

Multicultural Education According to Azyumardi Azra's Perspective



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ABSTRACT: The phenomenon of the diversity of the Indonesian people with the various problems that accompany it is the interesting thing behind this research. The existence of multiple religions and beliefs held by the community is one example of the many aspects of this diversity. One of the Muslim thinkers and scholars whose thoughts are pretty concerned about this issue is Azyumardi Azra. This research is library research with a qualitative biographical approach. The method used is content analysis to understand and find the substance of Azra's multicultural education thoughts in various literary sources. The study results: (1) In Azra's view, multiculturalism leads to an awareness and affirmation that all diversity and differences have the same position in the public sphere. Multiculturalism is not only limited to understanding the existence of pluralism. The core values developed in Azra's perspective are awareness of diversity (plurality), equality, humanity, justice, and democracy (democratic values); (2) Multicultural education is education for or about the diversity of society towards the formation of unity in diversity. Azra's concept of multicultural education is based on the reality of the variety of the Indonesian nation to strengthen the four pillars of nationality, namely Pancasila, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945), and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.

KEYWORDS: education, multicultural, Azyumardi Azra, perspective, nationality

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the implementation of religious education in both general and Islamic educational institutions has received a lot of attention and serious attention. One of the figures which are pretty concerned about criticism is Azyumardi Azra. He is a Muslim intellectual who has consistently initiated progressive, pluralist, and inclusive Islamic thought, both through academic pulpits, discussion forums, seminars, and conferences and in his writings in papers, articles, journals, and books. According to him, religious education has not been able to shape the religious attitudes of students that reflect the behavior of true faith and piety, nor has it developed a tolerant attitude in responding to differences, including differences between religious communities (Idris, 2020a).

In various writings by Azyumardi Azra, he criticizes many models of religious education that tend to be intolerant and presents the concept of multicultural education as education that needs to be applied by educational institutions to strengthen the spirit of nationalism. Moreover, the Indonesian people have recently experienced a tendency to be disoriented in various fields of life. The nation's condition consisting of diverse ethnic communities living on multiple levels of culture or different civilizations has created gaps. It has increasingly added to the complexity of societal problems (Azra, 2007).

As a Muslim intellectual who has an essential role in developing Islamic thought in Indonesia, Azyumardi Azra has formulated many concepts of multicultural education. The ideas follow the conditions of the Indonesian people experiencing disorientation in various fields of life and whose people are at different cultural levels. Some people live in a pre-agrarian culture, and some live in a rural culture; some groups live in industrial civilization, and other groups already live in a more sophisticated information technology culture. It is in this aspect that the natural attraction of Azyumardi Azra's thoughts on multicultural education. He formulated multicultural education to strengthen Bhinneka Tunggal Ika based on the community's cultural diversity, both past, and present. Through this education, it is hopes to foster mutual understanding of cultural differences (Idris, 2020a).

This study aimed to explore Azyumardi Azra's thoughts on the concept of multicultural education. This research contributes to efforts to develop the idea of multicultural education in educational institutions, both public education institutions and Islamic educational institutions.

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METHODS

This research used library research by reviewing scientific literature from relevant books, documents, articles, or previous research results. In particular, in this research, the author also uses a biographical approach. A biographical approach uses to explore Azyumardi Azra, which includes: his family background, educational history, figures who influence his thoughts, intellectual colleagues, and his works. The author used the content analysis method (Hidayat et al., 2022) to understand and find the substance of Azyumardi Azra's thinking on multicultural education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Azyumardi Azra

Azyumardi was born in Lubuk Alung, Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra, Indonesia, March 4, 1955. He is an Indonesian Muslim intellectual. From 1996 to 2006 Azyumardi served as Rector of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (Iswantir, 2017; Putra et al., 2021). In 2010, he received the title "Commander of the Order of the British Empire" from the British Empire, making him the first Indonesian with the honorific title 'Sir.' (Iswantir et al., 2019).

