



Piety and Tolerance in Thai Society: Exploring Multicultural Coexistence at Phatnawitya School

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ABSTRAK

Masyarakat Thailand yang kaya akan keragaman etnik dan agama menekankan pentingnya nilai kesalehan dan toleransi dalam menjaga harmoni sosial. Penelitian ini mengulas praktik penanaman nilai kesalehan dan toleransi di Sekolah Phatnawitya, dengan cara mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai tersebut ke dalam kurikulum dan kegiatan sekolah. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menggali tantangan-tantangan yang dihadapi dalam menciptakan lingkungan yang menghargai keberagaman baik di sekolah maupun dalam masyarakat multikultural secara lebih luas. Melalui metode kualitatif dan pendekatan studi kasus, penelitian ini menghimpun data primer dan sekunder. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam di Sekolah Phatnawitya memainkan peran vital dalam mengembangkan kesalehan dan toleransi di kalangan siswa melalui kurikulum agama Islam, aktivitas ekstrakurikuler, dan program-program pemberdayaan siswa. Pendekatan pendidikan ini berhasil menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung pengembangan sosial para siswa. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pendidikan Islam berperan sebagai alat yang efektif dalam membentuk karakter siswa yang harmonis dan toleran, serta mendukung pembentukan masyarakat multikultural.

ABSTRACT

Thailand's society, rich in ethnic and religious diversity, underscores the importance of piety and tolerance in maintaining social harmony. This study examines the practices of instilling the values of piety and tolerance at Phatnawitya School, through their integration into the curriculum and school activities. It also explores the challenges faced in creating an environment that values diversity in both the school and the broader multicultural community. Utilizing a qualitative approach and case study methodology, this research gathers both primary and secondary data. The findings indicate that Islamic education at Phatnawitya School plays a crucial role in nurturing piety and tolerance among students through the Islamic religious curriculum, extracurricular activities, and student empowerment programs. This educational approach has successfully fostered an environment conducive to student social development. The conclusion of this study highlights the role of Islamic education as an effective tool in shaping students with harmonious and tolerant characters, as well as contributing to the development of a multicultural society.

KATA KUNCI

Pendidikan Islam; Kesalehan dan Toleransi; Masyarakat Multikultural.

KEYWORDS

Islamic Education; Piety and Tolerance; Multicultural Society.

A. Introduction

Thailand, a constitutional monarchy, occupies a strategically central location bridging the Australian continent and the Chinese mainland. This pivotal position enhances its accessibility for business ventures and facilitates the dissemination of religious beliefs. The nation is home to a rich tapestry of ethnic diversity, including the Thai, Lao, Malay, and Chinese communities. Predominantly,

the population practices Theravada Buddhism; however, there exists a mosaic of religious beliefs including Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Christianity.¹

Despite being a minority, Islam represents the largest minority religion in Thailand, encompassing approximately four percent of the total population. This faith has witnessed significant growth in recent years.² The Muslim demographic is predominantly situated in the country's southern provinces—Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, and parts of Satun and Songkhla. These regions, sharing borders with Malaysia, are characterized by a predominant Malay ethnic presence, reflecting the cross-cultural ties and religious affiliations that enrich Thailand's societal fabric.

The coexistence of diverse communities, characterized by distinct norms, cultures, religions, and languages within a shared geographical space, offers a profound opportunity to enrich community life through a foundation of mutual respect and tolerance. However, this diversity also harbors the potential for conflict and tension, which can undermine social cohesion and the cultivation of a harmonious society, particularly in environments where tolerance is insufficient.³

In Thailand, the dynamic interplay of culture has historically manifested in tensions between the Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist communities, evolving into a complex and sensitive issue.⁴ Central to this challenge is the emergence of stereotypes and stigmas, notably reflected in the use of the term "Khaek" by some within the Thai-Buddhist population to refer to Malay-Muslims. This term, which etymologically means 'guest' or 'foreigner,' is imbued with negative undertones and serves as a derogatory label. It symbolizes an ethnocentric and stereotypical viewpoint, casting the Malay-Muslim community as transient and marginalizing them as second-class citizens. The perception of the Malay-Muslims in Southern Thailand as an 'alien' cultural group is further accentuated by distinctive markers such as language and traditional dress,⁵ exacerbating the division and highlighting the challenges of achieving cultural integration and mutual understanding.

Conversely, within the context of these cultural tensions, the Malay-Muslim community often views Thai-Buddhists through a lens of religious and ideological opposition, labeling them as infidels and idolaters. This perspective is rooted in a notion of modern ignorance (jahiliyah), positioning Thai-Buddhists as adversaries within the framework of Islamic law, particularly in response to perceived maltreatment of the Malay-Muslim populace. The interplay of ideological and cultural discord has occasionally escalated into physical confrontations, marking the interactions not only among the civilian

¹ Mania, "Perkembangan Sosial Islam Di Thailand," *ALMA' ARIEF: JURNAL PENDIDIKAN SOSIAL DAN BUDAYA* 1, no. 1 (2019).

