Conference Paper

Interreligious Education as an Approach to End Racism and Discrimination

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Abstract.

This study aims to explain that interreligious education can be used as an approach in dealing with diversity to end discrimination and racism in a multiethnic society. Interfaith education can increase students' fears about changing religions or losing their own beliefs, as well as foster an understanding of other religions beyond history and culture, while allowing individuals to maintain their own beliefs. In addition, interreligious education must emphasize universal values or principles, such as peace and tolerance. It is a type of qualitative research with a library research model. Research data comes from related books and articles on interfaith education as an approach to ending discrimination and racism. Collection techniques were carried out through reading literature or written sources such as books, previous research, journals, and articles related to the research title. Data analysis with the content analyst. The results of this study state that interfaith education lays the foundation for education as an approach to fighting racism and discrimination. Thus, there is a need to consider religion and education in everyday life to promote more holistic interfaith education and build harmonious coexistence.

Keywords: interreligious education, racism, discrimination, common principals, harmonious co- existence, multiethnic society.

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1. Introduction

Human beings, regardless of religious beliefs, generally aspire to and look forward to a life in which they are at peace and in harmony with themselves, others, the environment, and those who believe in a Transcendental Supreme Power; with the Creator, or God, or The Supreme Being, or the Highest Object of Worship/Veneration, depending on how the Absolute is perceived or defined in their religions, philosophies, or worldviews. Aside from peaceful and harmonious relationships, the most desirable state of existence that humans would be content with is one that provides safety, peace, security, and, withal,

How to cite this article: Khadijah Mohd Khambali*, Mohd Zaidi Daud, Andi Thahir, (2023), "Interreligious Education as an Approach to End Racism and Discrimination" in *International Conference on Multidisciplinary Science*, KnE Life Sciences, pages 111–123. DOI 10.18502/kss.v8i16.14035

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a sense of inner tranquillity or wellbeing, joy and happiness, success, or triumph, all of which should have a long-term positive impact on their lives.

Unfortunately, racism and discrimination persist in all societies. Although we can see that things have improved in this world. They take many forms, sometimes dramatically brutal, sometimes sly, and underhanded. It is harmful to group and individual identity, as well as peaceful coexistence. Discrimination based on race has been linked to a variety of issues, including public activities and interactions with others. (1) Religious discrimination, such as antisemitism and Islamophobia, has produced similar results. (2)

Racist or other types of discriminatory practices are often rooted in stereotypes and misconceptions, and one of the most pressing contemporary challenges is to promote knowledge about and understanding of different cultures. As a result, it is critical that all children, regardless of background, learn and practice non-discrimination and non-racism. Education is the most effective tool for combating racism and discrimination and fostering inclusive societies. Children can and should be taught about equality, respect, and tolerance from an early age. Inter-religious education should serve as a model for addressing discrimination in and through education, ensuring that all children receive the education they deserve.

2. Literatur review

Interreligious learning is experiential learning not focused on textbook knowledge about dif-ferent religious traditions, but rather on promoting interreligious literacy. The goal is to equipstudents with the necessary competencies to address religious diversity.(3) Interreligious learn-ing is focused on giving religionsa humanface. It is less about ideas than it is about promot-ing an exchange between persons. The priority is given to lived experiences. Nevertheless, in academia, interreligious learning usually takes place in a classroom environment, and theexchange between the students, drawing upon their experiences, insights, and intuitions, isfacilitated by reading texts (scholarly texts or sacred scriptures). This is highly valuable, butstill too remote from lived religion, which often revolves around particular religious practices.(4)

That is why as interreligious educators,we should develop methods that encourage students to move beyond texts and to participate in various religious practices. (5)

Racism is a form of prejudice that holds that members of racial categories have different characteristics and that these differences cause some racial groups to be inferior to others. Racism generally includes negative emotional reactions towards group members, acceptance of negative stereotypes, and racial discrimination against

individuals; in some cases it leads to violence. Discrimination refers to different treatment of members of a different ethnic, religious, national or other group. Discrimination is usually a behavioral manifestation of prejudice and therefore involves negative, hostile and detrimental treatment of members of rejected groups.(6)