Azyumardi's higher education career began in 1982 as an undergraduate student at the Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Jakarta. In 1988 thanks to a Fullbright scholarship, he was awarded a Master of Art (MA) from the Department of Middle Eastern Language and Culture, Columbia University (Fadli, 2019). In 1989 he again received a Columbia President Fellowship (from the same campus) in the Department of History. In 1992, he obtained a Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) degree from the Department of History, Columbia University, as well as a Doctor of Philosophy Degree by writing a dissertation entitled "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Network of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian Ulama. this is the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries". In 2004 dissertation was published simultaneously in Canberra (Allen Unwin and AAAS), Honolulu (Hawaii University Press), and Leiden, Netherlands (KITLV Press) (Azra, 1994).

In 1993, when he returned to Jakarta, Azyumardi opened the journal *Studia Islamika* which studied Islam, and as editor-in-chief. Then in 1994-1995 made a visit to Southeast Asian Studies at the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies, Oxford University, England, and became a guest lecturer at St. Anthony College. In Asia in 1997, Azyumardi became a visiting professor at the University of the Philippines and the University of Malaya, Malaysia. From 1997 to 1999, Azyumardi became a member of the Selection Committee of the Southeast Asian Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP) under the management of the Toyota Foundation and the Japan Center, Tokyo, Japan. In December 2006, Azyumardi Azra was appointed Director of the Graduate School of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta (Ahmad, 2013).

Azyumardi Azra was a journalist for *Panji Masyarakat* (1979-1985); Lecturer of the Faculty of Adab and Faculty of Tarbiyah IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (since 1992); Professor of History, Faculty of Adab, IAIN Jakarta, and Assistant Chancellor I of IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (1998). He is also the first Southeast Asian to be appointed as a Professor Fellow at the University of Melbourne, Australia (2004-2009), and a member of the Board of Trustees of the International Islamic University Islamabad Pakistan (2004-2009). He is also still a member of the Friends of the Partnership for Governance Reform (Ahmad, 2013; Azyumardy Azra & Shodiq, 2019; Noor, 2018).

Azyumardi Azra is a professor of Islamic history with social and intellectual expertise. When he became the rector of IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, he made a significant breakthrough in the institution. In May 2002, IAIN changed its name to Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta. That is a continuation of the previous rector's idea; Prof. Dr. Harun Nasution wants IAIN graduates to be rational, modern, democratic, and tolerant people (Ahmad, 2013; Azyumardy Azra & Shodiq, 2019; Noor, 2018).

Azyumardi Azra is married to Ipah Fariyah and has four children, namely Raushan Fikri Usada, Firman El-Amny Azra, Muhammad Subhan Azra, and Emily Sakina Azra. At first, Azyumardi never aspired to engage in Islamic studies. That is because he prefers to enter the field of general education at IKIP. However, because of his father's insistence, Azyumardi joined IAIN so that he is now known as an intellectual figure of Indonesian Islam. He was born to a father named Azikar and a mother named Ramlah (Ahmad, 2013). Table 1 below shows the books that Azyumardi Azra has written.

Table 1. Azyumardi Azra's books

No	Book Title	Publication Year
1	<i>Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara</i> (Network of Middle East and Archipelago Ulama)	1994
2	<i>Pergolakan Politik Islam</i> (Islamic Political Upheaval)	1996
3	<i>Islam Reformis</i> (Reformist Islam)	1999
4	<i>Konteks Berteologi di Indonesia</i> (Theological Context in Indonesia)	1999
5	<i>Menuju Masyarakat Madani</i> (Towards Madani Society)	1999

