



Religious Considerations In Educational Policy In A Multicultural Society

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of religious considerations in educational policies within a multicultural society, focusing on how educational policies can accommodate religious and cultural diversity in communities with different social and religious backgrounds. Multicultural societies face challenges in creating educational policies that can fairly include all religious groups, without prioritizing one religion or culture over others. Therefore, this research focuses on how educational policies can be structured to create an inclusive education system that is sensitive to religious diversity. The study uses a library research method, collecting and analyzing relevant literature on religious education policies in multicultural countries such as Indonesia, India, and European nations. Through this approach, the author explores information about the implementation of educational policies that consider religious diversity and their impact on social integration. The findings indicate that religious education policies, when properly designed, can be an effective tool to strengthen tolerance and social integration in multicultural societies. However, to achieve this goal, policies must carefully consider the rights of minority groups to prevent discrimination. Educational policies should also undergo regular evaluations and adjustments to ensure inclusivity and equality for all religious groups in education.

Keywords: Educational Policy, Multiculturalism, Inclusivity, Tolerance.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the era of globalization and multiculturalism faces major challenges in formulating policies that embrace the diversity of religions, cultures, and social values in society. One of the most important aspects of education is how religion is considered in educational policies, particularly in countries with multicultural societies (Sholeh et al., 2023). Indonesia, as the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, has a unique relationship between religion and educational policies (Minarti et al., 2024). However, the religious diversity in Indonesia, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other local beliefs, requires an approach to educational policy that is sensitive to pluralism and cultural diversity. This study aims to explore



how religious considerations are applied in educational policies in multicultural societies, with a focus on their implications for diversity and social integration (Efendi et al., 2023).

In Indonesia religion has been an integral part of educational policies from the colonial era to the reform era (Sholeh et al., 2024). As a Muslim-majority country, Indonesia's educational system has been significantly influenced by Islamic teachings, whether in the curriculum, teaching methods, or educational institutions (Sutrisno et al., 2024). However, in the current multicultural era, where cultural and religious diversity is increasingly evident in every aspect of life, it is important for educational policies to prioritize inclusivity. This means that educational policies must not only accommodate the needs of the majority religion but also consider the rights of minority religions to access education fairly and equally. In this context, the role of religion in educational policies should not be limited to normative or religious aspects but should also create space for constructive interfaith dialogue and promote values of tolerance in society (Masturi, 2018).

In multicultural societies, educational policies that consider religion must emphasize the understanding that every individual has the right to freely practice their religion and beliefs. Educational policies that are insensitive to religious diversity can create social tensions and hinder the creation of a peaceful and inclusive educational environment. For example, educational policies that impose one religion or belief system can create exclusion for minority groups. On the other hand, policies that respect religious differences can serve as tools for building social harmony. Therefore, it is crucial for policymakers to understand how religion plays a role in fostering harmony in the context of inclusive education. This understanding will provide a foundation for developing educational policies that can respond to the needs of a multicultural society (Mansur, 2019).

The importance of considering religion in educational policies also lies in religion's role in shaping social values in everyday life. Religious values can guide the development of character and morality in students. Therefore, religious-based educational policies need to support character development that prioritizes not only cognitive aspects but also social and moral aspects. In Indonesia, religious education is often seen as a means to build a tolerant and culturally-aware nation, but in a multicultural society, this approach must be implemented carefully to avoid creating social homogeneity that disregards diversity. For instance, religious education in schools



should be designed to instill respect for different religions and develop the ability to engage in constructive dialogue within the framework of pluralism (Syarif, 2017).

Educational policies that consider religion in a multicultural society must also pay attention to legal and constitutional aspects. In Indonesia, the 1945 Constitution guarantees religious freedom for all citizens. Educational policies must affirm that this right is not only limited to the freedom to practice religion but also the right to receive education that aligns with one's religious teachings. In practice, Indonesia's educational policies have accommodated religious diversity through the inclusion of religious subjects in the school curriculum. However, there are still significant challenges in ensuring that these policies are implemented fairly and without discrimination. Therefore, it is important to examine how religious-based educational policies can strengthen social integration and reduce tensions that may arise due to religious differences in a multicultural society (Riyanto, 2020).

