and norms are transferred. Education in Islam is indeed a long-lived religious duty (min al-mahdi ila al-lahdi). Considering the significance of education in Islamic tradition, Muslim parents are supposedly sent their children to Islamic educational institution since their childhood age. In Indonesia, children learn at musholla and suran (minor mosque) nearby their home. As they reached junior age, children enroll Muslim boarding schools (pesantren).

Pesantren is perhaps the oldest Muslim educational institution in Indonesia. The history of pesantren takes us back to the earliest period of Islamisation in the country in the 15th-16th century and contemporary

⁹ Seran De Leede et.al., "Radicalisation and Violent Extremism—Focus on Women: How Women Become Radicalised, and How to Empower Them to Prevent Radicalisation," Policy Department on Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Directorate General for Internal Policies of The Union," 2017.

Muhammad Zuhdi, "Challenging Moderate Muslims: Indonesia's Muslim Schools in The Midst of Religious Conservatism," *Religions*, Vol. 9, No. 10, 2018, pp. 12.

Indonesian *pesantrens* show a combination of traditional and modern forms of education. It is said the *pesantren* is essential to preserve moderate Islam in Indonesia. However, the Bali bombings (in 2002 and 2005) and other terrorists' attacks—involving *pesantren* graduates¹¹—surely retaliate the claim of *pesantren* as the pillar of moderate Islam. Some research findings contest the association of *pesantren* and radicalism in contemporary Indonesia.¹² Conducting his research at a *pesantren* in Central Java in 2004-2005, Pohl argued otherwise as *pesantren* is still playing key roles for moderate Islam, for encountering radicalisation, for implementing civic values. The same is true to a research finding of an American anthropologist Mark Woodward who argued *pesantren* is indeed a breeding-ground for Islamic moderatism and essential element to resist radical ideologies and movements.¹³

According to Jamhari Makruf, most Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia belong to individuals and affiliate to Muslim organisations. Many of these institutions are poorly managed and financed. Consequently, many *pesantrens* look for financial helps from donors, particularly from wealthy individuals or institutions based in Middle Eastern countries. Financial helps often collide with the traffic of ideologies, particularly Wahhabism and Salafism, thus making *pesantrens* are vulnerable to radical ideologies. It can be seen through the circulation of radical books authored by Middle-Eastern scholars, such as books by the founder of Wahhabism, Muhammad ibn Abd Wahhab.¹⁴

In addition to pesantren, secular schools are also vulnerable to

¹¹ Dina Afrianty, "Islamic Education and Youth Extremism in Indonesia," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2012, pp. 137.

¹² Abu Rokhmad, "Radikalisme Islam dan Upaya Deradikalisasi Paham Radikal," Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan, Vol. 20, No. 1 2012, pp. 80.

¹³ Mark Woodward, Inayah Rohmaniyah, Ali Amin, "Muslim Education, Celebrating Islam and Having Fun As Counter-Radicalization Strategies in Indonesia," *Perspectives on Terrorisms: A Journal of The Terrorism Research Initiative*, Vol. 4, No. 4. 2010.

¹⁴ Jamhari Makruf, "Incubators for Extremists? Radicalism and Moderation in Indonesia's Islamic Education System," *Centre for Indonesian Lan, Islam and Society (Cilis Policy Paper)*, 2014, pp. 7-8.

radical ideologies.¹⁵ As a reserch finding by Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) of Indonesian Islamic University of Jakarta, radical ideologies have been mooshrooming in many secular schools. Students activism of the schools is essential explaining the proliferation of radical ideologies among teachers and students.¹⁶ As *pesantren*, the schools have ideological affiliation to transnational Muslim organisations outside Indonesia.¹⁷ Thus, it is true that the current landscape of Indonesian Islamic educational institution has to face the challenge of 'infiltration' of radical ideologies and extremism.¹⁸ To tackle the radical challenges, Islamic education should reform four vunerable aspects of education that has been used as means of infiltration: transforming curricula, teacher, teaching materials and student activism.

