

Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia – **CONVEY Indonesia**

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CONVEY Indonesia aims to build peace in Indonesia and to prevent violent extremism and radicalism through a series of research-survey, policy advocacy, and public interaction based on the potential of religious education. CONVEY Indonesia project covers on the issues of tolerance, diversity, and non-violence among youth.

Countering Radicalization in Education, Creating Inclusive and Multicultural Schools

MAARIF Institute for Culture and Humanity

Problem Statements

This policy brief aims to see the strengths and weaknesses of policy regulation and its implementation regarding the students' improvement through extracurricular activities (Students Council - Organisasi Siswa Intra-Sekolah, OSIS) in the central, local, and school levels. This study also attempts to find alternative policies that enable schools to promote tolerance, diversity, inclusivism and to counter radicalism. It is expected that the involved parties can formulate strategic regulations and urge for the implementation to be more accurate according to the findings and recommendations of this study.

Background

Since the turn up of freedom and post-democracy reformation milieu, in the last 20 years the spread of religious exclusivism and radicalism have been intensely infiltrating formal educational institutions, either in schools or universities.¹ Private schools, especially those under the supervision of religious organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, are not even slipped from the radical group's tailing formerly considering their lack sense of nationalism and inclusive religiosity of these formal educational institutions.²

Over time, this kind of phenomenon is also widening in to public schools. A finite religious subject acknowledged by students at schools, add to their curiosity, are employed by radical networks to infiltrate students with violence and radical religious perspective. Religious activists and mentors who affiliated with radical organizations have been

internalizing their perspectives that nuanced with the issues such as intolerance, exclusivism, and anti-nationalism through activities developed by the Student Council. As a result, public schools have also become the seedbed of intolerance and radicalism.³

This situation is more alarming because teachers, especially Religious Education and Civic Education teachers, have not been maximizing their roles to reinforce values of nationalism as well as internalize inclusivism and tolerance during classes.⁴ This situation is worsened by the scant knowledge of teachers and principals to map out the radical and intolerant groups movements, which then giving off impression of lenience from principals' side towards the movements of radical networks through activities at school. This eventually makes the Student Council as a route of infiltration for radicalism and violence-oriented religious teachings.⁵

These sequences have then become the significant factors in the weakening of schools' defense mechanism against the spread of radicalism. If further serious actions are not taken to establish a more comprehensive policy that organizes student activities through OSIS, it's not impossible for the educational and cultural activities to weaken the vision and values of plural nationalism among students. Ideally, OSIS should promote student character development oriented around unity, prosperity, and celebration of diversity.

Significance

The notability of this study lies in the efforts

1 Study on radical movement infiltration at schools and universities as quoted in *Ilusi Negara Islam: Ilusi Gerakan Transnasional di Indonesia*, The Wahid Institute, Jakarta, 2009.

2 Decree of Muhammadiyah Executive Board No. 149/Kep/I.0/B/2006 on the policies of Muhammadiyah Executive Board on Organization and Charity Work, for example, is a response towards infiltration within Muhammadiyah.

3 Study of MAARIF Institute on radicalism movements infiltration in public senior high schools, e.g. written by Ahmad Gaus AF, "Pemetaan Problem Radikalisme di SMU Negeri di 4 Daerah", *Jurnal MAARIF: Arus Pemikiran Islam dan Sosial*, Vol. 8, No. 1, July 2013, p. 174-191.

4 A work that discuss such issue is Muhd. Abdullah Darraz's, "Radikalisme dan Lemahnya Peran Pendidikan Kewargaan", *Jurnal MAARIF: Arus Pemikiran Islam dan Sosial*, Vol. 8, No. 1, July 2013, p. 154173.

5 Research executive summary, "Penguatan Institusi Sekolah Melalui Kebijakan Internal Sekolah yang Mengokohkan Kebinekaan", MAARIF Institute, 2017.

of finding empirical facts concerning the entry mechanisms of radicalism, intolerance, and exclusivism religious ideologies and perspectives⁶ at schools. The findings expected to contribute in formulating a more strategic, systematic, and practical policy recommendation to counter radicalism. This study is prior in regard to revitalize students' improvement policies or extracurricular activities (OSIS), and strengthen the schools' capacity to conduct an early warning system for the movement of radical organizations and networks through religious activities at schools. By doing so, we hope that these recommendations can encourage the stakeholders to take initiation and design strategic policies in order to internalize nationalism as well as tolerance and religious inclusivism at schools.