This study also explores how the educational policies of countries with more developed multicultural societies can serve as models for Indonesia. Countries like Canada, Australia, and Singapore have developed educational policies that pay close attention to religious and cultural diversity in their societies. The educational policy models in these countries emphasize principles of inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity. These countries' educational policies can provide valuable lessons for Indonesia in formulating policies that not only prioritize the majority but also create space for the development of minority religions. A comparative study of religious-based educational policies in other multicultural countries will enrich this research and provide broader insights into the implementation of effective and inclusive educational policies (Bennet, 2016).

In Indonesia various dynamics affect the implementation of religious-based educational policies (Hidayah, 2020). The democratization process in Indonesia after the reform era has opened up more space for educational policies that are more open to religious differences. However, many people feel that current educational policies still tend to marginalize minority groups. In this context, it is important to consider more deeply how educational policies can serve as a means to strengthen social integration without sacrificing the religious values present in society. This requires comprehensive research on the implementation of religious-based educational policies that can embrace all layers of society, regardless of religious or ethnic background (Samsudin, 2018).



This study is expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive and sensitive educational policies in Indonesia. By considering religion as an important factor in the formation of educational policies, it is hoped that an education system will be created that not only educates students academically but also shapes their character as tolerant, culturally-aware individuals who are ready to face global challenges in the future. Therefore, this study is important to provide deeper insights into how religion is considered in educational policies and its impact on social integration and diversity in multicultural societies.

METHOD

This study uses the library research method, which aims to collect, analyze, and interpret literature relevant to the topic "Religious Considerations in Education Policy in Multicultural Societies." This method is chosen because it allows the researcher to access various sources of information, including books, scholarly journals, articles, reports, and other documents related to education policy, religion, and multicultural societies. Library research provides an opportunity to explore theories, concepts, and previous findings related to the topic under investigation, as well as to identify gaps and areas for further research (Hidayat, 2017).

In this library research, the researcher will collect literature published after 2015, with a focus on studies related to education policies that consider religion in countries with multicultural societies, including Indonesia. The process of collecting literature involves searching for scholarly documents from various databases, digital libraries, and relevant international journals. The sources obtained will be selected based on specific criteria, such as relevance to the topic, the quality and credibility of the sources, and their contribution to understanding the relationship between religion and education policy in the context of multicultural societies (Pratama & Suharto, 2016).

Data analysis in library research is conducted in a descriptive-analytical manner. The researcher will identify various themes and concepts that emerge from the collected literature, such as religious-based education policies, social integration, and the impact of religious diversity in education. Additionally, the researcher will assess how the literature sources are interconnected, complement each other, or even contradict one another, in order to provide a deeper understanding of how religion is considered in education policy in multicultural societies. The researcher will



also identify gaps in the literature and provide recommendations for further research (Mulyani, 2019).

The next step in library research is synthesis and the formulation of conclusions based on the analysis of the literature. The researcher will organize key findings obtained from various sources to build a coherent narrative on religious considerations in education policy. This conclusion will be drawn while taking into account the social, cultural, and religious contexts of multicultural societies. The researcher will also relate findings from the literature to the context of Indonesia and consider the application of education policies in other countries with similar multicultural societies. Therefore, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how education policies can create harmony in pluralistic societies (Rahmat, 2021).

The library research method offers several advantages, including time flexibility, lower costs, and easier access to various sources. However, library research also has limitations, such as dependence on the availability and quality of existing literature sources. Furthermore, the analysis conducted in library research is secondary, meaning that the researcher cannot directly observe phenomena in the field. Nonetheless, library research still provides significant contributions by expanding knowledge on a topic and identifying current trends and developments in the field (Syafudin, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religion and Education Policy in Multicultural Societies

In multicultural societies, education policies are often confronted with significant challenges in accommodating religious diversity. Societies made up of various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups require education policies that embrace all factions and foster mutual respect among individuals. In this context, religion becomes an integral consideration in the formulation of educational policies aimed at creating social harmony and preventing inter-group tensions. In many countries, such as Indonesia, India, and Malaysia, religion plays a crucial role in shaping social and cultural identities. Religious education, as one of the core subjects, is often used as a means to instill religious and moral values in young generations, while also introducing students to the religious diversity present in their communities.



