

# Strengthening the Role of Christian Education in the Multicultural Society

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**Abstract.** The existence of humans as social beings is something commonplace because basically everyone is different. Differences with one another in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and religion should enrich civilization, but what actually happens is the division of humanity. Disputes and conflicts on multicultural aspects often occur. Whereas the existence of humans as social beings, with all the diversity that meant to be a wealth of humanity to be proud of. With the complexity of this diversity, it is necessary to understand and support each other in living a safe, peaceful, and prosperous life. Humans cannot deny the diversity that exists in their lives because basically nothing is the same; all have differences and of course, the difference in question is uniqueness as a gift from God. In multicultural studies, the role of Christian education is very important, and even wider space needs to be given to implementing the principles of humanity to reduce conflict due to the existence of multiculturalism in society. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method in which efforts to describe the strengthening of the role of Christian education in a multicultural society are clearly stated.

**Keywords:** Role Strengthening, Christian Education, Multi-cultural

## 1. Introduction

The term multiculturalism appeared for the first time in Canada in the 1960s. Pierre Trudeau (1919-2000), the Prime Minister of Canada at that time saw that Canadian society with its cultural diversity that was dominated by people of British and French descent. The dominance of the two then gave birth to a concept known as Biculturalism. To deal with this, Trudeau then uses the term multiculturalism. However, there is another opinion which states that multiculturalism is a civil rights movement that occurred in the 1950s. In subsequent developments, the study of multiculturalism was then systematized and at the same time popularized by Will Kymlicka, through his two major works, namely: *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* which was published in 1989, and then *Multicultural Citizenship* which was published in 1995. For Kymlicka, the provision of space for the minorities of a country cannot be achieved only through guaranteeing individual rights in the law.

The life of the Indonesian people with all their diversity becomes a strength in the unity of the nation but it is undeniable that this diversity often creates friction and creates horizontal conflicts. That is why the role of all parties, including Christian Education, is expected to be able to overcome various problems that arise as a result of the existence of this multicultural society. By strengthening the role of Christian education in educating church members, it is hoped that horizontal problems related to multiculturalism

can be overcome. Horizontal conflicts with the nuances of SARA (ethnic, race and, religion) often occur because of the failure of all parties to maintain the diversity that exists in Indonesian society. If each party improves itself through learning and recognizing the differences in question, a common ground will be found as an effort to reduce conflict. One of the elements that can do this is the implementation of Christian Education which introduces multiculturalism in society and how to respect differences with one another as a wealth of humanity.

## **2. Theory**

A simple understanding of multiculturalism is multi-culture. Etymologically, multiculturalism is formed from the words multi (many), culture (culture), and ism (flow or understanding). Essentially, this word contains an acknowledgment of the dignity of human beings who live in their communities with their own unique culture. C. W. Watson, in *Concepts in Social Sciences: Multiculturalism*, said that: “... *multiculturalism, as a principle to be acted upon, requires from us all a receptivity to difference, an openness to change, a passion for equality, and ability to recognize our familiar selves in the strangeness of others.*” Watson sees that the principle requires everyone to accept differences and be open to change so that they can pay attention to equality; through which they can recognize themselves concerning the differences that exist.

Education is understood as a process of changing the attitudes and behavior of a person or group to mature a person or group by teaching and training, and related to Christian Education, it is understood as the process of guiding each individual into the decision to live as a Christian. Christian education is based on the Bible as the Word of God, and Jesus Christ as a person who is an example in it. Through Christian education, it is hoped that students will be enlightened and even come to know Christ.

The diversity that exists more or less causes social problems and the role of Christian education is needed to open up ideas about human existence that are different in many ways. Related to the existence of multiculturalism, the strengthening of the role of Christian education must be enlarged so that it has broad opportunities to educate the public so that they become aware of these differences.

## **3. Methodology**

This research is qualitative and carried out with a descriptive approach and tends to use analysis. Sources of data in this study through literature review. The study begins by describing the strengthening of the role of Christian education in a multicultural society. The collection of qualitative data as the ongoing process of this research is carried out through a series of stages which include: data collection and processing. The type of qualitative research used is phenomenology

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The multicultural phenomenon cannot be ignored in the life of modern society. The real diversity in human life needs to be realized and observed wisely. A multicultural society is built from many ethnic groups who join in one community, and the reality of multiculturalism is unavoidable. Everyone has a background that makes him an individual with his features and characteristics. It must be recognized that differences after differences will continue to manifest as an identity in everyone.

