

The Significance of Application of Religious Studies Courses at PTKIN in Central Java under Development Dialogue and Preaching

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Abstract:

This article wants to counter that the study of religions is not intended to make students who study them become apostates, but by studying religions, students are actually more tolerant towards inter-religious communities. This type of research is field research using a phenomenological approach. To obtain data the author used observation, interview and document techniques. This research uses phenomenological analysis. The Problems appear in various forms in this global era is very complex and multi-dimensional This certainly encourages humanity to return to paying attention to religion in an effort to find solutions to the actual problems faced. The attention seems to have increased significantly, both in the form of ideas, ideas, thoughts and movements. Many people are re-examining and discussing religion as more and more people are increasing their commitment and adherence to religion. Along with that, the field of religious studies is finding its momentum to become the idol of scientists in various fields.

[Artikel ini ingin membantah bahwa kajian agama tidak dimaksudkan untuk membuat mahasiswa yang mempelajarinya menjadi murtad, tetapi dengan mempelajari agama, mahasiswa justru lebih toleran terhadap komunitas antaragama. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian lapangan dengan



menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis. Untuk mendapatkan data penulis menggunakan teknik observasi, wawancara dan dokumen. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis fenomenologis. Masalah yang muncul dalam berbagai bentuk di era global ini sangat kompleks dan multi-dimensi Hal ini tentunya mendorong umat manusia untuk kembali memperhatikan agama dalam upaya mencari solusi atas permasalahan aktual yang dihadapi. Perhatian tersebut tampaknya meningkat secara signifikan, baik dalam bentuk ide, ide, pikiran dan gerakan. Banyak orang memeriksa kembali dan mendiskusikan agama karena semakin banyak orang yang meningkatkan komitmen dan kepatuhan mereka terhadap agama. Bersamaan dengan itu, bidang studi agama menemukan momentumnya untuk menjadi idola para ilmuwan di berbagai bidang.]

Keywords:

Religious Studies Courses, PTKIN, Dialogue, Preaching

A. Introduction

One of the biggest challenges faced by Indonesian society today is the infiltration of radicalism notions which are now exposing many young people. This should be of great concern considering that those who are exposed to radicalism will easily be invited to be involved in terrorist movements. Once upon a time in Surakarta, a friend of mine met a Madrasah Aliyah student who easily said that for him, followers of Shia and Ahmadiyah deserved harsh treatment from society. This pattern of thinking is certainly a real threat in the future. What happens if our young people are filled with the spirit of hatred and anti-diversity. A generation that allows violence to justify what it believes is right.¹

Even though those who are radical are not necessarily adherents of terrorism, radicalism is actually a first step that can cause someone to be involved in acts of terrorism.² Unfortunately, the infiltration of this radicalism movement actually strengthened among young people, both in high schools and on campuses. The closeness of the millennial young

¹ Zaid Munawar and Muhammad Ishom, 'The Emergence of Student-Writers in Surakarta: Combating Religious Radicalism Among Youth in the Digital Age', *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* Vol. 11, no. 1 (2023): 45–70.

² Rogelio Alonso et al., *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: A Concise Report Prepared by The European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation* (Europ: European Commission, 2008).

generation to social media is suspected to be one of the reasons for the emergence of this spirit of exclusivity.³

Millennials are the generation of the biggest social media users. From Facebook, WA, Twitter, Path to Instagram. Social media is filled with hate speech wrapped in religion which, if not understood carefully, will actually lead young people to an exclusive and anti-diversity religious model.⁴

This research was conducted to find out all the problems faced by the Religious Studies Study Program and the Religious Studies Course both academically and student-wise in order to obtain effective solutions for developing this Department in the future. For research locations, it was conducted at 6 PTKINs in Central Java (IAIN Kudus, UIN Walisongo Semarang IAIN Pekalongan, UIN Purwokerto, IAIN Salatiga and UIN Surakarta) on the grounds that the Religious Studies Study Program at the three UINs as well as the Religion Studies course were seen as representing the condition The study of religions in Indonesia both Historically, Academic Culture. The research sample was academic residents at 6 PTKIN in Central Java, mainly those in the Religious Studies Study Program or Ushuludin faculty students who received religious studies courses. This type of research is field research using a phenomenological approach. Data from the phenomena studied in this study can be collected in various ways, including observation and in-depth interviews, transcendental empirical communication and documentation. After the data is collected, technical data analysis is carried out. The data analysis process in this study will be carried out using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as written by Smith. The stages of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis that will be carried out include the following stages: 1) Reading and re-reading; 2) Initial notes; 3) Developing Emergent themes; 4) Searching for connections across. emergent themes; 5) Moving on to the next case; and 6) Looking for patterns across cases.⁵

³ Mirabdullayeva Zulfiya Olimjonovna and Akhmedova Shakhnoza Gayrat Kizi, 'Religious Extremism and Terrorism: As A Threat to The Development and Peace of Society', *Journal NX- A Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal*, Vol. 6, no. 10 (2020): 182–85.