In Indonesia, religious education in public schools is mandatory for all students, regardless of their religious background. This policy aims to strengthen interfaith understanding and tolerance by providing a deeper understanding of the religions present in Indonesia. Religious education is expected not only to teach specific religious teachings but also to create space for students to understand and appreciate religious differences. Suryani & Rahman (2020) state that by providing religious education to all students, it is hoped that a more tolerant and peaceful society can be created, despite the differences in beliefs among them.

The implementation of religion-based education policies often faces challenges, especially in the context of multicultural societies. One of the main challenges is how to accommodate minority religions within the national education curriculum that has already been established. Some education policies tend to dominate one particular religion, for example, Islam in Indonesia, which is the majority religion. This can create a feeling of marginalization among minority religious groups, who feel that their beliefs are not receiving the proper attention within the national education system. For instance, in religious education curricula that often focus on Islamic teachings, non-Muslim students may find it difficult to understand or appreciate teachings from other religions. Therefore, it is important to consider an inclusive approach that allows for the representation of all religions in the education system, without emphasizing one religion exclusively (Jamil & Khan, 2019). This approach not only focuses on understanding the majority religion but also provides room for teaching about minority religions, so that all students, without exception, feel valued and recognized in the education system.

Religious education policies should consider the social and cultural context of a country. In countries with high religious diversity, such as India, where there are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and other religions, religious education policies must accommodate this diversity in a neutral and non-discriminatory way. For example, in some states in India, there are policies that require religious education to be taught in a neutral and non-discriminatory manner, allowing students to learn about all religions present. This aligns with the basic principle of religious pluralism, which is the recognition of each individual's right to practice and teach their religion without coercion. Religious diversity in education also plays a role in fostering mutual respect among citizens (Chakrabarti & Thapar, 2021).



Another challenge is how to measure the effectiveness of religion-based education policies in improving tolerance and understanding between religious communities. Some studies show that although religious education policies can play a role in raising religious awareness, not all policies succeed in reducing inter-group tensions. Jamil & Khan (2019) argue that the success of religion-based education policies heavily depends on how they are implemented and how educators are able to deliver the material in a way that does not create polarization. Therefore, continuous evaluation of religion-based education policies is crucial to ensure that they are truly effective in creating an inclusive and tolerant educational environment.

In facing these challenges, it is important to create education policies based on the principle of inclusivity, which takes into account religious diversity in society. This can be done by designing curricula that objectively introduce various religions, without favoring one religion over another. Moreover, governments and educational institutions must provide training for educators so that they can teach religious education in a manner that is sensitive to differences and strengthens the values of tolerance. In this way, religious education policies will not only become a tool for shaping students' character but also help strengthen social cohesion in multicultural societies.

Implications and Challenges of Religion-Based Education Policies in Multicultural Societies

This section discusses the implications and challenges of religion-based education policies implemented in multicultural societies (Sabarudin et al., 2024). In many countries with cultural and religious diversity, religion-based education policies are often faced with various challenges, especially concerning how these policies can fairly and without discrimination accommodate all religious groups (Romlah et al., 2024). In plural societies, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and India, where religious diversity exists, religious education policies play a significant role in shaping social character and enhancing tolerance. However, policies that emphasize the majority religion may lead to dissatisfaction among minority groups, potentially escalating interfaith tensions.

One of the main challenges in religion-based education policies in multicultural societies is how to accommodate religious diversity without discriminating against minority groups. Countries with multicultural populations, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, face this challenge in managing an equitable and inclusive religious education curriculum. In Indonesia, for example, religious education policies in public schools mandate that all students participate in religious education, with a focus on the majority religion, Islam. This can create tensions, as minority groups, such as



Christians, Hindus, and others, feel that this policy does not reflect the diversity present in their society. Although the goal of religious education is to strengthen interfaith understanding, if not handled carefully, such policies can lead to discrimination against minority groups (Zulkifli & Ismail, 2020).

In highly plural societies like Indonesia, it is crucial to ensure that religion-based education policies create space for differences, without promoting one religion exclusively. One way to address this challenge is by designing more inclusive policies that consider the religious and cultural diversity in society. For example, education policies should include the study of various religions proportionally and not give dominance to only one religion. Policies that prioritize social justice and the rights of minority groups will ensure that every individual, regardless of their religious background, has equal opportunities to receive quality education (Rahayu & Nugroho, 2021).