Agenda for Transforming Islamic Education

As the above mentioned, transforming curricula is a key to counter radical ideologies and narratives at Indonesian Islamic education. Curriculum in education is the heart of learning. Scholars particularly distinguish between formal and informal or hidden curricula. Unlike written curricula, the hidden ones is a contextualised model of learning which appears during the learning processes. In its application, the hidden curricula depend heavily on the teachers who are directly involved in learning processes in the classroom. In many cases, radical ideologies are transferred through the hidden curricula which fall under the authority of teacher. A case study at Islamic schools in Semarang, Central Java for instance, Abu Rokhmad finds that teachers of religious subjects often misinterpreted the official or formal curricula which supposedly serve

¹⁵ Muhammad Tarobin, "Resepsi Aktivis Rohani Islam Terhadap Bacaan Keagamaan di Sman 1 dan 3 Banda Aceh," *Penamas,* Vol.27, No. 2, 2014, pp. 177-188.

¹⁶ Zulkarnain Yani, "Bacaan Keagamaan Aktivis Rohis: Studi Kasus di SMA Negeri 3 dan 4 Kota Medan," *Penamas*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2014, pp. 47-62.

¹⁷ Didin Syafrudin, et.al., Potret Guru Agama...,

¹⁸ Andrew Coulson, "Education And Indoctrination In The Muslim World Is There A Problem? What Can We Do About It?," *Policy Analysis*, No. 511, 2004.

as the base-lined model in teaching.¹⁹ A reseach finding by Zainayati also suggests that radicalism is transferred in school through the curricula as students learn radical interpretations of Islam without critical explanations by their teacher.²⁰

The crucial problem of curricula in Islamic education at Indonesian schools lies at the absence of critical thinking as a foundation of scientific thinking. Islamic education tends to indoctrinate students for certain principles or values. Some studies on Islamic education also demonstrate that the increasing conservatism among Indonesian students is a result of the failure of teacher to lead the student to critically examine important concepts in religion. Rather than cultivating moderate subjects, teaching-learning in schools turns to indoctrination of radical ideologies. The curricula in religious education often contain radical interpretation of Islam. Contents of Islamic subjects, such theology (aqida) and Islamic law (figh), often resort as a barrier to cultivate moderate Muslim subjects.

Another element needed to be reformed is the teacher who is directly active in learning activities. Teachers of Indonesian schools, mainly who teach Islamic subjects, are vunerable to radical ideologies. Rather than sending messages of moderate Islam, teachers transferred radicalism ideology in the teaching activities. A recent survey by Saputra and also Zuhdi- suggests that teachers of Indonesian schools have failed to internalised and transferred principles of religious tolerance through their teaching activities. They are indeed reluctant to agree to the concept of moderate Islam. Furthermore, their understandings on religion mirror

Abu Rokhmad, "Radikalisme Islam dan Upaya Deradikalisasi Paham Radikal," Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2012, pp. 79–114.

²⁰ Husniyatus Salamah Zainiyati, "Curriculum, Islamic Understanding...,"

²¹ Michael S. Merry, "Indoctrination, Islamic Schools, and The Broader Scope of Harm," *Theory and Research in Education*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2018, pp. 2-4.

²² Abdallah Abdallah, "Exclusivism and Radicalism in Schools: State Policy and Educational Politics Revisited," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2016, pp. 627.

²³ Martin Van Bruinessen (ed.), Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining The "Conservative Turn" (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

²⁴ Abu Rokhmad, "Radikalisme Islam...," pp. 87.

the radical interpretations of Islam.²⁵ For example, these radicalised teachers seem to contest the idea of Pancasila state and demonstrated their approval for religious intolerance.²⁶

Transforming Islamic education in Indonesia should also include the transformation of teaching-learning materials. Recent survey PPIM suggests that teaching materials in Islamic subjects mainly contests pluralities of Islamic interpretations. In some parts of the books, it further echoes radical interpretion of Islam, for example when discussing the Jews and the Christians from Islamic perspective. A similar finding is proposed by as examining learning materials for Islamic education at mainly that contest the idea of tolerance and further mirror radical interpretation of Islam.

Finally, transforming religious education requests students' participation for mainstreaming moderate understanding of Islam. Particularly important for this aim is to reform student organisations, particularly the Rohani Islam/Rohis. Rohis is an Islamic extracurricular organization that organises Islamic activism, particularly *dakwah* activities.²⁷ At secular schools, Rohis is supposedly helping Muslim student to learn Islamic subjects outside the classroom settings.²⁸ Nevertheless, contemporary Rohis has been a breeding-ground for radicalism.²⁹ Through its activities, like *mabit* and *daurah*, Rohis introduces radical thoughts and expands its networks to radical organisation outside the

²⁵ Rangga Eka Saputra, "Sikap dan Perilaku Keberagamaan Guru dan Dosen Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Convey Report* (Jakarta: PPIM UIN Jakarta-UNDP Indonesia, 2018), pp. 14-15.

