

Fostering Tolerant Religious Education to Prevent Violent Extremism in Indonesia – **CONVEY Indonesia**

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This Policy Brief series is published as part of CONVEY Indonesia project organized by PPIM UIN Jakarta and UNDP Indonesia.

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.

Nurturing Faith: State, Religious Education and Prevention of Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia.

Key Findings

1. The role of Religious education in the prevention of violent extremism has not been fully explored.
2. The six countries ASEAN under study should develop concerted efforts in Preventing Violent Extremism through religious education otherwise ASEAN countries in the region will get polarized further along religious and ethnic lines.
3. Singapore approach in using value education through schools in instilling values around citizenships and religious harmony could be a model for other ASEAN countries in so far as all students—Muslims and non-Muslims—are made to feel equally Singaporean.
4. Despite the increasing threat of violent extremism in Southeast Asia region, those of religious groups are still in denial of the alarming situation yet are willing to work together to start dialogue and discussion.
5. The study shows that there are inconsistencies between states' constitutions and practices for instance, the state with the neutral position toward religion provides space for the religious groups to manage religious education by themselves. In some countries, the neutral position of the state toward religion leads to the prosecution to those of minority religious groups.
6. Dominance of the majority ethnic group/religious group in the religious education and national education is prevalent.

Background

Southeast Asia region, a home of diverse faith and beliefs, have been facing challenges of the increasing number of violent extremist cases. Radical views of religious doctrines are used in justifying these actions. In 2017, PPIM conducted a survey among senior high school students and university students revealing that a significant number of these young respondents are prone to hold radical views. The data from this study shows that more than half- 58.5% of the students tend to be radical in attitude/opinion. When asked whether they are tolerant toward others, 51.1% of the youth tend to be intolerant to “the others” within Islam and 34.3% of them are intolerant to other religious believers.

Youth has been increasingly the center of the violent acts in the South Asian countries. To mention a few, in 2017, Maute brothers were leading actors of the Marawi Siege in Southern Phillipines. Muhammad Fadly Zainal Abidin,

a 23 year old student of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, was caught stealing a motorcycle to wage Jihad against the Thai military. The phenomenon is supported by several studies showing how radical views have infiltrated schools and universities through various factors: religious extracurricular activities (Wahid Foundation, 2016), teachers who tend to have radical views (PPIM, 2016), the poor system of religious education teachers in schools (PPIM, 2019) and materials in religious education books that contain radical and exclusive views (PPIM, 2016). Furthermore, the misuse of religious doctrines is another contributing factor in the increasing trend of intolerance, radicalism, and violent extremism (PPIM, 2017) with the support of strong connection between intolerance and radicalism held by teachers (PPIM, 2018).

Therefore, in an attempt to address the increasing radicalism among the youth in Southeast Asia using religious justifications

put the roles of religious education at stake. The examination whether religious education is contributing or hindering factor in the prevention of violent extremism needs to be pursued.

METHODOLOGY

The research is conducted in six countries in Southeast Asia that include Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, and Myanmar. This qualitative

case study approach is employed utilizing three data collection methods. The methods are 1) document review of existing policies and religious education textbooks, 2) in-depth interviews with relevant actors in religious education and 3) focus group discussion inviting policy makers and civic society organization who are involved in the religious education policy making and its implementation at schools.

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RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on countries - in alphabetical order

	State-Religion relationship	Religious/Values Education policies and implementation	Religious education and Prevention of Violent Extremism
<i>Indonesia</i>	Religion is less superior compared to that of nationalism as mentioned in the Indonesian constitution, UUD 1945. Article 29: "The State shall be based upon the belief in the One and Only God, and the State guarantees every citizen the freedom of worship each according to his/her own religion or belief".	Religious Education (RE) is compulsory (National Education Law (Law NO. 20 Year 2003). Three different curricula of religious education, they are: 1) Religious education in Madrasah (muslim school) 2) Religious education in general schools and 3) Religious education in religion-affiliated schools.	State schools provide religious instruction for major religious groups in confessional manner. Tolerance are taught superficially.

Malaysia	Islam is official religion of the federations but other religions can be practiced in peace and harmony, (Article 3 (1)).	Technically, Islamic education is the responsibility of the states however the federal government controls the management of religious education. Ministry of education is in charge of all national religious secondary schools, the ministry supervises the national curriculum in these school while the state Islamic council sets the curriculum for all Islamic subjects. The state obligates Islam religious education for Muslim students and requires non-Muslim students to take Moral Education.	Religious education for Muslim students is taught as Religious instruction and has not significantly touched upon PVE-relevant concepts. However, values of tolerance and respect is taught to non-muslim in a school subject called moral education.
Myanmar	According to 2008 Constitution: Buddhism is the religion of majority (article 361) , and the state recognizes other religions in its constitution (article 362). The union may assist and protect the religion it recognizes to its utmost (article 363). The abuse of Religion of religion for political aims is prohibited, hate speech is punishable by law (Article 364).	Myanmar national education is held through government schools, private school, dhamma school -monk led schools, Monastery and madrasa. RE is not institutionalized in public schools. Yet Buddhist symbols are dominant and meditation is held every day in government schools.	RE and PVE-concepts are non-existent in schools. Attempts to promote interreligious dialogue and diversity are done by the CSO, one is of Center for Diversity and National Harmony (CDNH) yet received resistance from Ma Ba Tha – The Buddhist nationalist group.