² A. Manan, F. R. Armii, and W. Y. Amri, "The Expansion of Islam in Pattani, South Thailand: A Historical Analysis," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 17, no. 1 (2022), <http://dx.doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol17no1.7>.

³ Ahmad Suradi, John Kenedi, and Buyung Surahman, "Religious Tolerance in Multicultural Communities: Towards a Comprehensive Approach in Handling Social Conflict," *Udayana Journal of Law and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2020).

⁴ W. Binisris, "Peacemaking and the Muslims' Outlooks: Problems in Three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand," *Res Militaris* 12, no. 1 (2022), <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85141135476&partnerID=40&md5=e721e6b86fc01d0c5fc771e8915835ff>.

⁵ Arismunandar Arismunandar, Afriantoni Afriantoni, and Asmuni Asmuni, "Melayu Pattani Thailand: Muslim Minority Religion Expression in the Middle of Non Muslim Majority," *Journal of Malay Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2019).

populations but also with the Thai government. The perception among the Malay-Muslims in Southern Thailand of discriminatory practices by the state frames this dynamic in terms of colonialism, with the Malay-Muslims cast in the role of the colonized. These conflicts, grounded in cultural, identity, and historical contexts, highlight the complex challenges facing Southern Thailand and underline the urgent need for pathways to peace and communal harmony.⁶

In the broader context of Thailand's diverse society, the imperative to embrace a multiculturalist stance becomes clear. Multiculturalism advocates for the coexistence of multiple ethnic groups within a single societal framework, preserving their unique contributions to the collective social fabric.⁷ This approach underscores the belief that cultural, religious, and value-based diversity need not be barriers to peaceful cohabitation. Instead, diversity should be approached with mutual respect and appreciation, fostering an environment conducive to harmonious living. The concept of multiculturalism, first introduced in the 1960s by Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, was initially proposed as an alternative to the dominant biculturalism of the time. Through the significant contributions of scholars like Will Kymlicka, with pivotal works such as "Liberalism, Community, and Culture" in 1989 and "Multicultural Citizenship" in 1995,⁸ the discourse around multiculturalism has evolved and gained prominence, offering a framework for navigating the complexities of diverse societies like Thailand.

The pursuit of cultivating a multicultural perspective, aimed at developing a deep-rooted and enduring mutual understanding and empathy within a society, is chiefly advanced through the domain of education. Education stands as a pivotal force in promoting and instilling respect among members of society, particularly targeting the younger generation who are the bearers of the future. It is through the educational process that young individuals are educated and inspired to cherish and respect the diversity that surrounds them, thereby ensuring the effective assimilation of diversity literacy. Educational institutions act as microcosms of society, providing a space where students are immersed in the socialization process, embracing and navigating a variety of evolving values.⁹

The endeavor to foster a comprehensive transformation towards the embrace of an open-minded perspective within society, particularly under the umbrella of multiculturalism, underscores the imperative role of education.¹⁰ Indeed, education emerges as the quintessential platform for nurturing a multicultural ethos, as evidenced by educational institutions that prioritize quality education and

⁶ Paulus Rudolf Yuniarto, "Minoritas Muslim Thailand Asimilasi, Perlawanan Budaya Dan Akar Gerakan Separatisme," *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya* 7, no. 1 (2005).

⁷ T. Tsukamoto, "Seeking Common Ground and Reconciliation: Islam, Thai Citizenship and Multiculturalism," in *Social Transformations in India, Myanmar, and Thailand: Volume II: Identity and Grassroots for Democratic Progress* (2022); M. F. Morton, "Multiculturalism from Below: Indigeneity and the Struggle for Recognition in Thailand," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 79, no. 1 (2023), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/723074>.

⁸ Rizal Mubit, "Peran Agama Dalam Multikulturalisme Masyarakat Indonesia," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2016).

⁹ Saihu Saihu, "Pendidikan Islam Multikulturalisme," *Al Amin: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Dan Budaya Islam* 1, no. 02 (2018).

¹⁰ N. Witayarat, "Where Multicultural Worldviews Begin: Development of Thai University Students' Intercultural Competence through Their Life Experiences and Formal Education," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 44, no. 1 (2023), <http://dx.doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2023.44.1.21>.

uphold the value of diversity amongst their student body. Teachers and stakeholders within these institutions play a crucial role in sculpting the social and cultural framework of educational settings, guaranteeing that educational offerings are inclusive and accessible to students hailing from varied backgrounds.¹¹

Phatnawitya School, as an Islamic educational institution, stands as a beacon of Islamic learning within a multi-religious and multicultural context. It adeptly weaves religious instruction with the rich tapestry of cultural and religious diversity that characterizes its environment. The school's core mission is to deliver an integrated Islamic education through a full-day schooling system that is attentive to the individual learning progression of each student. Embracing a holistic educational model, Phatnawitya School endeavors to bolster academic rigor while simultaneously nurturing the character development of its students. This educational approach is designed to unlock students' potential in a learning atmosphere that is joyful, democratic, and humanistic, facilitated through experiential engagement with their immediate world. The institution holds the conviction that an effective Islamic education must encompass a profound comprehension of the faith, the cultivation of ethical and moral values, and the capacity for harmonious coexistence within a diverse society. This article delves into the principles of piety and tolerance as foundational conduct and interaction tenets.