²⁶ *Ibid* .., pp. 7-15.

²⁷ Dirana Suryaningrum, Muslihin Amali, & Andy Hadiyanto, "Pandangan Anggota Rohis SMA tentang Radikalisme Agama: Studi Komparatif Rohis SMA Labschool Jakarta dan SMKN 26 Jakarta," *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur an*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2017, pp. 34-47.

²⁸ Hayadin Hayadin, "Tragedi Kecolongan Rohis Keterlibatan Alumni Rohis SMKN Anggrek pada Aksi Radikalisme," *Al-Qalam,* Vol. 19, No. 2, 2016, pp. 231.

²⁹ Zulkarnain Yani, "Bacaan Keagamaan Aktivis...; Muhammad Tarobin, "Resepsi Aktivis Rohani Islam...,"

school.³⁰ Thus, transforming Rohis is an essential agenda to counter radical ideologies and narratives that are currently dominant in Rohis circles.³¹

Deradicalization in Islamic Educational Settings: A Multicultural Approach

Radical ideologies has infiltrated many Islamic educational institutions and teaching-learning activities at Indonesian schools. Thus, deradicalization at educational setting is a must. Deradicalisation of religious curriculum resorts as a global agenda to prevent extremism and terrorism at educational instituion.³² Deradicalisation can be done, for instance, through teaching tolerance and respect for different religions and traditions which serves as counter narratives to radical ideologies. Helping students to deal with alienation in current situation is also essential. This is particularly because young students seem to be more attracted and vulnerable to radical ideologies which offer a new world system. Thus, as the fondations of radicalisation at educational settings, four important principles should be taken into account: teaching differences, respect for different opinions and values, mainstreaming moderate Islam, and finally tolerance as the basic principle of teaching-learning activities.

If we locate deradicalization into a wider perspective at societal level, deradicalization is seeking to minimize crime and prevent further accelerated radicalism, mainly through religious education. It can be done through a pedagogical approach via careful planning of curriculum of Islamic religious education. It lies to the fundamental principle that Islam is a peaceful religion teaching harmony and tolerance.³³ The nature of

³⁰ Abu Rokhmad, "Radikalisme Islam...,"

³¹ Abdul Basit, "The Pattern of School Da'wa Movement: Restraining Radicalization Among Adolescent," *Ijtimā'iyya* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2016.

³² Audrey Kurth Cronin, "The Evolution of Counterterrorism: Will Tactics Trump Strategy?," *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 4, 2010, pp. 837–856.

³³ Edhy Rustan, Nurul Hanifah, & Bulu' Kanro, "De-Radicalization in The Implementation of Islamic Education Curriculum in SMA Masamba South Sulawesi,"

deradicalization aims to teach harmony, mutual respect, peace, respecting differences, and advocate for tolerance as mentioned in the Qur'an (Al-Ma'idah: 48,99, Al-Hujurat: 11,13, Yunus: 99, Al-Ghasiyah: 21-22, Qaf: 45). The Qur'an clearly mentions that Islam is a religion that brings grace and prosperity to the entire creatures and the universe (al-Anbiya: 107). Islam also teaches the concept of brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) which means all human are brothers and sisters. It teaches Muslim to uphold justice and equality regardless ethnic, cultural and religious differences.³⁴ These principles surely echo the underpining principles of multicultural education.³⁵

Multicultural education is an contextualised education derived from principles of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism accepts and protects differences. For Azyumardi Azra, multiculturalism is a worldview that accepts realities and diversities and aims to protect diversities³⁶ as differences are guaranteed to exist.³⁷ Multicultural education is regarded as a systematic and measured facilitator to build multicultural understanding/insight to the students as a form of anticipatory or alternative specific issues of radicalism in religion.

Paul Gorski argues that multicultural education is a form of self-transformation of an educator to install a universal insight into students's awareness, and, at a later phase, to contribute to social transformation.³⁸ There has been an effort to implement multicultural approach in

Dinamika Ilmu, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2018, pp. 272-280.