Methodology

The research used qualitative method in the data-collecting process through a depth, semi-structured interview. The research was conducted in six cities/districts of five provinces in Indonesia: Padang (West Sumatra), Cirebon (West Java), Sukabumi (West Java), Surakarta (Central Java), Denpasar (Bali), and Tomohon (North Sulawesi).

Forty senior high schools and Islamic high schools were chosen as the research sample (purposive sampling). They were selected based on the categories of urban-rural, elite-nonelite, and homogenous-heterogeneous respondents.

Over the course of 20 days, ranging from October 2nd to 21st of 2017, 440 informants were interviewed, including the principals, vice-principals of student affairs department, OSIS mentor, students and OSIS member students, school committees, as well as school supervisory board. Besides, the interview also aims for other informants who can give further information following the previous interview (snowballing process).

Key Findings

The research is concerning about the "Policy Development for Improving Student Council (OSIS) in order to Disseminate Diversity and Inclusivity in Senior High Schools and Islamic High Schools." In this research, there are four keywords to define: policy, diversity, inclusivism, and radicalism.

Policy is defined as regulations that affect the view and management of OSIS activities at schools. It is indicated through: (1) regulations from the central and local governments, such as Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Decree of Ministry of National Education No. 39 of 2008 on Student Council, and Direction of Mayor of Padang No. 451.443/Binsos-iii/2005 of 2005 on Youth Wirid, Subuhand Anti Gamble/ Drugs Mentoring, and Muslim Clothing for Primary (SD/MI), Junior High (SMP/MTs), and Senior High (SMA)/Vocational (SMK) and Islamic (MA) Schools; (2) regulations as formulated in committee meetings which later then listed in the formal code of conduct; (3) joint decision on incidental matters which usually not listed in the formal regulations; and (4) customs that bind through cultural hegemony.

Meanwhile, diversity means an intact condition including faiths, traditions, and historical legacies that are expected to last long, given that they are fully respected and not

⁶ Fathali Moghaddam, through a psychological study, illustrates how someone becomes a terrorist. Moghaddam conceptualizes that terrorism is the final stage of a progressive closed-mindedness. In a MAARIF Institute study, this closed-mindedness is categorized as intolerance. Fathali Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism," *American Psychologist*, February-March 2005 Vol. 60, No. 2, p. 161169. In his work, Jurgen Habermas states that the seeds of intolerance will lead to an inclusive way of thinking and will end in a negative radical movement, meaning destructive action towards other parties with different perspectives. Jurgen Habermas, *Intolerance and Discrimination*, 2011, Sage Publication, UK.

denounced. This can be measured by: (1) recognition as the aspect of tolerance, which includes access to worship place, practices that confine certain groups, and enforcement of a value based on a certain belief; (2) representation as the political aspect, such as representation in the body of OSIS and a right to nominate themselves in the OSIS election; and (3) Redistribution as the social-economic aspect, which includes access to receive fundings and scholarships.

While inclusivism is an accommodative attitude that may open a broader perspective towards other opinions or beliefs, through (1) positively thinking towards any differences, and (2) building cooperation with diverse people and/or groups to achieve a common goal

Last but not least, radicalism as referred to Martin F. Marty, *Fundamentalism* (UK: Oxford, 1992), is often being considered as “fundamentalism,” a social phenomenon (political, economic, and religious) which relates to ideological issues or radical and revolutionary movements. It is indicated by: (1) refusal to follow the current system, which turns into revolutionary initiative against fundamental issues; (2) unwillingness to interpret religious texts; (3) oppositional to those with different ideals and attitudes; and (4) if possible, it is necessary to take over the economic-social system and religious teachings.

The conceptualization in this instance means to be the basis of understanding to the research findings. The key findings from this study are as follow:

Contestation Between Radicalism and Moderation

The infiltration of radicalism at schools have three entry points: alumni, teachers, and school (principal) policies. Alumni, who enter schools through extracurricular activities, are not well-monitored because they are expected to will not influence negativity.