Piety is conceptualized as a lifestyle or worldview that champions virtue and adherence to religious and moral precepts, closely linked with devotion to Allah SWT and a spiritual ethos. Within the Islamic tradition, piety entails a steadfast commitment to the observance of Islamic teachings, the practice of Islamic law in daily life, devotion to Allah, and the pursuit of benevolent acts towards others.¹² Conversely, tolerance, as elucidated by Umar Hasyim, embodies a mental posture and behavioral paradigm that honors and accepts the variances in beliefs and life principles, contingent upon the non-contravention of core principles that foster societal order and peace.¹³ This definition echoes Webster's, highlighting a disposition of tolerance, particularly towards diverse beliefs and customs, by permitting, recognizing, and valuing the convictions of others.¹⁴

In a multicultural society, the virtues of piety and tolerance are paramount. Individuals practicing piety maintain their identities while adhering to ethical and moral standards, pivotal for engendering harmonious interactions and mutual respect among diverse individuals and groups. These principles are amplified by the essential virtue of tolerance, which acts to alleviate conflicts, discrimination, and tensions across various collectives. Tolerance champions the recognition and acceptance of each person's distinct identity, beliefs, and cultures. Through the cultivation of piety and tolerance, society

¹¹ Irham Irham, "Islamic Education at Multicultural Schools," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam UIN Sunan Gunung Djati* 3, no. 2 (2017).

¹² Haris Riadi, "Kesalehan Sosial Sebagai Parameter Kesalehan Keberislaman (Ikhtiar Baru Dalam Menggagas Mempraktekkan Tauhid Sosial)," *An-Nida'* 39, no. 1 (2014).

¹³ Nazmudin Nazmudin, "Kerukunan Dan Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama Dalam Membangun Keutuhan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (Nkri)," *Journal of Government and Civil Society* 1, no. 1 (2017).

¹⁴ Prosmala Hadisaputra, "Implementasi Pendidikan Toleransi Di Indonesia," *Dialog* 43, no. 1 (2020).

can imbue its fabric with unity, diversity respect, and foster an inclusive and peaceful environment for all its constituents. Hence, piety and tolerance lay a solid groundwork for the edification of a society marked by mutual respect and peaceful cohabitation.

This research endeavors to explore the strategies utilized by Islamic education in fostering the virtues of piety and tolerance among students, alongside the challenges encountered in this pursuit. It aims to illuminate the role that nurturing these values within Islamic educational frameworks plays in enhancing unity and fostering harmony in a society marked by cultural and religious diversity.

While previous studies have delved into similar themes, this investigation distinguishes itself by focusing on actionable solutions and strategies to mitigate the challenges faced in multicultural settings characterized by ethnic and religious tensions. Among pertinent prior works are studies such as "Instilling Religious Character and Tolerance in the Social Development of Primary School Students", which investigates effective approaches to cultivate religious character and tolerance in educational contexts.¹⁵ "The Role of Schools in Fostering Religious Tolerance" underscores the pivotal role of educational institutions and educators in promoting peace and harmony within school settings.¹⁶ Additionally, "Developing Islamic Religious Education in a Multicultural Society" discusses the potential of integrating Islamic educational principles with multicultural values as a means to advance peace and societal cohesion.¹⁷

The present study centers on identifying and evaluating the methods and strategies employed by Islamic education, with Phatnawitya School serving as a case study, to imbue students with the values of piety and tolerance. This exploration aims to demonstrate how these students can remain faithful to Islamic teachings while embracing the universal principles of *rahmatan lil alamin*, thereby preparing them to actively contribute towards sustaining peace and fostering understanding among diverse groups in society. Through this research, we seek to contribute to the discourse on the essential role of Islamic education in promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in a multicultural world.

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology utilizing a case study design,¹⁸ selected for its capacity to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the role of Islamic education in fostering the virtues of piety and tolerance at Phatnawitya School. The research methodology was carefully chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of the practical application of Islamic educational principles in nurturing these values. Data collection was executed through a combination of direct observation, interviews, and review of documentation on-site, ensuring a rich and multifaceted gathering of insights.

¹⁵ Dani Dwi Nur Hidayat, "Penanaman Karakter Religius Dan Toleransi Terhadap Perkembangan Sosial Peserta Didik Tingkat Sekolah Dasar," *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 4, no. 6 (2022).

