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CHAPTER VI Developing Interfaith Competence In Preparing Catholic Educators For A Pluralistic World

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Abstract

This study explores interfaith competence among Catholic educators in Indonesia within a pluralistic society. Utilizing a qualitative method through literature review, the research examines the role of Catholic educators in building social harmony amidst religious diversity. Indonesia, with its 281 million inhabitants and over 1,340 ethnic groups, presents a complex landscape of interfaith interactions. The study identifies three key components of interfaith competence: collaborative, personal, and comparative competencies. Research findings highlight the strategic role of Catholic educators in developing tolerance and interfaith understanding through dialogue, teaching, and character formation. The Catholic Church plays a crucial role in supporting the establishment of inclusive educational institutions and publishing religious guidelines. The research reveals that interfaith competence is not merely an additional skill but a fundamental necessity in building social harmony. With Catholics representing 3.06% of the population, their educational institutions face unique challenges in a predominantly Muslim society. The study emphasizes the importance of developing educators' abilities to understand different religions, manage emotions, and create tolerant learning environments. Key recommendations include enhancing educators' interfaith understanding, implementing innovative learning media, and fostering dialogue between religious groups. The research underscores the critical role of education in preventing social conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence in Indonesia's diverse social landscape.

Keywords: interfaith competence, Catholic educators, pluralism, inclusive education, interreligious dialogue

Introduction

The context of religious pluralism in Indonesia is a fundamental reality that requires special attention in character education. This reality demands inter-religious interactions that can adapt. Society is expected to understand

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diversity in order to live in this reality deeply. The reality in the real world requires that people do not understand diversity. People tend to be intolerant of each other, as proven by the intensity of conflicts.

The phenomenon of intolerance occurred in Bekasi City involving a mother. A mother who turned out to be a State Civil Apparatus (ASN) allegedly prohibited Christians who were worshipping and asked permission to use the house for worship. According to the local Catholic Youth Leader, this action has injured Bekasi City's achievement as the second Tolerance City in Indonesia (Robesk, 2024).

In addition to Bekasi, intolerance in Cirebon City is related to the local community's rejection of the church. The community rejected the church's construction due to the lack of socialization and the change of function of the warehouse into a church. The establishment of the church has gone through a long process and is recognized by the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag). However, there is still rejection from the community for reasons that are not directly related to the church (Syahroni, 2024).

Cases of intolerance were also present in South Sulawesi related to the rejection of the construction of the Gamaliel Christian School. The rejection event took the form of a demonstration by residents on behalf of the Parepare Muslim Community Forum (FM2P) at the school construction site (Abduh, 2024). The three incidents of intolerance are facts that Indonesian society still does not have interfaith competence to achieve a peaceful life. Indonesia faces both challenges and opportunities, especially for Catholic educational institutions. The challenge is to prepare educators who can develop interfaith competencies. Like an educator and academic institution, a good attitude or behavior toward the community is a goal that must be achieved.

In Indonesia, the majority religion is Moslem (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). This has led to many Islamic-based educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Madrasah Aliyah. As for minority groups such as Catholics, Catholic educational institutions have gained space and have long been known as quality and inclusive (Wardhana et al., 2024).

There are 67 Catholic educational institutions in Indonesia (Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 55 Tahun 2007, 2007). These institutions are fostered by the Directorate General of Catholic Public Guidance under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This situation creates an urgency for

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Catholic educators to develop adequate competencies in managing religious diversity while maintaining their Catholic identity. Several efforts have been made to answer this challenge. The Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) has issued various guidelines and directives related to Catholic education in the context of pluralism. The Ecclesiastical Document Series No.86 by the Indonesian Bishops' Conference in 2008 contains the church's view on pluralism.

Ummah and Yusuf (2019) researched the pluralism values that exist in religious learning at Catholic high schools and Catholic junior high schools in Pasuruan. Based on the study's results, Catholic high schools have pluralism values that educators instill in students. This is undoubtedly a real effort Catholic educators make in a pluralistic world.