Five out of six public and Islamic senior high schools in Surakarta that became subjects of the research, for example, are mentored by alumni who are also members of Kriya Mandiri Youth Care Organization through activities such as halaqa and liqa’. Tarbiyah nuance of education that adheres to that organizations later then dominates activists’ paradigm of Rohis (Islamic study club) in Surakarta.⁷ Similar pattern of mentoring also found in Padang and Sukabumi.⁸

Teachers, who considered as holding the authority to students’ education, instead carry out indoctrination while in and out of class. An English teacher in SMAN 1 Jamblang, Cirebon, consider this state as taghut and clearly disseminate his opinion during class. Thus, the teacher also refused to pay the dues for the Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI). The teacher even once sent a non-Muslim student to study in the Ar-Royyan Islamic boarding school for not achieving passing score in his class.⁹ Meanwhile, a teacher in MAN 2 Surakarta has been casually teaching while disseminating values of anti-Shiite and anti-plurality.¹⁰

School principals, due to lack of knowledge, often enact policies that ignorantly permits intolerant and radical groups to foster their students in religious activities. SMAN 5 Surakarta have collaborated with Darus Syahadah Islamic Boarding School, Simo, Boyolali, which has relation to Al-Mukmin Ngruki Sukoharjo Islamic Boarding School to held students’ mentoring. Darus Syahadah itself is often referred as the original Al-Mukmin as it still holds the principles and teachings of Abdullah Sungkar as the founder of Al-Muk-

7 Research report, “Penguatan Kebijakan Pembinaan Kesiswaan (OSIS) dalam Memperkuat Kebinekaan dan Kehidupan Inklusif di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Madrasah Aliyah,” Surakarta.

8 Research executive summary, “Penguatan Kebijakan Pembinaan Kesiswaan (OSIS) dalam Memperkuat Kebinekaan dan Kehidupan Inklusif di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Madrasah Aliyah.”

9 Research report, “Penguatan Kebijakan Pembinaan Kesiswaan (OSIS) dalam Memperkuat Kebinekaan dan Kehidupan Inklusif di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Madrasah Aliyah,” District of Cirebon.

10 Research report, Surakarta.

min Islamic Foundation.¹¹

The in rush of radicalism infiltration at schools has received response from moderate religious groups. Such kind happened at SMAN 1 Plumbon, Cirebon. Rohis mentor in that school were visited by a Muslim woman who brought a stack of Islamic studies curriculum which consists the issues of caliphates, khilafiyah, Islamic state, social interaction in Islam, as well as how to advocate using network of organizations outside of school. To sever the grains of intolerance that can lead to activities of radical networks, she initiated an establishment of Commissary for Nahdlatul Ulama Students Association (Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama, IPNU) and Nahdlatul Ulama Female Students Association (Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama, IPPNU), even involving Fahmina Institute, with the aim to intervene Rohis to teach moderate values to build a more inclusive environment.¹² However, such support frequently changes along with the succession of school principals. The initiative to introduce youth organizations to the school has no longer resounds. This is due to the lack of observation from school principals concerning the map of radical movements around school and the succession of Rohis supervisor teachers.¹³

The Forgotten Power of State

This research has found facts regarding the overlapping regulation of OSIS. At the highest level, there are several policies on student activities. For example, the Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and several government regulations on Student Improvement Activities or Extracurricular Activities serve as the legal framework in fostering OSIS to shape character of students oriented in unity, proficiency, and plurality. Besides, as the management and implementation aspects of education at

schools are under the responsibility of local governments, several policies were also enacted by the local government to regulate OSIS activities. Yet in practical, local regulations are mostly contradictory even impeding the implementation and progress of the OSIS activities as outlined in the central government.

The overlap and vagueness situation of OSIS regulation have fostered the policy-makers in local area, including schools in conducting OSIS activities to a mere religious context. Thus, many extracurricular activities are focusing solely on religious activities. The Character Building Program outlined since 2011 is commonly interpreted only to the extent of ritual practices and perspective of a certain religion monolithically. This in turn weaken the nationalism and diversity vision among students as the impact of misunderstanding the role, responsibility, and function of OSIS.