¹⁶ Anita Ida Karolina and Rustiyarso Rustiyarso, "Peran Sekolah Dalam Membangun Sikap Toleransi Beragama," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa (JPPK)* 8, no. 3 (2015).

¹⁷ Fina Surya Anggarini, "Pengembangan Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Masyarakat Multikultural," *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 2 (2019).

¹⁸ Dimas Assyakurrohim et al., "Metode Studi Kasus Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Dan Komputer* 3, no. 01 (2023).

Participants in this study encompassed Islamic religious education teachers, students, and the school's principal, providing a diverse range of perspectives. Additional data sources included the school's curriculum, teaching materials, and other pertinent documents, offering a holistic view of the educational approach and resources in place. The analysis of the collected data employed data condensation techniques, including simplification, abstraction, and transcription of data,¹⁹ aimed at distilling key insights. The structured presentation of findings within this article reflects a systematic approach to analyzing and reporting on the empirical evidence gathered, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the impact of Islamic education on promoting piety, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence within a diverse educational context.

B. Social Context of Phatnawitya School

Phatnawitya School, an esteemed Islamic educational institution, is situated in the culturally rich city of Yala, Thailand. The school extends a comprehensive educational pathway, covering early childhood through to high school equivalency levels. Its urban location places it within close proximity to several other educational institutions, such as Rangsee Anusorn School, Ratchata Wittaya School, and Satree Yala School, highlighting its integration within a broader educational network. Recognized for its well-equipped facilities, Phatnawitya School stands as a beacon for Islamic education in a region marked by cultural and religious pluralism, effectively bridging religious teachings with the diverse cultural tapestry of its environment. Additionally, the school is proactive in forging collaborative ties with both local and international educational bodies, further enhancing its educational outreach and impact.

In its pursuit to deliver an inclusive and comprehensive Islamic education, Phatnawitya School embraces a full-day schooling model, meticulously focusing on each student's learning journey from 07:30 am to 04:30 pm. The institution prides itself on adhering to its ethos of cleanliness, good manners, and academic excellence, supported by a dedicated faculty of over 60 teachers. This holistic educational approach not only emphasizes academic achievement but also places significant importance on character building, aiming to instill a deep-rooted understanding of Islamic tenets, ethical principles, and the skills necessary for harmonious coexistence within a diverse societal fabric.

The religious education curriculum at Phatnawitya School is thoughtfully curated to provide students with a deep and nuanced understanding of Islam, covering key areas such as faith (aqidah), Islamic law (sharia), and morality (akhlak). Through an extensive array of subjects including Tauhid, the Quran, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), the history of Islamic civilization, religious ethics, and the Arabic language, the program endeavors to cultivate a resilient foundation of Islamic values and moral excellence in alignment with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Beyond theoretical knowledge, the curriculum emphasizes the practical application of Islamic teachings in everyday life and

¹⁹A Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis a Methods Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage, 2014).

the development of social skills and emotional intelligence. This pragmatic approach aims to equip students with the capabilities to navigate and contribute positively to a multicultural society, embodying the principles of piety and tolerance.

C. The Practice of Instilling the Values of Piety and Tolerance

Cultivating piety involves nurturing a personal connection with the Divine, living life aligned with the moral and ethical guidelines prescribed by one's faith. A pious individual's life is characterized by a continuous effort to pursue virtue and shun vice in their daily conduct. Conversely, tolerance is about acknowledging and accepting the diversity of beliefs held by others, without compromising one's own religious convictions or principles. It entails respecting those with differing views, affirming that piety and tolerance are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, a devout person can remain steadfast in their faith while respecting and acknowledging the rights of others to hold and practice different religious beliefs. Similarly, a person who values tolerance can honor and respect differences without diluting their own religious beliefs and values.

Phatnawitya School embraces a comprehensive strategy to imbue students with the values of piety and tolerance, incorporating both formal education and extracurricular activities. The school's approach includes daily practices such as the recitation of morning and evening dhikr, participation in guided congregational prayers, and engagement in community-focused social projects. These activities are designed to encourage students not only to internalize religious values but also to apply them practically, fostering an ethos of tolerance and unity within the broader society. Through these dedicated efforts, Phatnawitya School aims to prepare students to become individuals who are deeply rooted in their faith while actively contributing to a harmonious and inclusive community.

At Phatnawitya School, students are actively encouraged to develop a virtuous character that spans social, emotional, and spiritual realms. Teachers and school staff serve as paragons of virtue, guiding students towards positive habits such as altruism, sharing, discipline, and environmental stewardship. This educational approach is in harmony with the objectives set forth in Thailand's 2008 Core Curriculum, which emphasizes the holistic development of students, aiming to nurture their physical, intellectual, and moral faculties in a balanced manner.²⁰

To facilitate the formation of well-rounded personalities, Phatnawitya School provides students with a diverse array of skill-building opportunities. These include simulation of religious practices to deepen spiritual understanding, academic enrichment activities to foster intellectual growth, scouting to promote physical and communal engagement, and self-reflection sessions to encourage introspection and emotional growth. Furthermore, the school recognizes the importance of mental and emotional well-being in the educational process. Through dedicated counseling services and the support of

²⁰ MASc Yunardi, "Sistem Pendidikan Di Thailand," *Kantor Atase Pendidikan, Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia (KBRI) Bangkok* (2014).

homeroom teachers, students have access to a supportive environment where they can openly discuss their emotions, engage in problem-solving, and work on building self-esteem. This comprehensive educational strategy aims to equip students with the competencies necessary to excel across various domains, preparing them to navigate the complexities of life with resilience, empathy, and tolerance.