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6	<i>Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru</i> (Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization Towards the New Millennium)	1999
7	<i>Esei-esei Pendidikan Islam dan Cendekiawan Muslim</i> (Essays on Islamic Education and Muslim Scholars)	1999
8	<i>Renaissans Islam di Asia Tenggara</i> (Islamic Renaissance in Southeast Asia)	1999
9	<i>Islam Substantif</i> (Substantive Islam)	2000
10	<i>Historiografi Islam Kontemporer: Wacana, Aktualitas dan Aktor Sejarah</i> (Contemporary Islamic Historiography: Discourse, Actuality and Historical Actors)	2002
11	<i>Paradigma Baru Pendidikan Nasional: Rekonstruksi dan Demokratisasi</i> (The New Paradigm of National Education: Reconstruction and Democratization)	2002
12	<i>Reposisi Hubungan Agama dan Negara</i> (Repositioning of Religion and State Relations)	2002
13	<i>Menggapai Solidaritas: Tensi antara Demokrasi, Fundamentalisme, dan Humanisme</i> (Achieving Solidarity: Tensions Between Democracy, Fundamentalism, and Humanism)	2002
14	<i>Konflik Baru Antar-Peradaban: Globalisasi, Radikalisme, dan Pluralitas</i> (New Conflicts between Civilizations: Globalization, Radicalism, and Plurality)	2002
15	<i>Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global dan Lokal</i> (Islam Nusantara: Global and Local Network)	2002
16	<i>Surau: Pendidikan Islam Tradisional dalam Transisi dan Modernisasi</i> (Surau: Traditional Islamic Education in Transition and Modernization)	2003
17	<i>Indonesia Bertahan, dari Mendirikan Negara Hingga Merayakan Demokrasi</i> (Indonesia Survives, from Establishing a State to Celebrating Democracy)	2020

The awards that Azyumardi Azra has won are: Most prolific writer from Mizan publisher, Bandung (2002); Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) of the United Kingdom (2010); Sarwono Prawirohardjo Memorial Lecture (SML) from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (2017); and Order of Rising Sun: Gold and Silver Star of the Emperor of Japan (2017) (Ahmad, 2013; Hakim, 2017; Susanto Zuhdi, 2020).

Azyumardi Azra Multicultural Education Concept

Multiculturalism is an understanding that believes that different ethnic or cultural groups in society can live side by side in harmony marked by mutual respect for one another (Agustian, 2019). Multiculturalism is the uniqueness of various cultures in a particular community (Nuridin et al., 2021; Sumarna et al., 2021). Multiculturalism is the wisdom of a region, but it can cause conflict in society (Ulfa et al., 2021). In Azyumardi Azra's view, the crucial point of multiculturalism is the acceptance of the reality of difference and diversity in society. Multiculturalism is interpreted as a world view that recognizes all existing cultural existences, regardless of how big or small they are. It is called the politics of recognition (Azra, 2007).

According to Azyumardi Azra, multiculturalism leads to an awareness and affirmation of all diversity and differences that have the same position in public. In other words, multiculturalism is not only about understanding and pluralism. According to Azyumardi Azra's perspective, the core values in multiculturalism are awareness of diversity (plurality), equality, humanity, justice, and democracy (democratic values) (Masamah, 2015).

The birth of understanding multiculturalism is motivated by the importance of recognition (the need for recognition) of cultural diversity in various nations, including Indonesia. That must understand as a significant concept aiming to raise the appreciation and spirit of equality for humans. In other words, multiculturalism is a concept that seeks to appreciate cultural diversity. In the idea of multiculturalism, equality and recognition are the most emphasized principles. Furthermore, multiculturalism is not enough to be understood as a worldview or concept. Still, it needs implementation in various forms of policies that emphasize the importance of accepting all differences that exist in people's lives. In this context, the interpretation of multiculturalism is a worldview that must realize in political awareness (Azra, 2007).

According to Azyumardi Azra, multicultural education is education about the diversity of society towards the formation of unity. The basic of Azra's concept of multicultural education is the reality of the Indonesian nation's variety to strengthen the four pillars of nationality, namely Pancasila, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945), and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Idris, 2020a).

Azyumardi Azra believes that multicultural-based religious education is needed in educational institutions and society in general. It is because religious education in educational institutions has not yet been able to form religious attitudes that reflect the behavior of one's faith and purity, nor does it foster a tolerant attitude in responding to differences (Azra, 2005).

The existence of educational institutions has yet to show a significant role compared to other sectors, such as the economy, business, and politics. The center of cultural dynamics today is allegedly no longer in education but in the world of business and politics. Under these conditions, the existence of Islamic educational institutions is also possible to marginalize. Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world. However, the size of the population is not directly proportional to its

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strength and potential in the arena of community life (Zainuddin, 2004). This condition is closely related to Islamic education, which is more directed at religious fanaticism and the ideology of truth claims and does not touch the actual dimension of people's lives with their various needs and demands. In addition, religious education has not been able to develop a positive awareness of the reality of the plurality of people's spiritual life (Arif, 2008).