That kind of policy interpretation seen as discriminative or irrelevant to the minority groups. It is even incompatible to be implemented in public senior high schools that should duly open to diversity. Wearing veil or hijab for all female students in Padang as instance, though the rule was originally not mandatory for non-Muslim students, yet in practice enforcement occurred. This is due to the small number of non-Muslim female students enrolled in public senior high schools. They involuntary wear the hijab due to psychological burden that if they are not wearing one, thus being easily identified as the oddball among the Muslim majority.¹⁴

Vulnerable Resistance

The lack of observation and awareness of schools in the mapping of radical movements has weaken the defense mechanism of

11 Research report, Surakarta.

12 Koidah, *Potret Toleransi Rohis, IPNU dan IPPNU*.

13 Research report, District of Cirebon.

14 Research report, "Penguatan Kebijakan Pembinaan Kesiswaan (OSIS) dalam Memperkuat Kebinekaan dan Kehidupan Inklusif di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Madrasah Aliyah," Padang.

school to face radical infiltration. So far, there has not been any specific policy at schools on how to defend themselves against the penetration of radical movements and ideas. However, some schools have already implemented defense mechanisms through:

- *Filter System and Control to Mentors/Speakers*¹⁵

This mechanism can be found in SMAN 6 Surakarta and several public senior high schools in Cirebon, by conducting a screening towards mentors or speakers from outside of school. OSIS track their life records and expertise, then send the report to the supervisor teacher and school principal.

- *Early Warning System*

Though it came from a personal initiative, an Islamic Religious Education teacher in SMAN 1 Plumbon, Cirebon, has attempted to formulate an early warning system by compiling a list of student behaviors indicated to radicalism, such as refusal to salute to the national flag for taghut reason.¹⁶

Internalize the Values of Diversity

The view of OSIS as a catalyst for school activities has led to mentor-dominated programs suggestions. Unfortunately, the transmission and interpretation of diversity values are often hindered by primordial barriers in the name of religion, and this kind is supported by schools. Opinion on liyan, or those with different religions including the views and practices, often encourage OSIS to only accommodate members from a certain religion, group, even gender which bolstered by the school through teachers. Two examples of this issue are: SMAN 3 Denpasar, that reluctantly involving non-Hindu students as OSIS members, stating that the primary task of OSIS is to help the school in preparing re-

ligious rituals;¹⁷ and MAN 1 Padang, which explicitly state that women cannot be leaders.¹⁸ However, one interesting case is shown by Furqon, the Chairman of Rohis of MAN 1 Surakarta, who declare an anti-infidel attitude (liyan) as a way to keep distance from non-Muslims.¹⁹

Seeking a Defense Model at School

This defense model is casuistic. Though it is effective in one school or region, it is not guaranteed to be effective in other schools and regions. The following are examples of school defense models found from this research:

- Conduct a screening to mentors, as explained in the sub-findings of “Vulnerable Resistance”.
- Encourage students to learn directly from their teachers, not from the internet. “Learning without teachers or learning from the internet means learning with the devils” has become a jargon in SMAN 6 Surakarta. This is a kind of response towards the large number of students who learn religious knowledge from the internet.²⁰
- Strengthen the relationship between teachers, parents, and students by urge the first-year students (class 10th at SMAN 3 Surakarta) to be accompanied to schools by their parents for one-year period. Through this relationship, it is expected that parents will be more concern to the educational and peer pressure of their children.²¹
- To disengage students from obtaining unauthorized religious knowledge from outside schools, conducting a boarding class activity as the reference for moderate

17 Research report, “Penguatan Kebijakan Pembinaan Kesiswaan (OSIS) dalam Memperkuat Kebinekaan dan Kehidupan Inklusif di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Madrasah Aliyah,” Denpasar.

18 Research report, Padang.

19 <https://conveyindonesia.com/beritaactual/2017/11/17/upaya-mengikisintoleransi,mempertebalsemangatkeberagaman/>. Accessed 29 Januari 2018.