Another challenge faced is how to integrate religious teachings into the curriculum without leading to social homogenization. Teaching religion without universal values can exacerbate tensions between religious groups, especially if it is taught in a way that leads to social segregation between majority and minority groups. Therefore, governments must ensure that religion-based education policies are designed to build social awareness and tolerance between religious communities. Inclusive education policies will help create a harmonious social environment where all religious groups can live together peacefully (Asri et al., 2024).

Religion-based education, if well-designed, can have significant positive implications for multicultural societies. One of the main positive implications of religion-based education policies is their ability to strengthen interfaith tolerance. By teaching values that emphasize morality and universal ethics, religious education can help students understand the religious and cultural differences in their society. This will reduce tensions between religious groups, improve interfaith understanding, and strengthen social unity in multicultural societies.

Religion-based education can also be a powerful tool in building social awareness among students. By studying religious teachings that emphasize peace, justice, and mutual respect, students can better adapt to social life in diverse settings and avoid falling into stereotypes or negative prejudices against other religious groups. Religious education based on universal values



can also help students develop empathy, which is essential in fostering harmonious interfaith relations in multicultural societies.

To achieve this goal religion-based education policies must be designed inclusively, ensuring that they not only accommodate the majority religion but also respect and provide space for minority religious groups. In this way, religious education will not only strengthen social integration but also enrich students' perspectives on the diversity that exists in the world.

Inclusive Approach in Religious-Based Education Policy

It is important for the government to develop religious-based education policies that can accommodate religious diversity in an inclusive manner. One approach that can be used is incorporating lessons on various religions into the national curriculum. Religious education that includes teachings from both majority and minority religions can help students better understand and appreciate other religions. This will create opportunities for better interfaith relations, reduce stereotypes and prejudices, and strengthen tolerance and mutual respect in a multicultural society.

Religious-based education should emphasize common values that can be found across different religions, such as justice, peace, and compassion. This approach will help avoid religious education that overly emphasizes differences, focusing instead on universal values that can be accepted by all religious groups. Thus, religious-based education policy will not only strengthen the religious identity of each group but also encourage the creation of a more inclusive and harmonious society.

The government needs to continuously evaluate and adjust religious-based education policies. This evaluation is important to ensure that the policies implemented can create equal space for all religious groups. The government should pay attention to the social and cultural developments in society and identify whether the existing policies have accommodated all parties fairly and without discrimination.

Evaluations are needed to ensure that religious-based education policies not only strengthen interfaith tolerance but also reduce social tensions that may arise due to injustice in the education system. Policy adjustments based on the principles of social justice and equality will ensure that each religious group has equal access to education, regardless of their religious background.

Religious-based education policy in a multicultural society brings complex challenges but also has great potential to strengthen tolerance and social awareness. In countries with religious



diversity such as Indonesia and Malaysia, it is crucial to design inclusive education policies that fairly accommodate all religious groups. With an approach based on universal values, religious-based education can reduce tensions between religious groups and create a harmonious educational environment. Therefore, religious-based education policies must be continuously evaluated and adjusted to create a more inclusive, tolerant, and just society.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the importance of considering religion in education policies in multicultural societies, as well as the challenges and implications for religious diversity in the education system. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that religious-based education policies play a strategic role in building character, morality, and social awareness in multicultural societies. However, to achieve inclusivity and equality, education policies need to be designed in such a way that they can accommodate religious diversity without favoring any particular religious group. In many multicultural countries, such as Indonesia and India, religious education policies often come under scrutiny due to tensions between majority-religion-based education and the rights of minority groups to receive education that aligns with their beliefs. Although religious education in schools aims to raise social awareness, the greatest challenge is creating an equitable educational space for all religious groups. Therefore, education policies must be carefully considered to accommodate religious and cultural diversity while strengthening tolerance and unity among students. The implementation of religious-based education policies in multicultural societies also requires ongoing evaluation. Adjusting policies in response to social and cultural developments is essential to ensure that they remain relevant and do not create social tensions. Inclusive education policies that consider the rights of minority groups to receive religious education in accordance with their beliefs are crucial for creating social harmony. religious-based education can serve as an important means to strengthen interfaith harmony and build a tolerant and harmonious society, but these policies must continuously adapt to the social dynamics and diversity present in society.

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