⁴ Suci Ramadhanti Febriani and Apri Wardana Ritonga, 'The Perception of Millennial Generation on Religious Moderation through Social Media in the Digital Era', *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama* Vol. 21, no. 2 (2022): 313–34.

⁵ Hamed Taherdoost, 'Data Collection Methods and Tools for Research; A Step-by-Step Guide to Choose Data Collection Technique for Academic and Business Research

B. The Emergence of Radical Concept in the Study Area

Facts about young people and the penetration of radicalism that has hit this generation are corroborated by the results of research on the significance of Islamic studies courses at PTKI in Central Java in 2021. The results of the study found that the current younger generation has a tendency to internalize radicalist views that are penetrated by the environment. closest. The process of internalization begins with the tendency of Islamic consciousness to be higher than national consciousness. At a certain level, Islamic awareness has replaced and neglected national consciousness.⁶

At first, it was thought that the infiltration of radical movements only took place on public campuses or in public schools. In fact, the infiltration of this movement no longer only occurs among public campuses but also targets campuses of other religions. The arrest of several members of the terrorist network who are students and alumni of Islamic campuses proves that the recruitment pattern of this movement is no longer only targeting public campuses, but has also started targeting campuses labeled as Islamic.⁷ Even though in terms of numbers, the percentage of those who adhere to this radical ideology is small compared to the majority of Indonesia's population, this is still a threat to the sustainability of Indonesia as a country that upholds the value of diversity, Bhineka Tunggal Ika. Fuad Fanani cites the views of Sidney Jones who says that the threat of terrorism and radicalism in Indonesia is real even though only minorities are radical Muslims. The consequence of strengthening radical religious understandings among students is that students' Islamic understanding becomes monolithic and tends to blame other parties. This closed religious understanding also reduces the nationalism they have.⁸

Projects', *International Journal of Academic Research in Management* Vol. 10, no. 1 (2021): 10–38.

⁶ Aep Saepudin, 'Islamic Education in the Context of Globalization: Facing the Challenges of Secularism and Materialism', *International Journal of Science and Society*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (2022): 393–407.

⁷ Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, *An Introduction to The Danish Approach to Countering and Preventing Extremism and Radicalization* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2015), 4–6.

⁸ Ahmad Fuad Fanani, 'Fenomena Radikalisme Di Kalangan Kaum Muda', *Ma'arif: Arus Pemikiran Islam Dan Sosial* Vol. 8, no. 1 (2013): 4–13.

The issue of radicalism of the younger generation is also not merely a sectoral issue in the sense that the infiltration of radicalism does not only occur on the island of Java but also spreads to eastern Indonesia. In Makassar, research results disclosed by Makassar Research and Development also indicate the emergence of youth radicalization in this city. Syamsurijal in the report of the Makassar Religious Research and Development Center stated that there were indications of a shift in students' religious understanding on several campuses in Makassar. The shift in question is the religious model that used to be open and tolerant, now tends to be inclusive and often leads to radicalism. Although he acknowledged that the process of shifting identities and understandings is commonplace in the context of globalization, this should be watched out for given that religious radicalism is suspected of triggering escalation of violence and acts of intolerance in the name of religion.⁹

This is in line with a national survey conducted by BNPT in collaboration with The Nusa Institute in 2017. A survey involving 9,600 people in 32 provinces in Indonesia placed Makassar as one of the cities with high potential for radicalism.¹⁰ This is not the first time that the names Makassar or South Sulawesi have been mentioned as areas with strong potential for radicalism. In 2014, Ahmad Najib Burhani, et al in the book *Conservative Turn; Indonesian Islam in the Threat of Fundamentalism* gave rise to the name South Sulawesi as a province that has a strong tradition of radicalism. This is suspected because previously in 1952 and 1956, South Sulawesi together with Aceh and West Java were the regional bases of the Darul Islam rebellion.¹¹

Seeing the strong exposure to radicalism among young people, studies on young people in the vortex of religious radicalism have emerged. In writing, Zuly Qodir states that the emergence of radicalism among young people is caused by many factors. Among them are psychological factors, domestic and international political conditions, textualist religious texts, to the loss of role models so that young people look for new charismatic

⁹ Syamsurijal and et al., *Yang Muda, Yang Fundamental: Fenomena Pergeseran Paham Keagamaan Mahasiswa Muslim* (Makassar: Cahaya Mujur Lestari, 2016), 4–6.