3. Question Reseach

3.1. How can Interfaith Education be used as an Approach to End Racism and Discrimination?

4. Metods

It is a type of qualitative research with a library research model. Research data comes from related books and articles on interfaith education as an approach to ending discrimination and racism. Collection techniques are carried out through reading literature or written sources such as books, previous research, and journals, articles related to the research title. Data analysis with content analysts, with the steps of formulating research problems, conducting literature studies, determining units of analysis, collecting data then processing the data and providing conclusions.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1. Result

5.1.1. The Concept of Discrimination and Racism

Racism and discrimination are two closely related concepts that are perhaps the most widely condemned around the world. The belief that my race is better or superior to the other person causes people of a particular race or even religion to act arrogantly or in a discriminatory manner. Thus, racism is a form of discrimination, also known as racial discrimination. Many people find it difficult to distinguish between racism and discrimination, even though racism is a type of discrimination. Let us examine the two ideas more closely.

Discrimination is a broad, general term that we are all familiar with. We learn to discriminate between things as children based on our preferences and how things are perceived and approved by our elders and peers. Discrimination is defined as the treatment of people based on their gender, race, community, skin colour, facial features,

height, or even their voice. Stereotyping all people of Hispanic origin and having a biased attitude toward them, for example, is a classic example of racial discrimination. During the American Civil War, the term discrimination was mostly applied to the practice of whites treating blacks unfairly. However, discrimination is not limited to skin colour; gender inequality has also given rise to gender discrimination, in which women are treated unfairly by men in nearly all cultures around the world. Women are assaulted and even raped by men; they are paid less and have fewer benefits at work; and they do not advance to top positions in some companies. This is also considered discrimination.

Where does the meaning of racism intersect with discrimination? Racism is the belief that one's own culture and race are far superior to others, and that members of other races are inferior. During the Second World War in Germany, the most famous form of racism the world has ever seen resulted in the holocaust, or the killing of hundreds of thousands of Jews by Nazis. A dictionary definition of racism is 'the belief that the abilities and characteristics of other races are inferior to one's own'. This belief causes behavioural and attitude changes toward members of other groups and minorities. People begin to discriminate against members of other communities, and this behaviour is sometimes sanctioned by the state. Casteism is a classic example of racism with a slight variation. People from higher castes are inhumane to those from lower castes (untouchables). As a result, the term 'discrimination' refers to the unjust or prejudicial treatment of other individuals (or groups) based on specific characteristics. People can discriminate - or be discriminated against - based on the aforementioned factors.(7). The term "racism" refers to prejudices, hatred, and misconceptions against an individual or a group of individuals based on the idea of racial superiority.

Racism can also be defined as racial discrimination, but the term 'discrimination' refers to a broader concept that includes unjust or prejudicial treatment of others based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, height, physical features, or skin colour(8). The two ideas are related to the concept of 'prejudice'. In fact, the underlying idea in both cases is that one person (or a group of people) is superior to another individual or group based on prejudices and stereotypes. As a result, both discrimination and racism fall under the umbrella of prejudice, but racism can also be considered a subcategory of discrimination. Both ideas have resulted in - and continue to result in - instances of violence and hatred. Racism and discrimination spark fights, disagreements, and controversies within and between societies, and they can fuel extremist and violent ideas. While these two emotions have always existed in human nature, they have been exacerbated by extremist and nationalist political discourses.

5.1.2. The Common Principal in World Religion

Cultural diversity is an unavoidable requirement in human socio-cultural life. Humans benefit from diversity, but that diversity can also lead to cultural conflict. Conflicts typically arise as a result of poor intercultural communication, or as a result of a closed communication space between cultures, resulting in misunderstanding or distrust between one cultural entity and another(9). Today's major challenges for all religions are intolerance, religious fundamentalism, extremism, and religious dominance. However, we believe that every religion has the potential to protect humanity and create equilibrium by using their teachings as tools to keep the world at peace and secure. Religious teachings emphasize these common principles, which emphasize human dignity, peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and respect for one another. According to Mahatma Gandhi, 'the fundamental Truth of all great religions of the world [is that] the followers of those faiths.were all one and were all helpful to one another'.(10)

In contrast, The Dalai Lama once stated that 'there will be no peace among the nations unless there is peace among the religions." There can be no religious peace without religious dialogue' (Lama, 2016). The Bible begins with the creation story in which God creates humans. It's stated in Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them". This demonstrates that all people are made equal. This is made explicit in the New Testament book of Acts which says, *"From one human being he created all the races on Earth and made them live throughout the whole Earth"* (Acts 17:26).