At Phatnawitya School, the educational philosophy extends beyond traditional teaching methods by weaving Islamic principles seamlessly into the fabric of the curriculum and school life. This innovative approach involves the integration of Islamic values within a broad spectrum of subjects, including mathematics, science, languages, and the arts. Such a holistic educational strategy aims to reveal the symbiotic relationship between Islamic teachings and everyday academic disciplines, demonstrating the relevance of faith across all facets of life. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, a distinguished figure in Thailand, emphasized that the ultimate goal of education is to nurture a generation marked by a robust and distinct identity, equipped with the capabilities to contribute positively to the global community.²¹

To achieve this comprehensive understanding of Islam and its practical applications, students at Phatnawitya School are encouraged to partake in experiential learning activities. These activities range from visiting places of worship to participating in social projects and simulations that incorporate Islamic values into daily routines. By adopting an educational approach grounded in positive reinforcement and the integrated development of students, Phatnawitya School fosters an environment conducive to the cultivation of exceptional character. This approach emphasizes the importance of applying religious values in everyday situations, resonating with the teachings of Imam Al Ghazali, who highlighted the transformative impact of good deeds and quality education from a young age. This foundation of goodness, as advocated by Imam Al Ghazali, not only enriches students' lives in the worldly sense but also paves the way for blessings in the hereafter,²² illustrating the profound and lasting influence of instilling piety and tolerance through education.

At the core of Phatnawitya School's ethos is the emphasis on fostering tolerance, underpinned by the understanding that societal differences are divinely ordained and inevitable. Through a blend of teaching methodologies, discussions, and interactive activities, students are nurtured to embrace and respect the religious and cultural diversity that surrounds them. An inclusive mindset, coupled with a comprehensive grasp of universal principles, is deemed essential for sustaining harmony among the varied ethnic and religious demographics within society. The educational journey at Phatnawitya School aims to equip students with a robust sense of piety, an in-depth understanding of Islam, and the capacity for tolerant coexistence with individuals of diverse religious and cultural identities.

Islamic education, by fostering an appreciation for differences and promoting respect for them, plays a pivotal role in cultivating peace and harmony across societal segments. It enriches the religious

²¹ Muhamad Razak Idris, "Surin Pitsuwan (1949-2017)" "Tokoh Politik Muslim Thailand", " *Cabaran Agamawan dalam Membela & Membangun Tanah Air* (2019).

²² Novi Puspitasari and Reonaldi Yusuf, "Peran Pendidikan Agama Islam Terhadap Pembentukan Karakter Religius Peserta Didik," *Atta'dib Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 1.(2022)

and cultural viewpoints of individuals, facilitating mutual learning and respect. Prioritizing tolerance among followers of different faiths paves the way for constructive dialogue, collaboration, and the alleviation of social tensions and stereotypes.

The integration of piety and tolerance within the educational framework is fundamental in shaping a generation poised to champion peace in society. Individuals who embody deep religious insight and exhibit a high degree of tolerance are better prepared for life in a multicultural community. However, the responsibility for nurturing these values extends beyond the classroom; it is a collective duty that encompasses educators, parents, and the wider community. While teachers play a vital role in imparting and modeling these virtues within the school setting, parents are instrumental in reinforcing character development at home. Additionally, the broader community interactions further enhance a child's appreciation for diversity and tolerance. Acknowledging the necessity of a collaborative effort among all stakeholders is critical for achieving educational goals and preparing future generations to navigate the complexities of an increasingly diverse global landscape effectively.

D. The Challenges of Islamic Education in Instilling Piety and Tolerance in School Environments and Multicultural Communities

In the pursuit of advancing any significant initiative, challenges and obstacles are inevitable. This truth holds particularly for the endeavor of embedding Islamic education principles of piety and tolerance within both school settings and broader multicultural contexts. These challenges may stem from both internal and external sources relative to the educational institution. Internally, a notable challenge includes the scarcity of teachers who possess the requisite expertise and skills to effectively convey these complex values. Additionally, an educational atmosphere that lacks support for the nuanced demands of Islamic education can impede the cultivation of these virtues.