¹⁰ BNPT, 'Laporan Pemetaan Potensi Radikalisme Dan Terorisme Di 32 Provinsi Se-Indonesia' (Jakarta: BNPT, 2017).

¹¹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Conservative Turn: Islam Indonesia Dalam Ancaman Fundamentalisme* (Bandung: Mizan, 2014), 133–36.

figures.¹² Meanwhile Wahyudi Akmaliah, an LIPI researcher who is much concerned with issues of youth and pop culture, states that there are many factors that cause young people to get entangled in the notion of radicalism. These factors include the problem of poverty, the vulnerability of family education, the massive network of terrorism against young people in the midst of an identity crisis they are experiencing, the weakness of state justice, and the ambitions of Islamist attitudes after the New Order regime to enter the public sphere.¹³

In line with that, the question that deserves to be asked related to the phenomenon of strengthening religious radicalism among the younger generation is, where is the position of academics of religious studies in dealing with this phenomenon. More specifically, what is the contribution of the Study Program of Religions in responding to the increasing cases of radicalism among young people.¹⁴

C. Study Program of Religions as a Pioneer of Religious Inclusiveness

The problem of radicalism is a complex problem and does not arise from a single cause, so of course a holistic approach is needed in overcoming this problem. Every element of society as well as the state has a moral responsibility to be involved in the process of deradicalization and strengthening the spirit of togetherness as a nation. This includes the Study Program of Religions. Moreover, the Study of Religions itself is expected to become a study program that will be one of the spearheads to fortify young people -- in this case students -- so that they are not involved in radicalism movements.¹⁵

If all this time radicalism is understood to arise because it originates from a religious attitude that tends to be very exclusive, then on the

¹² Zuly Qodir, *Radikalisme Agama Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2014), 32–34.

¹³ Wahyudi Akmaliah Muhammad and Khelmy K. Pribadi, 'Anak Muda, Radikalisme, Dan Budaya Populer', *Ma'arif: Arus Pemikiran Islam Dan Sosial* Vol. 8, no. 1 (2013): 132–53.

¹⁴ Nele Schils and Antoinette Verhage, 'Understanding How and Why Young People Enter Radical or Violent Extremist Groups', *International Journal for Conflict and Violence* Vol. 11, no. 2 (2017): 1–17.

¹⁵ Muhammad Adnan and Anita Amaliyah, 'Radicalism VS Extremism: The Dilemma of Islam and Politics in Indonesia', *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial* Vol. 20, no. 1 (2021): 24–48.

contrary, the study of religions is a space that allows students to get out of the confines of exclusivity that has so far infected those who are exposed to radicalism. It can be said that the study of Religion is an incubator where the spirit of religious inclusiveness is raised. This happens because differences in faith are not new for young people in the study program of religions. Instead of being an exclusive and anti-religious youth group, the Study of Religions is a place where students celebrate diversity.¹⁶

Religious inclusiveness is not understood as an understanding that all religions are the same. Religious inclusiveness in question is a religious concept that is different from religious concepts that tend to be exclusive. A concept of diversity that is open and accepts the social fact that there are many people with different religious choices. As meant by Alwi Shihab that religious inclusion is an open nature in religion. This characteristic is very important because according to Alwi Shihab, world peace will not be achieved without peace between and within religious communities.¹⁷ Inter- and intra-religious peace can occur if society is able to be inclusive in religion. The concept of inclusive Islam itself is believed to have been demonstrated by the Prophet during his lifetime with the emergence of the Medina Charter.¹⁸ The contents of the Medina charter contain the Prophet's idea of creating a civil society by applying universal human principles.¹⁹

The activities carried out in the Study Program of Religions, both in the form of formal classes and off-campus activities make it possible to create meetings with those of different faiths. It would not be wrong to mention then that studying at the Study Program of Religions not only enhances interfaith understanding, but also provides interfaith experiences. One of the problems in our life as a pluralistic nation is

¹⁶ Holger Daun, 'Islam, Christianity and Secularism in European Education', *Policy Futures in Education* Vol. 6, no. 6 (2008): 730–42.