The Noble Qur'an has laid down a system of clear rules to preserve societies and keep sectarian strife away from them, as Islam declared that all people were created from one soul, which means that they share in the unity of human origin, where God Almighty said: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer". (Qur'an 4:1).

All human beings on this planet are involved in humanity, and thus Islam guaranteed them the right to life and the right to live with dignity; without discrimination between them, and on the principle that a person is honored, regardless of religion, race, color, or origin. All members of society are one family with certain rights and responsibilities. The Almighty said: "Good things, and We have preferred them over many of those whom We have created with a preference; And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and

preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Qur'an 17:70).

Islam commanded its adherents to deal morally with all people, not just Muslims, such as the Almighty's saying: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing". (Qur'an 4:58). Rather, Islam commands Muslims to be just and righteous with non-Muslims as long as they are not fighting Muslims. God Almighty said: "Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity". (Qur'an 60:8).

In the verse, righteousness and equity are a divine law in Islam in dealing with non-Muslims, that equity is justice, and righteousness is the clearest word for the meaning of interaction, because righteousness in the Arabic language is a word that encompasses all the attributes of goodness, and it is a word that is only used in the greatest and finest forms of dealing, it is used to describe the interaction between sons and their parents. As a result, the writer's goal throughout the discussion on this paper is to elucidate the inter-religious education activity in the real world today to end racism and discrimination.

5.1.3. The Concept of Inter-Religious Education

The goal of inter-religious education is to promote understanding among people who hold different religious and non-religious worldviews. Inter-religious education incorporates religious and non-religious perspectives into the classroom and engages them in a dialogical learning process. Inter-religious education aspires to be an approach to ending discrimination and racism because it is not solely focused on people who belong to a particular faith tradition and is based on the assumption that everyone has a 'worldview', 'religion', and 'faith', i.e., a particular way of looking at the world, people, and society. (Bertram-Troost, de Roos, Miedema, 2006); (Wielzen, ter Avest, 2017).

So, what exactly do we mean by "inter-religious education"? The answer to this question will determine the approach we must take in addressing inter-religious education issues in the world. It will also determine which aspects of inter-religious education will be prioritized in the pursuit of a strategy to end discrimination and racism among multiethnic societies, including Muslims and non-Muslims. Religious education, as most people understand it today, refers to the teaching and learning of so-called religious

subjects that deal with traditional religious sciences and everything to do with God or religion.

The other viewpoint, which is a minority viewpoint but has gained increasing support in recent decades, seeks to broaden, and universalize the meaning of the term 'religious education'. They define religious education more broadly, including the teaching and learning of subjects such as the history and philosophy of religious science, religious civilisation, and subjects such as mathematics, sociology, economics, psychology, medicine, engineering, geography, literature, and art that are universally recognized as secular in modern times. (Bakar, 2015). Traditional religious sciences, together with secular sciences, constitute the total concern of religious education for this minority group. They do not, however, consider the secular sciences to be secular in the sense that they have nothing to do with God or religion.

If religious education only refers to religious sciences within a single religious tradition, then multi- ethnic and multi-religious students and teachers are usually excluded. As a result, there is no need for interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding, or peace education. However, when multi-religions and multi-ethnicity appear in society, this type of religious education is challenged. This could be due to the immigration of people from another religious tradition, or it could be that people in a particular society start to drift away from their traditional religion. On occasion, a unified and monolithic society may begin to respect the hopes and ideals of its minority faiths. (Hull, 2002).