³⁴ 'Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Musānāh al-Insāniyyah Fī al-Islām Bayn al-Nazariyyah Wa al-Taṭ bīq* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2014), p. 143–144; Kitāb al-Adab, 65, No. 4941 Abū Daūd Al-Imām, *Sunan Abū Daūd*, Vol. 9 (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), p. 297.

³⁵ James A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (Boston: Pearson, 2008).

³⁶ Azyumardi Azra, *Merawat Kemajemukan Merawat Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007).

³⁷ Rizal Mubit, "Peran Agama dalam Multikulturalisme Masyarakat Indonesia," Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2016, pp. 163–184.

³⁸ Paul C. Gorski, *Multiculture Education and The Internet Intersection and Integrations*, Second Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), p.13–15.

Islamic educational settings. The Sekolah Menengah Atas Pembangunan (Senior High School of Developmentalism) in Bintaro-Jakarta for instance tries to implement principles of multiculturalism throughout its learning curricula. It particularly tries to adapt multiculturalism in Islamic education.³⁹ This project implements mainstreaming inclusive education for religious teachers and the learning curricula. To do so, the school is taking into account backgrounds of teachers, especially their educational backgrounds and activities. It further translates the principles of multiculturalism into the school's curricula with particular objectives to foster tolerant and multicultural attitudes and insights. Likewise, during the learning process at the classroom, the teacher always starts the class with a brief discussion on principles of multiculturalism before proceeding to the main topic of the class. Importantly, teachers try to explain principles of multiculturalism from the lights of religions, instead of one religion. In some cases, religious scholars were invited to introduce a general introduction of his/her religion. The learning process is also interactive rather than following a model of indoctrination. ⁴⁰ To do so, teacher is invited to contextualise the topic of the class to religious diversities of society in general. This method surely mirrors, what James Banks mentions, as "transformative curriculum."41

Likewise, when explaining the basic concepts of the Qur'an, a teacher also explains principles of Islam through the lens of multiculturalism. For example, Quranic verses and the Prophet tradition (*hadīth*) are selected in accordance to the topic of multiculturalism, such as religious tolerance, just and justice society.⁴² Students were invited to be tolerant subjects towards non-Muslims and to do justice

³⁹ Irham, "Islamic Education at Multicultural Schools," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2017, pp. 141–154.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ James A Banks, *An Introduction To Multicultural...*, p. 47-50.

⁴² Andik Wahyun Muqoyyidin, "Deradikalisasi Pendidikan Islam dan Tantangannya di Indonesia," *Annual Intrenational Confrence on Islamic Studies Religion & Science: Integration through Islamic Studies*, 2017, pp. 491–492.

regardless religious background and to form brotherhood of humanity (al-ukhuwwah al-bashariyyah). To do so, teacher should be able to expain Islam which has a strong foundation on multicultural principles (al-Anbiya: 107, al-Hujurat:13, Hud: 118-119, Yunus:99). Determination of such material can define the direction of students' religious thoughts. This means that religious scientific insight has a strong influence on the attitudes and insights of the students. Thus, it is clear that principles of multiculturalism rooted in Islam and the Islamic education with a special emphasis on multiculturalism could cultivate moderate Muslim and is is fundamental in deradicalizing religious education.

Conclusion

This article reveals a context of Islamic education in Indonesian which, since the last two decades, has experienced radicalisation processes. Islamic education is indeed vulnerable to radical narratives and ideologies which are particularly alien to Indonesian culture and society. As this article also demonstrates, radicalisation at Islamic education develops through the curricula of Islamic education, the model of teaching which mirrors a model of indoctrination rather than deliberation, teachers who are also vulnerable to radical ideologies, and the expanding influence of transnational ideologies and movements through student activism, Rohis. As for the answer to this radicalision of Islamic education, I argue that the idea of multiculturalism has been essential to counter radical narratives and ideologies that are currently prevalent among religious teachers at schools. This multicultural education aims to create moderate Muslim subjects who are immune to radical ideologies and narratives. To to so, reforming curricula of religious education, mainstreming multiculturalism to the minds of teachers, transforming Rohis activism are important elements of deradicalization of educational institututions.

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