Externally, the relentless pace of global changes, propelled by the forces of globalization, presents a formidable challenge. These evolving world conditions necessitate an adaptive and resilient approach to Islamic education, one that is capable of addressing and overcoming the contemporary challenges it faces. Therefore, it is imperative for Islamic educational institutions to engage in a rigorous analysis of the challenges encountered, devising strategic solutions that ensure the effective implementation of their educational programs.²³

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted strategy that includes the enhancement of teacher training programs to equip educators with the skills needed to foster an environment of piety and tolerance. Moreover, it involves creating a learning environment that actively supports the integration of Islamic values into the educational fabric, thereby enabling students to navigate and contribute positively to a multicultural world. By tackling these obstacles head-on, Islamic education can

²³ Majida Faruk, H Syarifuddin Ondeng, and H Munawir Kamaluddin, "Pendidikan Islam Di Tengah Masyarakat Multikultural," *Aksara Kawanua: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 2, no. 01 (2023).

fulfill its potential as a transformative force, nurturing a generation that embodies piety and tolerance as foundational elements of their character.

From the vantage point of internal dynamics, the caliber of educators, particularly in aspects of religious knowledge, pedagogical skills, and a nuanced appreciation of tolerance, emerges as a pivotal challenge in the realm of Islamic education. A reliance on traditional and monolithic teaching approaches can result in a lack of student engagement and interest. This issue is exacerbated when religious instruction is delivered in a normative fashion without integrating the lessons into the social and cultural realities of the students' lives, rendering religious education a monotonous classroom activity.²⁴

For Islamic educational institutions to thrive, it is imperative that teachers not only exhibit proficiency in religious scholarship but also demonstrate pedagogical agility in conveying these teachings effectively. This encompasses a breadth of competencies, including innovative teaching methodologies, adept classroom management, insightful assessment of learning, and the design of learning experiences that are both engaging and contextually significant.²⁵

To address these challenges, it is essential for schools to invest in the ongoing professional development of their teaching staff. Such initiatives should aim to both refine existing skills and impart new knowledge, ensuring that educators are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of modern educational demands and the changing socio-cultural landscape. The commitment to continuous professional development stands as a cornerstone for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of teachers, thereby ensuring that Islamic education remains a dynamic and impactful force in fostering piety and tolerance among students.

The influence of popular culture, characterized by films, music, fashion, and viral trends, presents a nuanced challenge to Islamic education, particularly when these elements diverge from religious values and social norms. The impact of popular culture on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of students, who are particularly impressionable to its allure, necessitates a tactful and informed approach.²⁶ Popular culture's frequent portrayal of explicit sexuality and moral viewpoints at odds with religious teachings underscores the urgent need for Islamic education to guide students towards a deep understanding of religious doctrines and moral excellence. Additionally, it highlights the importance of instilling a conscientious commitment to embodying these values in their daily lives.

In the context of the digital era, the mass media's role in molding public opinion and influencing societal perceptions, including those related to Islam, cannot be overstated. Media platforms often perpetuate negative or skewed narratives about Islam, focusing on sensationalism and controversy. The

²⁴ Sukarno L Hasyim, "Problematisasi Guru Pai Realita Dan Idealita Sebagai Akuntabilitas Sosial," *JURNAL LENTERA: Kajian Keagamaan, Keilmuan dan Teknologi* 13, no. 1 (2015).

²⁵ Anggun Wulan Fajriana and Mauli Anjaninur Aliyah, "Tantangan Guru Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Era Melenial," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 2 (2019).

²⁶ Dalmeri Dalmeri et al., "Sekularisme Sebagai Tantangan Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 2 (2022).

prevalence of news stories centered around terrorism, separatism, and extremism contributes to an unbalanced narrative, fostering a distorted image of Islam. Moreover, the advent of social and digital media platforms has expedited the spread of misinformation, with fake news and inaccurate depictions of Islam rapidly circulating amongst wide audiences.²⁷

Addressing these challenges demands a proactive and strategic approach from Islamic educational institutions. It is imperative to equip students with critical thinking skills and media literacy, enabling them to discern and critically evaluate the information they encounter. Islamic education must also provide a counter-narrative that emphasizes the peaceful, compassionate, and tolerant essence of Islam, offering students a well-rounded perspective that empowers them to navigate the complexities of modern society while remaining anchored in their faith and values. Through such educational endeavors, Islamic schools can contribute significantly to shaping a generation that not only upholds piety and tolerance but is also adept at countering misconceptions and promoting a positive understanding of Islam in the multicultural tapestry of global communities.

A foundational aspect of Islamic education involves nurturing students' critical and analytical thinking skills, particularly in the context of information consumption. Educators must emphasize the importance of evaluating data from multiple sources, considering diverse viewpoints, and prioritizing verified facts before forming judgments. This becomes especially crucial in combatting the spread of fake news, which can foster societal misunderstandings and conflicts.²⁸

In Thailand, a secular nation²⁹ that champions freedom of religion, individuals are afforded the liberty to follow any religion in alignment with their personal convictions. This freedom, however, also paves the way for the introduction of divergent Islamic ideologies that diverge from mainstream Islamic teachings. Islamic education faces the challenge of reconciling this freedom with the need to fortify students' understanding of authentic Islamic principles. It must promote a critical mindset and profound grasp of religious teachings to counteract ideologies that run counter to the essence of Islam.