¹⁷ Alwi Shihab, *Islam Inklusif, Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama* (Bandung: Mizan, 1997), 2–5.

¹⁸ Abdul Fatah and et al., 'The Qur'anic Vision Towards Minorities in a Plural Society: A Case Study in Kudus Regency, Indonesia', *IBDA': Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya* Vol. 22, no. 2 (2024): 213–34.

¹⁹ Muhammad Zainuddin, *Pluralisme Agama: Pergulatan Dialogis Islam-Kristen Di Indonesia* (Malang: UIN Maliki Press, 2011), 41–44.

actually the lack of interfaith meeting rooms. Interreligious relations often only end in awkward and negative tolerance.²⁰

In the future, students of religious studies are expected to be able to crystallize the views of the nation's teacher, Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur regarding efforts to build relationships between different faiths. Gus Dur's tolerant attitude can be seen through his daily life where Gus Dur appears in defending minorities and non-Muslims and cooperates with anyone openly, both Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and other Islamic groups. Even though in the end, Gus Dur's attitude often received accusations, barrage of blasphemy and accusations of being a traitor to the people. To reach that level requires an effort to mature oneself in religion and the study program of religions is a place where the process of religious maturity can be built.²¹

In Central Java and Yogyakarta itself, the movement of the interfaith movement has recently been very developed. Groups that have concerns about peace and interfaith issues have emerged, such as Interfide, Jalin Harmoni, Mahabbah Institute for Peace and Goodness, PISS, and also Gusdurian. Interestingly, the interfaith movement was actually initiated and driven by the millennial generation. Young people who care about the interfaith movement. The approach they use is no longer just a dialogue but is mixed with the contemporary model that is typical of young people 'Age Now'. Interfaith dialogue is built on the model of Interfaith Camp, Peace-santren, Voice of Peace, or Futsal for Peace.²² It was in these institutions that some students of the Study of Religions took part in the process. The existence of cooperation that is built with these institutions makes the children of the Study of Religions not only learn in the classroom but are also directly involved in designing interfaith works in the field.

What remains is how to transmit the spirit of religious inclusiveness embraced by Students of the Study Program of Religions to those who choose majors outside of Religious Studies. Spread the inclusivism spirit to

²⁰ Mercedes Llorent-Vaquero, 'Religious Education in Public Schools in Western Europe', *International Education Studies* Vol. 11, no. 1 (2018): 155–64.

²¹ Indo Santalia, 'K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid: Agama Dan Negara, Pluralisme, Demokratisasi Dan Pribumisasi', *Al-Adyaan: Jurnal Sosial Dan Agama* Vol. 1, no. 2 (2015): 137–46.

²² Syamsul Arif Galib, *Dialog Lintas Agama Model Kekinian Ala Muslim Makassar Dalam Muslim Milenial* (Bandung: Mizan, 2018), 9–12.

those who have seen different faiths as “enemies” since childhood, or at least those who have problems in interfaith understanding and have never had the opportunity to experience interfaith experiences. For this reason, in the future, students of Religious Studies are required to be able to create new study spaces off campus, in their communities as a forum for sharing and spreading the virus of peace that they have learned in the Study Program of Religions. Every student is expected to be able to carry out interfaith schools for children from elementary to high school levels.

Lecturers in the Study Program of Religions are also expected to be able to show this enthusiasm to students of Religious Studies. The presence of lecturers in Religious Studies in the interfaith movement will certainly inspire students to be involved in similar activities. In the future, it is hoped that lecturers in Religious Studies will not only appear as researchers and commentators on interfaith relations, but also as practitioners of interfaith activities in society.