Educators are at the forefront of interacting with groups of people. In addition, educators are facilitators and are responsible for students' competence, who will later plunge into society. Catholic religious educators are essential in spreading and fostering a moderate societal culture to achieve harmony. Teachers need knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values whose integration and implementation result in interfaith competence.

Interfaith competence is not just an additional skill. Interfaith competence is a fundamental need in building social harmony. Research was conducted to explore what actions can enhance competence, especially for Catholic educators. Interfaith competence is considered necessary in globalization and a pluralistic world. The outcome of such competence is respectful behavior between individuals and groups with different backgrounds.

Literature Review

Interfaith Competency

Humans are social creatures, so interacting is already an essential human ability. Humans from different religious backgrounds can use competencies to interact effectively and respectfully. These interactional competencies can be referred to as interfaith competencies. Interfaith competence is becoming increasingly important for educators and communication leaders as they often interact with various religious groups. This interfaith competency is the basic competency used to produce pluralistic education. Interfaith competence must be owned by a group of people and all levels of society. According to

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Khairunisa (2024), interfaith competence is divided into 3, namely, collaborative competence, personal competence, and comparative competence.

Collaborative competence means individuals can think, behave, and act to work with others of different religions and beliefs. Personal competence means competence based on an understanding of one's own moral, spiritual, and knowledge framework. Comparative competence has the same meaning as personal competence, but the object of understanding is other people, especially those with different religions and beliefs.

Catholic educators in a pluralistic world

Catholicism, as a minority religion in Indonesia, certainly has Catholic religious educators. Catholic religious educators are adults responsible for providing students with knowledge and development of the Catholic religious faith. Catholic religious educators are spread across all levels of education, from elementary schools to universities, both public and private. The Church recommends Catholic educators encourage learners to appreciate moral values with a conscience (Jehaut, 2019). Educators are responsible for shaping learners' character and must provide examples of people with moral attitudes, ethics, and noble character (Sihotang, 2019).

The basic principle in pluralistic education is the recognition of diversity in society. Diversity recognition can be through interfaith dialogue between educators and students. Through dialogue, the parties involved can expand knowledge, deepen tolerance, and build harmonious relationships to communicate effectively (Hanggara & Khususiyah, 2024). Schools are institutions close to the pluralistic world, reflected in students' beliefs. Educators are responsible for improving students' morals through formal and non-formal learning. Moral improvement through the role of educators can be done in 3 aspects.

The first aspect is that educators are role models by using good communication and looking polite. Furthermore, the second aspect is that educators understand how to act politely and take responsibility for their actions. The third aspect is that educators are shepherds in that they must understand the feelings and attitudes of students (Ginting et al., 2023).

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Research Method

The research method used is qualitative, with a literature study analysis of previous journals. A literature study explains the form of interfaith competence in society and the factual conditions of Catholic educators in a pluralistic world. A literature study collects data and information and then reviews them, which will be further analyzed to produce relevant answers. Based on the results of the journal sources, existing interfaith competencies are general in scope. Indonesia is a pluralistic world. The main point emphasized in this study is the interfaith competence that Catholic educators in Indonesia can exercise.

This research uses articles with qualifications, including those based on research results with empirical evidence and published in national and international journals. In addition to journals, the author used church documents to represent the church's opinion on the phenomenon in the study. These two supporting documents are expected to support this research.

Discussion

With Indonesia's diversity, we must agree that it is a tangible form of a pluralistic world. Catholicism is one of the recognized religions in Indonesia. This gives Catholicism room to grow through the world of education. Catholicism plays a role in the world of education through the development of educational institutions. Church members who work as educators and the church need a harmonious understanding to create conditions of mutual support between the two. Harmonized understanding can occur if educators can develop interfaith competencies and the church supports educators.

How to develop interfaith competence

Interfaith competence is a competency that educators, especially Catholic educators, must possess. Indonesia's predominantly Muslim society and a large number of public educational institutions pose a challenge for Catholic educators. Competence is needed to maintain the communication situation in society, which must remain peaceful and serene. In their research, Rissanen et al. (2020) stated that several factors can be used to develop interfaith competence. These factors include our knowledge of religion and understanding of internal religious plurality. Developing the cognitive dimension through interpersonal competence can create the behavioral dimension.