Moreover, Islamic educational institutions situated in regions where Muslims are a minority often confront stereotypes and negative biases stemming from a lack of understanding and interaction among different religious or cultural groups. Such misconceptions can lead to mistrust, fear, or discrimination, impeding the cultivation of tolerance within society. Religious divergences can escalate into conflict and tension among communities.

Thus, Islamic education is tasked with serving as a conduit for interfaith dialogue, establishing robust channels of communication across diverse faiths to mitigate misunderstandings and foster social harmony. By empowering students with critical thinking skills, a comprehensive understanding of Islam,

²⁷ Mira Rahmayanti Sormin, "Dampak Media Massa Terhadap Pendidikan Islam," *Al-Muaddib: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial dan Keislaman* 3, no. 2 (2018).

²⁸ Farid Khoironi, "Mengcounter Hoax Melalui Internalisasi Nilai-nilai Pendidikan Islam," *Quality* 5, no. 2 (2017).

²⁹ Alaidin Koto and Wali Saputra, "Wakaf Produktif Di Negara Sekuler: Kasus Singapura Dan Thailand," *Sosial Budaya* 13, no. 2 (2016).

and the capacity for interfaith engagement, Islamic education can lay the groundwork for a more tolerant and cohesive society. This approach not only addresses the immediate challenges within the educational and social milieu but also prepares students to navigate and contribute positively to the complex tapestry of global multicultural communities.

E. Islamic School Resolution in Mitigating Conflict in Multicultural Societies

Islamic teachings inherently embrace multiculturalism, as exemplified in the Quranic verse Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), which underscores the creation of diverse nations and tribes with the intent for individuals to foster understanding and knowledge among each other.³⁰ This divine wisdom aligns with the core Islamic value of "rahmatan lil alamin," or "mercy to all worlds," advocating for universal compassion and kindness towards all beings, irrespective of their religion, race, or ethnicity.³¹

In the educational realm, the embrace of multiculturalism is embodied through the framework of multicultural education, a pedagogical approach that acknowledges and appreciates cultural diversity. This educational philosophy, prominently advocated by James A. Banks, a professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, seeks to promote an understanding and celebration of cultural differences within educational settings. As a pioneer in the field, Banks is often referred to as the father of multicultural education, highlighting his significant contributions to advancing this critical educational model.³²

Islamic schools, by integrating the principles of multicultural education with the inclusive teachings of Islam, are uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in mitigating conflicts within multicultural societies. By fostering an educational environment that celebrates diversity and encourages intercultural understanding, Islamic schools can contribute to the cultivation of a more harmonious and cohesive society. This approach not only aligns with Islamic values but also equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate and positively contribute to a diverse world, promoting peace and understanding across different cultures and communities.

Multicultural education stands as a transformative process aimed at unleashing the fullest potential of individuals while embracing their diversity as a natural outcome of cultural, ethnic, tribal, and religious multiplicities. It champions a philosophy of cultural pluralism within the educational landscape, predicated on the ideals of equity and a deep-seated moral obligation towards mutual respect and acceptance, thereby fostering social justice.³³

³⁰ Hayati Nufus Nur Khozin La Diman, "Nilai Pendidikan Multicultural (Kajian Tafsir Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat Ayat 9-13)," *Al-Iltizam: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 2 (2018).

³¹ Muhammad Turhan Yani et al., "Islam Dan Multikulturalisme: Urgensi, Transformasi, Dan Implementasi Dalam Pendidikan Formal," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 8, no. 1 (2020).

³² James A Banks, "The Construction and Historical Development of Multicultural Education, 1962–2012," *Theory into practice* 52, no. sup1 (2013).

³³ Rustam Ibrahim, "Pendidikan Multikultural: Pengertian, Prinsip, Dan Relevansinya Dengan Tujuan Pendidikan Islam," *Addin* 7, no. 1 (2015).

The primary objective of multicultural education is to curtail the emergence and escalation of conflicts inherent in a diverse society. Ignorance and entrenched stereotypes often underpin potential societal conflicts, leading to intercultural clashes, racial discrimination, and religious strife. In the absence of an informed appreciation for diversity, such tensions have the propensity to evolve into physical confrontations and violence. Hence, multicultural education emerges as an essential tool in equipping society to navigate and reconcile these challenges. It underscores the importance of fostering tolerance, encouraging dialogue, and cultivating an appreciation for the rich tapestry of diversity.