20 Research report, Surakarta.

21 Research report, Surakarta.

15 Research report, Surakarta and District of Cirebon.

16 Research report, District of Cirebon.

religious views become the mechanism chosen by MAN 3 Sukabumi for the last eight years.²²

- Establishment of youth organizations (such as IPNU and IPPNU) collaborate with moderate groups (such as Fahmina Institute) was conducted by SMAN 1 Plumbon in order to counter radicalism as explained in the sub-findings of “Contestation of Radicalism and Moderation.”
- Study-visit to different religious communities to their worship places was a way to introduce diversity that initiated by a sociology teacher who also a Paskibraka mentor in SMAN 1 Jamblang.²³
- Study-visit to historical sites, such as Tondano Muslim Heroes Cemetery was an effort to introduce values of local wisdom, initiated by a history teacher for first-year class in Tomohon 1 Christian High School. The visitation expected to disseminate a peaceful coexistence with other religious and ethnic communities.²⁴
- A multicultural carnival by wearing costumes of national heroes from variety of religions, ethnicity, culture, and region was held by OSIS of SMAN 1 Cirebon to promote diversity at school.²⁵
- Active participation by the Cirebon Regional Ministry of Religious Affairs through cooperation with several boarding schools in order to strengthen the capacity of nationalism and multiculturalism among teachers and students.²⁶
- Allocation for teachers and principals’ welfare, is conducted by Tomohon Educational Agency to maximize the growth of tolerance and harmony at schools.²⁷

22 Research report, “Penguatan Kebijakan Pembinaan Kesiswaan (OSIS) dalam Memperkuat Kebinekaan dan Kehidupan Inklusif di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Madrasah Aliyah,” Sukabumi.

23 Research report, District of Cirebon.

24 Research report, “Penguatan Kebijakan Pembinaan Kesiswaan (OSIS) dalam Memperkuat Kebinekaan dan Kehidupan Inklusif di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Madrasah Aliyah,” Tomohon.

25 Research report, District of Cirebon.

26 Research report, District of Cirebon.

27 Research report, Tomohon.

- Responding to current issues by holding seminars, also carried out by the Tomohon Educational Agency. One of the discussed issues was the Islamology seminar that stressed on Islam as a “blessing for the world” (Rahmatan lil’Alamin) in response to Action for Defending Islam occurred in Jakarta in the last 2016.²⁸

Recommendations

The conclusion from this research is that schools are vulnerable to the infiltration of radical movements and ideas, because there have not been any specific policies with aim to protect schools from radicalism. Nevertheless, some schools have already implement a defense mechanism such as filter system and control to the speakers and mentors as well as conducting an early warning system.

The infiltration of radicalism into schools is rushing through three apertures: alumni, teachers, and school (principal) policies. The infiltration of such perspectives occurs due to the lack of observation and awareness towards the map of radical movements. While only few schools responded to this issue, one of them as in the case of Rohismentor in SMAN 1 Plumbon, Cirebon. However, based on the research findings, casuistic model of school defense mechanisms can be found. The models could be effective in one school or region but may not even applicable in other areas. However, still does not discredit the possibility of replication in other schools or regions.

Based on the research findings, we conclude the following recommendations:

- The Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the Ministry of Religious Affairs must create certain regulations to accommodate the involvement of moderate civil society groups that have proven able

28 Research report, Tomohon.

to supervise and mentor the students to develop tolerance, inclusivity, and diversity character and vision. Meanwhile the Provincial Educational Agency, Regional Office for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and school's management must be selective when inviting and welcoming groups who intend to mentor their students, as what has applied in Cirebon District.

- The Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Religious Affairs, as well as policy makers on the local level (Provincial Educational Agency and Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs) must reformulate and disseminate several regulations related to OSIS in a light and easy to understand kind of language. It is required in order to prevent overlapping regulations between central and local governments.
- The Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Religious Affairs, as well as policy makers on the local level (Provincial Educational Agency and Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs) must formulate a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Early Warning System as well as the Reporting and Proceeding Mechanism towards radicalism at schools; in addition, there must be a standardization of mentors of OSIS activities.
- Strong engagement is needed between schools, parents, and students to conduct intercultural and interfaith meetings as part of OSIS activities, which could be done through inter-school dialog that accommodate diversity and multiculturalism.
- Schools must strengthen the nationalism and diversity ideologies through various models of defense mechanisms, as those have found in the research (e.g. study-visits to different religious, ethnic, and cultural groups).



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