The existence and sustainability of a nation are highly dependent on the education of its people. Education is not only to improve students' intellectual abilities but also to build student's character, morals, and cultural values. Creating the potential of natural resources and human resources (HR) for forming a complete human being is the goal to be achieved by education. Education plays a role in transferring knowledge and as a guide for developing noble values and noble characters, such as honesty, democratic justice, discipline, tolerance, and mutual respect. The main task faced by educators, religious scholars, and social activists in the era of pluralism and multiculturalism is how they can continue to preserve the culture and traditions that they believe to be true. Still, at the same time, they also need to be aware of and acknowledge the existence of other cultures and traditions that are also true. They must be able to strengthen their identity and group culture while maintaining togetherness with other groups (Abdullah, 2021).

Multicultural education is very significant to continue to develop in Indonesia. Multicultural education is an educational model that believes in creating peace to overcome the conflicts that are rife lately. The fundamental value of multicultural education is to instill an understanding of the values of tolerance, empathy, sympathy, social solidarity, mutual care, respect for diversity, and differences of opinion. Indonesia, which consists of various ethnic groups, cultures, religions, and others, is undeniable. Therefore, Indonesia is called a multicultural nation. But on the other hand, multicultural life faces an urgent need to rebuild Indonesian national culture so that it can become an integrative force that binds all existing ethnic and cultural diversity. Education with a multicultural approach needs to be carried out by every educational institution (Imas & Wewen, 2011).

Multicultural education can be interpreted as education for or about the cultural diversity of society in the past and present, which will continue to experience demographic and socio-cultural changes. With this kind of educational effort, it is hoped that mutual understanding will grow between various cultural entities (Azra, 2019).

Multicultural education views that the problems in society, in general, originate from the emergence of an attitude of indifference and lack of recognition from one party to another. This situation, in turn, will impact the emergence of various deviations in society, and this is the highlight or paradigm of multicultural education. This paradigm encourages the growth of studies on ethnicity to include them in the education curriculum from elementary to higher education. The primary purpose of discussing these issues is to empower minority groups and disadvantaged groups (Idris, 2020a).

The concept and implementation of multicultural education require severe and intense discussion. It is not only related to the problem of the content or context of multicultural education but also to how the implementation strategy. For example, in the form of a stand-alone subject or integrated with other topics. However, apart from these problems, it is clear that the dynamics of the Indonesian nation today require multicultural education, which is expected to make an essential contribution to the formation of the strength of unity in a diverse society; it is not enough just as a slogan and jargon. That it will strengthen the actualization of Pancasila as the primary identity in the life of the nation and state (Azra, 2019).

Efforts to create a healthy multicultural society in Indonesia are certainly not easy and instant. It needs serious measures that are systematic, programmed, and sustainable. In this case, the appropriate strategic step is through multicultural education (Baidhaw, 2005).

Multicultural education aims to free people from ignorance, poverty, backwardness, dependence, and oppression in the relationship of different religions, ethnicities, and cultures. This multicultural education must begin to be implemented in the national education system and taught from primary education to higher education (Idris, 2020b).

In general, multicultural education seeks to eliminate students' egoistic, individualistic, and exclusive attitudes. On the other hand, multicultural education aims to develop a paradigm of students who can respect the existence of others and realize that their presence cannot separate from the reality of life full of diversity. Therefore, multicultural education is closely related to strengthening the nation's character, which needs implementation in an integrative curriculum, both in terms of material and learning process (Subandi et al., 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Multiculturalism leads to an awareness and affirmation of all diversity and differences that have the same position in public. In other words, multiculturalism is not only about understanding and pluralism. According to Azyumardi Azra's perspective, the core values in multiculturalism are awareness of diversity (plurality), equality, humanity, justice, and democracy (democratic values). Multicultural education is education about the diversity of society towards the formation of unity. The basic of Azra's concept of multicultural education is the reality of the Indonesian nation's variety to strengthen the four pillars of nationality, namely Pancasila, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945), and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

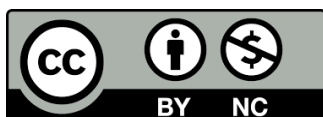
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers would like to thank the Director of postgraduate IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon.

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