D. Study of PTKIN Religions in Central Java: Hopes and Challenges

As one of the study programs under the auspices of the Ushuluddin Faculty, the Religion Studies Study Program is expected to become a study program that can be part of the solution to various socio-religious problems that occur in society. In addition to providing academic contributions related to religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia, this study program is also expected to be pro- active in managing cross-faith diversity and creating young people who are open and not have radical views.²³

At UIN Semarang, for example, when it was founded in 1972, the Study Program of Religions was originally called the Department of Comparative Religion. In line with time, in the context of developing the department, in 1999, this department received permission to then open two study programs, namely the Study Program for the Study of Religions and the Study Program for the Sociology of Religion. But seeing the low interest in this program, the acceptance of new students, then the T.A. 1999/2000 was only open to Comparative Religion majors/study programs. Along with the enactment of Presidential Regulation No. 57 dated 10 October 2005 related to the change in status from IAIN to UIN,

²³ Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies Di Perguruan Tinggi, Pendekatan Integratif – Interkoneksi*(Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012), 2–5.

so in the 2004/2005 academic year both study programs began to open. Furthermore, with the issuance of Regulation of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Number 36 of 2009 concerning Determination of Science Fields and Academic Degrees in the Environment of Religious Higher Education, T.A. 2009/2010, the Department of Comparative Religion opened the Comparative Religion Study Program and the Sociology of Religion Study Program.

Since October 2015, the two study programs - Comparative Religion and Sociology of Religion - have been declared independent, with status as Departments as well as Study Programs. Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 2110 of 2017 concerning Adjustment of Study Program Nomenclature at Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar then changed the name of the Comparative Religion Study Program to the Study Program of Religions. This name is still attached to the Study Program of Religions at UIN Walisongo Semarang.

The name change from Comparative Religion to the Study of Religions is an attempt to change the erroneous understanding of the Department of Religious Studies. In the past, there was an impression that the Department of Comparative Religion was a department where Muslims studied many religions so that they could then find out where the weaknesses of other religions were. This paradigm makes Comparative Religion more visible as a department that actually "competition" religion. It is not surprising that the figures that emerge and become students' idols are those who are experts in religious debate. Take Ahmed Deedat for example. The trend of religious debate looks sexy and attractive. This kind of paradigm emerged because Comparative Religion was dominated by the theological paradigm at that time. In the book *Study of Religion in Indonesia: Reflection on Experience*, Suhadi writes that in the past, the paradigm that dominated academic study of religion in tertiary institutions in Indonesia was generally not the paradigm of Religious Studies (Religious Studies). Suhadi, *Dari Perbandingan Agama Ke Studi Agama Yang Terlibat Dalam Studi Agama Di Indonesia; Refleksi Pengalaman* (Yogyakarta: CRCS, 2016). This is partly influenced by the lack of development of the paradigm of religious studies, on the contrary, the dominant paradigm is the theological paradigm.²⁴

²⁴ Schweitzer Friedrich and Schreiner Peter, 'International Knowledge Transfer in Religious Education: Universal Validity or Regional Practices? Backgrounds,

It is this paradigm that is being tried to change with the emergence of the term Religious Studies. Religious Studies is a study program that allows students not only to study many religions but also to try to see how religion influences society's social life with various models of approaches. Students are expected to come to the fore no longer as religious debaters but to become people who are actually more interested and active in interfaith dialogues.

The presence of Religious Studies at IAIN Salatiga, for example, is expected to become one of the study programs that makes an active contribution to socio-religious issues in Indonesia as well as being a solution to socio-religious cases in this country. Religious Studies is not only expected to produce students, but also to produce practitioners who are concerned with the spirit of religious inclusivity and become a stronghold in counteracting radicalism among young people who have recently also found momentum to rise in Indonesia..

Despite the noble intention of the emergence of the presence of Religious Studies as a solution in dealing with the strengthening wave of religious radicalization, the reality is that it is not easy for religious studies at PTKIN in Central Java to emerge with this mission. As a study program, there are still a number of challenges faced by the Department of Religion Studies itself.

The change from IAIN to UIN which was followed by an explosion of prospective new students on the campuses of several UINs in Central Java did not necessarily make the Study of Religions one of the majors that also felt the surge in prospective applicants. The increase in the number of applicants generally only occurred in non-religious majors. Instead of making the study of religions their main choice, Students of the Study of Religions themselves often make the Study of Religion their last choice. This is because even those who choose to study religions are often confused about where they will end up. Where will the graduates of religious studies be taken and what are their future prospects. To answer questions from the community about what they will become in the future, students of religious studies themselves are often confused about the answers.

Considerations and Open Questions Concerning a New Debate', *British Journal of Religious Education* Vol. 42, no. 4 (2020): 381–90.