Beyond the acquisition of knowledge and academic competencies, the ultimate aim of education transcends to the moral and ethical dimension, seeking to enrich the souls of students with virtues and values. This holistic educational approach empowers students to lead lives characterized by moral integrity and virtue. Islamic schools, by intertwining the principles of multicultural education with the inclusive and compassionate ethos of Islam, are ideally positioned to mitigate conflicts in multicultural settings. Through this synergistic approach, Islamic schools can play a pivotal role in nurturing a generation equipped with not only academic prowess but also the moral compass necessary to contribute positively to a diverse and peaceful society.

Within the framework of Johan Galtung's conflict theory, conflict is conceptualized across three primary dimensions: direct violence, which encompasses physical actions that cause injury or harm; structural conflict, stemming from inequities within systems or policies that affect access to services, employment, education, and legal justice; and cultural conflict, which arises from divergences in values, norms, beliefs, and cultural identities among various groups.³⁴

In the realm of multicultural education, addressing and mitigating conflict is a fundamental goal, achievable through fostering an ethos of righteousness and tolerance. By tackling the underlying issues of structural and cultural conflicts, educational institutions can play a pivotal role in averting direct violence. This is accomplished through the impartation of key conflict resolution skills such as effective communication, the pursuit of equitable solutions, and the resolution of disagreements in a non-violent manner. The integration of these principles into the educational syllabus enables schools to become breeding grounds for understanding and peace.

Students imbued with the values of righteousness and tolerance are equipped to contribute positively to societal cohesion, significantly reducing the likelihood of conflicts and promoting harmony among diverse groups. The emphasis on cultivating these virtues within the school setting not only primes students for responsible citizenship but also contributes to sculpting a society that is more peaceful and unified. Islamic schools, by aligning their educational objectives with the principles of multicultural education and the teachings of Islam, are uniquely positioned to lead efforts in conflict

³⁴ Fajar Khaswara and R Yuli Ahmad Hambali, *Conflict Theory According to Johan Galtung*, vol. 4, *Gunung Djati Conference Series* (2021).

mitigation within multicultural societies, embodying the potential for education to transform societal relations and foster a climate of enduring peace and mutual respect.

Islamic schools are poised to embrace a humanist approach to education, one that positions students at the forefront of the learning experience. This methodology acknowledges the intrinsic rights, diversity, and potential of each individual, fostering an educational environment where students actively participate and engage. Through this engagement, students cultivate positive values, a direct consequence of their social and cultural interactions. As Riyanto, through the citation by Pettalongi, elucidates, humanist education prioritizes the establishment of meaningful communication and personal relationships both among individuals and between individuals and groups within the school community.

An effective educational framework goes beyond the mere sharpening of intellectual faculties; it seeks to harmonize emotional, social, and spiritual intelligences. This holistic approach ensures a well-rounded development from the perspective of individuality to a broader societal sensitivity, facilitating a balanced integration of students into society's systemic fabric. According to this perspective, true humanity is achieved through the development and integration of cultural values encompassing knowledge, religiosity, artistry, economic understanding, social engagement, and political awareness.

At the core of human instinct is the desire for dignified treatment, which reflects a broader commitment to a culture of nonviolence, a life-affirming ethos, solidarity, equitable economic practices, tolerance, and ethical living.³⁵ Islamic schools, by adopting this humanist educational approach, not only nurture individuals who are intellectually capable but also cultivate students who are emotionally balanced, socially adept, and spiritually grounded. This education model inherently promotes conflict mitigation in multicultural societies by preparing students to engage in and contribute to a diverse world with understanding, compassion, and respect. Through this comprehensive educational journey, students are equipped to navigate societal challenges with a commitment to nonviolence and tolerance, thereby embodying the principles of Islam and contributing to a peaceful and harmonious society.

F. Conclusion

In the mosaic of diverse societies such as Thailand, piety and tolerance emerge as complementary and indispensable virtues, acting as foundational pillars that foster an inclusive and peaceful multicultural environment. *Kesalehan*, encapsulating deep moral, ethical, and religious principles, lays the groundwork for behaviors that honor and embrace diversity. Tolerance, on the other hand, facilitates the harmonious coexistence of individuals from varied backgrounds and beliefs, ensuring that differences enrich rather than divide.

³⁵ Sagaf S Pettalongi, "Islam Dan Pendidikan Humanis Dalam Resolusi Konflik Sosial," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, no. 2 (2013).

The promotion of education that underscores tolerance as a core component of cultural and societal values is crucial, particularly among the youth. Such educational initiatives pave the way for future generations to champion cultural and religious diversity, effectively eradicating discrimination and mitigating conflicts. The integration of *kesalehan* and tolerance, which collectively value and respect diversity, is paramount in cultivating an equitable, inclusive, and serene society within Thailand.

By intertwining religious teachings with humanistic ethics and a commitment to tolerance, Thai society is better equipped to sustain harmony amidst its rich tapestry of cultural and religious plurality. This synergistic approach ensures that Thailand remains a beacon of coexistence and mutual respect, showcasing the profound potential of embracing universal values in creating a cohesive and tranquil community.

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