<p>Singapore</p>	<p>Singapore upholds secularism as shown in 1966 Constitutional Commission report, the 1989 White Paper, Maintenance of Religious Harmony, The 1991 White paper)</p>	<p>Government organized and conducted Values education in Singapore’s government schools. Where religious education, a form of values education is conducted in religious space, such as part-time Islamic schools, which are attended by muslim students attending full-time government (secular) schools. To private islamic schools, the values education takes form mostly in a different syllabi with different from those of government schools.</p>	<p>Religious Education in Islamic schools promotes all the elements of PVE-relevant concepts , However has yet included in values education</p>
<p>Thailand</p>	<p>The 1997 constitution mentioned the State’s equal support to all religion in the country. However, the 2017 Constitution emphasized Theravada Buddhism as the faith of Majority.</p>	<p>Religious instruction is required in public schools at both the primary and secondary education levels. The Ministry of Education (MOE) by the Office of Basic Education Commission has formulated a course called “Social Studies, Religion, and Culture”, in which religious education is part of the required course.</p>	<p>PVE-themes such as peace and reconciliation are taught in Islamic-based schools in conflict area in the deep south.</p>
<p>Philippines</p>	<p>The 1987 consttution of the Philippines states that the country holds the main principle of the separation of church and state. ‘The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable’. (Article II, Section 6). The state also recognizes the freedom and equality of all religions by declaring: “No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights (Article III, Section 5).</p>	<p>The 1987 constitution allowed the optional teaching of religion in public elementary and secondary schools. RE policies in the Philippines are implemented according to religion of majority within an area, either it is Catholic majority or Muslim majority. Catholic group has a significant influence on the government policies on education e.g. integration of RE in the Philippine national education although the Constitution of the Philippines declares that the state is secular</p>	<p>RE takes a form as Values Education and religious instruction. PVE-themes are yet to be integrated in the subjects</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools authorities	Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs	ASEAN
<p>To equip students with an understanding of the vocabularies of faith communities that exist in their societies.</p> <p>To foster more inter-ethnic and inter-religious interactions, for instance exposure to places of worship and ethnic enclaves.</p>	<p>To create concerted efforts in creating dialogue to develop education that addresses power imbalances in society to minimize rifts that may exist in a country</p> <p>To revamp the religious education syllabus to include a component on comparative religion and establishing a module for Inter(religious) literacy and Inter(intra)-faith dialogue in the teachers' training curriculum, and organize training seminars on comparative religion which is compulsory for existing teachers.</p>	<p>To continue a regional dialogue amongst Southeast Asian countries in addressing socio-religious conflicts attended by representatives of community leaders and policy makers.</p> <p>To strengthen a regional concerted effort amongst southeast Asian countries in exploring the role of religious education in the prevention of the violent extremism in SEA.</p>

Recommendations to specific government of countries under study:

1. In Indonesia, the government should use its authority to supervise religious education curricula in private schools. This is important in order to ensure the relevance of religious education to the aims of national education. Also, the Government needs to reintroduce "understanding religions" to the curricula, in order for students to understand the existence of different faiths. The path to take is through Citizenship Education, not religious education.
2. In Malaysia, It is imperative for the Ministry of Education to work closely with the state governments to tackle the issues associated with the informal religious schools by having standardized syllabus that incorporates lessons on inclusiveness, pluralism, and inter-religious empathy.
3. In case of Philippines, the government should commission a group coming from all faith denominations like Catholics, Muslims, Protestants, and Iglesia ni Kristo to make the module more acceptable to all students coming from diverse religious background. National curriculum on values education should reflect Filipino traditional values including islam to promote national unity.
4. In case of Thailand, the Thai Ministry of Education should incorporate a non-biased information regarding new threats and terrorism in the textbooks. The Thai government should disseminate and implement policies around the Prevention of Violent Extremism in other areas in Thailand, not just the conflict-affected areas.
5. In case of Myanmar, the Ministry of Education should review and reform curriculum for conflict sensitivity, more balanced perspectives, and promotion of a culture of peace.
6. In the case of Singapore, educators from the government and private sectors should synchronize the content of their citizenship education syllabi to ensure that the same fundamental messages reach all Singaporean students.

About PPIM UIN

Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) is an autonomous research institution in UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. Today PPIM is a strategic, university-based study centre in Indonesia with the experience in religious and social studies with extensive publications and networks, domestically and internationally.

About the Research on 'The Role of Religious Education in Preventing Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia'

PPIM UIN Jakarta and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Indonesia conducted a study on "The Role of Religious Education in Prevention Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia by looking closely the relationship between the state and religion, the state's policies around religious education and the role of religious education in preventing violent extremism. There are six countries under study, they are Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Myanmar. There are three data collection methods used in this study, they are, in-depth interviews, document reviews and focus group discussions. The data was collected in the month of September 2018.



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Prevent Violent Extremism in Indonesia**

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