When plurality appears in such formerly monolithic societies, two reactions may be observed. First, religious education may be discontinued entirely, and the state educational system may become entirely secular. When this occurs, it is expected that religious faith will be nurtured solely in thehomes of the children or within the religious communities themselves. The second possible reaction is a pluralization of religious learning in which students are offered a system of parallel instruction. In other words, children of each faith are educated in separate classrooms by a representative of that faith. For example, Muslim teachers educate Muslim children, Christian teachers educate Christian children, and so on (Hull, 2002). As a result, the students do not interact with others and are more focused on their ethnicity.

How can this problem be resolved? As a result, we believe that a suitable approach is required to ensure the best solution among multiethnic students. We also believe that inter-religious education is important in promoting peace through education as a medium for narrative and dialogical truth, reflecting a transformative view of peace education. It was used as a medium for transformative learning that promoted collective consciousness. It encouraged students to live their lives in accordance with the values

of a peaceful culture. As a result, the elective approach recognizes the people as the greatest resource for fostering a culture of peace. The task of peace education is centred on educating young people to be agents of social change. (Anjarwati & Trimble, 2010).

As we all know, the interconnected challenges of protecting cultural identities and preserving cultural diversity are becoming increasingly important and urgent in the context of globalization, as well as increasing migration and urbanization. As a result, our world today is known for its religious and cultural diversity. The people's diversity is reflected not only in their various languages and multi-racial society, but also in their multi-religious adherents. As a result, the diversity of religions in our world is the primary social challenge that must be addressed effectively. We believe that inter-cultural communication, as facilitated by inter-religious education, plays an important role in bridging various cultural differences while simultaneously preserving a variety of cultural expressions through various processes of interaction, mutual support, and empowerment of one another (UNESCO, 2017). Creating an environment conducive to inter-religious understanding and harmony is a challenge for the world's societies.

6. Dicussion

The main goal of inter-religious education is to promote harmony, which can be implemented in the classroom. In the school and classroom, we see ourselves as a modern pluralistic society of practical living together, where a dialogue aims to learn something new from others while also getting to know them as one big human family (Shehu, 2014). This is known as the pluralistic model. Pluralistic education, in general, incorporates higher levels of complex thinking, allowing students to engage in cooperative behaviours, manage contentious issues, and develop a high regard for the perspectives, beliefs, and backgrounds of others. (Engberg and Hurtado, 2011). As a result, the model of pluralistic religious education can be defined as religious literacy education based on respect for different beliefs and taught in such a way that religion is not taught, but inter- religious teachings are taught (Jawoniyi, 2009).

Consequently, getting to know others is a dialogical interaction that promotes respectful relations with people from various religions and ethnicities. It begins when one encounters, lives, and interacts with the others and participates in daily life activities together. The social interaction marks the involvement of non-elite participants in the inter-religious dialogue at the grass roots level. The non-elite participation in interreligious dialogue is necessary to accommodate the challenge of pluralistic society. The process of social interaction in everyday activity is known as a dialogue of life. Those

activities can be seen in the life experience of living together with mix-faith family, celebrating festival and wedding ceremony as well as doing (running) business with other religious communities. Undoubtedly, there are still opportunity to get along and live harmoniously within multiethnic and multi-religious society through inter-religious education as a mechanism to being more understanding and tolerance and at the same time built a harmonious co-existence. (Mohd Khambali Hambali et.al, 2019).

In a multi-religious context, inter-religious education refers to "all positive and constructive inter- religious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment in obedience to truth and respect for freedom" because dialogue promotes a positive perception of others as well as a meeting of mind and heart between followers of various religions. Only through inter-religious education, we can increase our understanding and decrease prejudice and negative perceptions on the others as well as the more we can gain knowledge of 'the other', the more we increase the opportunity to better understand each other. (BadrulHisham & Mohd Khambali Hambali, 2018).

6.1. The Inter-Religious Education Activity

Inter-religious education comprehends topics and issues of various natures. In this implementation of the inter-religious activity, the participants may not engage in promoting violence and, hostility but be more concerned with leading the inter-dialogue activity towards peace, mutual respect, and harmony. Furthermore, the objective in inter-religious education activities is to solve any problems with harmony, peacefully and without trying to convert those of other faiths or make others have doubts about their faith. Perhaps, in this activity, every participant may help others be concerned with and find a way to become better and improve their relations with one another, to make the world a better place to live. (Shehu, 65).