With this difference, the Indonesian people should need a separate mechanism in establishing a better and dignified social life. Kusumohamidjojo saw that this pluralistic Indonesian society can be found in various sub-groups of society that cannot be grouped together with groups different from himself. The fact that there are no less than 500 ethnic groups in Indonesia confirms the above facts. The same is true of their culture. Meanwhile, heterogeneity which is a counter position of homogeneity indicates a quality of a state that holds dissimilarities in its elements.

### ***Multicultural Society is a Fact***

In the context of Indonesia, this country is rich in people with cultures that follow it. Demographic data shows that: the Javanese as the largest ethnic group with a composition of 40.2%, and which consists of the Osing, Tengger, Samin, Bawean/Boyan, Naga, Nagaring, and other ethnic groups; Batak tribe which includes Angkola, Karo, Mandailing, Pakpak Dairi, Simalungun, Tapanuli, Toba, and Dairi; Sundanese with a number that reaches 15.5% of Indonesia's population; in Sulawesi, there are 208 tribes, not including the Makasar, Bugis, Minahasa and Gorontalo tribes; there are 466 tribes that inhabit the territory of Papua and West Papua; Dayak tribes who inhabit the island of Kalimantan as many as 268 ethnic groups with a population of 1.3% of the total population of Indonesia.

The condition of this multicultural society cannot be denied, and even must be able to be used as a force to build a nation and civilization. That is why it is imperative to understand this existence. Kusumohamidjojo stated that in the condition of a pluralistic Indonesian society, it is necessary to recognize two important terms to understand well, namely progress (pluralism) and diversity (heterogeneity). It should be noted that plurality is contraposition of singularity which indicates the existence of a situation that consists of plurality, and not a singularity.

### ***Christians are in the midst of multicultural society***

Believers live and exist in a pluralistic society. The Bible has been translated into various languages, as well as sermons in the church delivered in various human languages. This proves the existence of Christianity in a multicultural society. Regarding the diversity of humanity, what D. Ravitch said is correct as follows: “*Multiculturalism as the public policy for managing cultural diversity in a multi-ethnic society, officially stressing mutual respect and tolerance for cultural differences within national borders.*” With the diversity that exists, the emphasis should be on aspects of mutual respect and tolerance for differences.

In the context of national and state life, it is clear that the Indonesian nation has diversity, both in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, and culture. Multicultural reality should be a means of encouragement to support and help each other. that is why every believer should be aware of this as an ecclesiastical task in a different world.

### ***Strengthening the Role of Christian Education is needed***

Christian education must be able to be a pioneer in fighting for togetherness amid differences. Everyone is different from one another, but that doesn't mean it's a reason to stay different; there must be an effort to find elements that can unite. Remember that the implementation of education depends on the individuals involved in it; What is meant here is that every individual is involved as an organizer, teacher, and even students. Each party has a contribution in their respective capacities. If each party is aware of the importance of togetherness for the sake of the unity of humanity, then divisions that can harm one another can be avoided. Strengthening the role of Christian education in this regard needs to be further improved so that every human being is aware of this important matter.

As it is known that the purpose of Christian education is to know God as the creator and government of this entire universe, and Jesus Christ as redeemer, leader, and helper, and to love fellow human beings and be converted to their sins so they want to repent. Every student needs to be taught about humans as noble beings and, behavior that hurts others is inappropriate. Likewise, if we are taught about togetherness as fellow human beings who must take care of each other, maintain and even protect. That is why, if knowing God correctly and responsibly is applied in every Christian education lesson, then surely every individual in it will be able to protect and respect one another, even though the culture is different from it.

### ***The existence of Christianity is a must***

Christianity that is present amid a multicultural society must be able to be the salt and light of the world (cf. Matthew 5:13-16). Salt that can salt, and light that can illuminate. That is a Christian existence. The Bible is the underlying source of Christian teaching and, authoritative for all truth and teaching (cf. II

Timothy 3:16). Although the Bible does not fully provide factual knowledge about every subject taught in schools, the framework of Christian education is sourced from this book.

Christian education is tasked to ensure that the existence of Christianity in society is well maintained. That is why the implementation of proper and responsible education will give the expected results. Strengthening the role of Christian education is related to coaching students to get to know a multicultural society that can produce individuals who not only know Christ in their faith but are also capable of implementing their faith responsibilities to the surrounding community.

## 5. Conclusion

A multicultural society is a reality that cannot be avoided, and if this situation is not managed properly, it can lead to horizontal conflicts. A multicultural society is a human's wealth that can be proud of. That is why proper management is needed in education that enlightens society about the diversity of life.

Strengthening the role of Christian education needs to be done seriously as part of Christian responsibilities in the world. Students need to be taught about the reality of the multicultural society that exists in their midst and makes every believer be salt and light for the world. Thus, students will be able to implement the responsibility of their faith towards the community.

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