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Research conducted by Aneas et al. (2024) produced a conceptual framework regarding interreligious competencies (IRC). IRC consists of (1) the ability to learn, understand, and critically analyze; (2) the capacity to manage emotions that may arise in situations of discomfort, ambiguity, and confusion; and (3) the skills needed for behaviour regulation based on all conditioning factors. These competencies are critical today, where relationships with people from different backgrounds are part of everyday life.

Interfaith competence is a significant thing that can bridge differences in religious beliefs and overcome conflicts that arise. Competence is carried out through dialogue, deep understanding, collaboration, and the application of tolerance values. Competencies can result in a greater sense of other religions, increased community cooperation, and reduced interfaith tensions (Mandalahi & Wijayanti, 2024). Interfaith competence is manifested through the act of interfaith counseling. Interfaith counseling is a meeting between counselors from different backgrounds. It can produce bias, resulting in ineffective counseling (Adhiputra, 2013). Interfaith counseling is a real effort by educators to develop interfaith competence in a pluralistic world.

The role of the church in improving the competence of Catholic educators

Catholic educators are citizens of the Catholic church who have the responsibility to provide teaching in an institution. Catholic educators are an essential part of the success of education. With this in mind, the church has a role in national education by improving the quality of education for educators (Darmawan, 2014). In addition to creating quality education, the church has a role in helping the government and being the initiator of change. The church's role is evident in establishing educational institutions with core values that can be applied in general. Catholic educators are responsible for providing students with an understanding of core values.

The church can make three efforts to deal with pluralism that can be done by educators, including realizing real-life testimony, establishing a reconciliatory mission theology, and fighting for human values and the integrity of creation (Suriawan, 2023). Churches, through educational institutions and educators, can make efforts by creating mixed classes to foster respect for plurality (Rukiyanto et al., 2024). Church documents published by the Bishops' Conference discuss tolerance so that these documents can guide Catholics, especially educators, in acting in a pluralistic world.

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Conclusion

Indonesia is an archipelago with a population of 281 million (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). In addition to a large population, Indonesia is known to have more than 1,340 ethnic groups. Many people and ethnic groups are spread across various islands in the geographical area of Indonesia. Diversity is a key feature of Indonesia. However, this plurality can prevent Indonesia from being a country where different religions coexist peacefully. Anarchist acts between ethnic, racial, and cultural groups (SARA) result in an anti-peaceful life.

Interfaith learning and dialogue can prevent and reduce community actions. Learning in the form of character education is beneficial for children at school. The competence of educators is a supporting factor for the sustainability of character education and interfaith dialogue in schools. Educators are at the forefront of direct communication with a pluralistic society. They must develop interfaith competencies focusing on character education and a tolerant environment. The Church has tried to help educators by establishing Catholic educational institutions with central values that are generally acceptable, including the issuance of church documents that can be used as guidelines for behavior in society.

As a recommendation, Catholic educators can develop interfaith competence by increasing their understanding of other religions through interreligious dialog and learning about emotional management to create media. The interpersonal competence of educators needs to support a tolerant learning environment. The Church supports the competence of educators, from establishing tolerant educational institutions to issuing documents that guide the behavior of Catholic communities.

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I am Dr. Yulianti, a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics, University of Semarang. I was born in Wonosobo in 1966. I completed my undergraduate and master's degrees at the Faculty of Economics, Diponegoro University. Doctoral education in Economics at Merdeka Malang University. In addition to teaching and research, I am a practicing public accountant, tax consultant, advocate, and resource person in several seminars and training related to taxation and accounting. I am active in various scientific organizations, such as the Indonesian Economists Association (ISEI), the Institute of Indonesia Chartered Accountants (IAI), the Indonesian Tax Consultants Association (IKPI), the Indonesian Institute of Certified Public Accountants (IAPI), and the Indonesian Catholic Scholars Association (ISKA). I am also involved in various social, humanitarian, and religious activities in the Diocese of Semarang and the surrounding community. As a lecturer, I have written several articles and books in Accounting and Auditing, including Banking Accounting, Intermediate Accounting, Auditing, BUMDes Governance, and Mosque Accounting.