There fore, the themes that been discussed by the multiethnic students in inter-religious education activities should be of a diverse nature, given that such dialogue involves a diversity of people. Thus, the scope of inter-religious education depends on the form and the dialogue of multiethnic students' level of interest, understanding and knowledge. (Shehu, 2014; Shafiq and Abu-Nimer, 2007). Moreover, the scope of inter-religious education activities should cover issues that will not create conflicts between the multiethnic students as well as the community within which the students reside and contemporary world society. They may engage with issues that naturally increase mutual knowledge, lead to better understanding, and decrease conflicts and tensions

between religious groups (Shehu, 2014) as well as create a platform to share harmony, peace, and mutual respect.

Moreover, in this practice of inter-religious education, the educators may use the teaching of world religions as tools for the purpose of maintaining peace and security in the world. Also, by using common inter-religious teachings which emphasize human dignity, peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and respect to one another, the real panacea to religious extremism and fundamentalism may be found. (Wani et.al, 2015). Thus, we believe that inter-religious education is always fruitful for a better understanding of other faiths and religions. The inter-religious education may be taught in moderation (*wasatiyyah*). Moderation (*wasatiyyah*) is the backbone of inter-religious education which all faiths need to recognize and adopt. Based on the Golden Rule stipulates that we do not do unto others what we do not want them to do to us. This principle requires that we put ourselves in the other's shoes and try to understand the situation once we are in another position. It is only through this experience that we are able to understand the complexity and injustice faced by the other side. The spirit of being tolerant among multiethnic and multi-faith are inculcated by the practice of moderation (*wasatiyyah*) as they apply fair and humble treatment both in the relation with Muslim and non-Muslim (Mohd Khambali Hambali et.al., 2017) to sustain the religious harmony and peaceful co-existence.

6.2. The Virtues of the Inter-Religious Education

The inter-religious education approach to education in general offers numerous advantages to all, multiethnic including Muslims and non-Muslims alike. From the point of view, we would like to mention here just three of the benefits. First, every student learning would be based on the socio-cultural reality of their own times which they encounter daily in their lives. Second, through the inter-religious dialogue approach, students will come to realise the meaning of mutual understanding, peace and harmony and will stop the discrimination and racism. Third, the multi- ethnic student will become better known as a new generation who love and respect to each other and live in peaceful world.

6.3. Challenges to the Realisation of the Inter-Religious Education

Education is essential as the early step in comprehending those interreligious values can be implemented in the life of a multi - ethnic society. Religion Studies is a step in the right direction because it aims to promote a socially cohesive society that respects

and tolerates religious and cultural diversity. The key to transforming a weakness into a strength is education. It provides a variety of tools and methods for identifying and resolving upcoming issues. Multiethnic education in the community must begin at the elementary level in order to address the real world in the community. This fundamental understanding of interreligious relations can develop a feeling of unity and prevent racism. The relevance and benefits of establishing a sense of community must be stressed in official and informal educational settings so that it can be fostered from an early age.

The virtues and advantages of inter-religious education notwithstanding, there are hurdles and challenges to their realisation that we must face and overcome such as the necessary preparatory knowledge for all models of inclusive education that we have discussed should be made available to and internalised by teachers and students. Besides that, the theory and practice of inter-religious education as well as intercultural dialogue should be made available to all concerned. Lastly, the teachers must be well grounded on inter-religious dialogue, intercultural teachings, and intellectual traditions, especially in epistemology of knowledge and the philosophy of education, both of which are necessary to the pursuit of excellence in learning and scholarship.

7. Conclusion

This research concludes that religious education can be used as an approach to reduce racism or prejudice among its members. Interreligious dialogue and social interaction form the basis for building harmonious multiracial coexistence. Interfaith education as a segment of interfaith dialogue is proven to be able to prepare students for social interaction. This can only be realized by recognizing the similarities and differences between religions. In addition, prioritizing a generalized world view in instilling an appreciation for the diversity of religious and cultural beliefs is part of interfaith education which will reduce feelings of racism and prejudice against fellow members of society. Finally, interreligious education cannot succeed without the virtue of mutual respect, which forms the basis of interreligious relations.

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