The discourse that has been raised is to make Religious Studies alumni as teacher candidates. This reason arose because it was suspected that the spirit of radicalism and exclusivity arose because young children were taught by religious teachers who had radical views. This arises because the model of teaching religion in schools is mono-religious, the concept of teaching religion that only studies one religion. Achmad Munjid states that a mono-religious teaching model is only suitable for religious education institutions such as Islamic boarding schools and seminaries, but is not suitable for public schools whose students have diverse religious backgrounds. If religion is to be taught in public schools, then a more suitable model is a multi-religious model of teaching religion. This model allows students the opportunity to study other religions, besides the religion they adhere to. In this way, students can have an adequate understanding, at least of basic matters, both concerning the doctrines, traditions and practices of various religions. But for that, it needs to be considered carefully at which level and by whom subjects like this are taught. For this reason, alumni of Religious Studies who are at least considered to understand the spirit of inclusiveness are encouraged to be directly involved in the teaching and learning process at school.²⁵

Unfortunately, subjects on the introduction of world religions are not found in secondary schools. Whether it's in Middle School or High School. The idea of teaching religion using a multi-religious model as proposed by Munjid is also still difficult for groups to accept, which often misunderstands the process of religious learning outside of what they believe. Studying a religion other than the one one believes in is often feared to fade one's faith or even lead someone to change their beliefs. Views and fears like these that lead to interfaith meetings are often interpreted positively rather than negatively.

Forget about religious teaching, the concept of interfaith dialogue itself, which actually opens an open space for religious people to be able to share and know each other, is often interpreted negatively. Those who reject interfaith dialogue often suspect that the interfaith dialogue that is carried out has a hidden mission. Interfaith dialogue is often seen as a Western product, funded by the West and aimed at secularizing Muslims. In fact,

²⁵ Achmad Munjid, *Signifikansi Studi Dan Pengajaran Agama Model Inter-Religius Dalam Memaknai Pluralisme Dalam Studi Agama Di Indonesia; Refleksi Pengalaman* (Yogyakarta: CRCS, 2016), 2–5.

inter-faith dialogue is a platform built to forge a knot of understanding by adherents of different faiths. In countries where Muslims are a minority, interfaith dialogue is encouraged to build an attitude of openness and a more comprehensive understanding of Islam. Interfaith dialogue is also carried out to prevent the emergence of Islamophobia towards Islam.²⁶

The idea raised by Achmad Munjid regarding religious teaching with a multi-religious model is actually not the first time it has been conveyed. Long before, in 1797, UI Professor of Sociology, Harsja W. Bachtiar had proposed a similar idea. According to Harsja W. Bachtiar, religious lectures at PTs need to be replaced with religions lectures whose contents cover all the belief traditions that live in Indonesia. The method used must be scientific, not doctrinal. Previously, the former Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia from 1978 to 1983, Daoed Joesoef, had also suggested the need for major religions courses to replace religion lessons in public schools. However, the proposal which later became known as the "five religions" lesson, as well as the proposed lecture on religions by Harsja Bachtiar, only received strong criticism, especially from Muslim circles. Alamsjah Ratu Prawiranegara, who at that time served as Minister of Religion, even called the proposal for "five religions" a crazy idea.²⁷

Not accepting the idea of teaching religions in schools has closed the possibility for alumni of the study of religions to become teachers in those subjects. The only thing that is then possible is to encourage Religious Studies alumni to try to compete to become teachers of Religion, Pancasila or Civic Education.

Another challenge is the lack of literature related to other religions. In fact, the presence of the literature is considered to be able to support the space for students of religious studies, especially for those who are directly involved in interfaith movements. The presence of the literature is considered very urgent because the theological foundation is considered important for young people involved in this movement to enrich their understanding about different faiths seen from the point of view of the adherents of the religion concerned. In addition, it is very

²⁶ Galib, *Dialog Lintas Agama Model Kekinian Ala Muslim Makassar Dalam Muslim Milenial*, 25–28.

²⁷ Munjid, *Signifikansi Studi Dan Pengajaran Agama Model Inter-Religius Dalam Memaknai Pluralisme Dalam Studi Agama Di Indonesia; Refleksi Pengalaman*, 17.

important to read a book on understanding a religion from the perspective of the religion itself.

What is equally important is the availability of a Laboratory for the Study of Religions. The presence of the Religious Studies Laboratory is considered important and urgent considering that this Laboratory can be used as a practicum place for students studying religions. This laboratory can also be developed as a place for students of the Study of Religions to develop their potential and curiosity regarding religious issues. In this place, the production of ideas will continue to be developed so that students studying religions become students who are rich in ideas. The Religious Studies Laboratory can also become an incubation vessel for prospective interfaith peace activists from the Study of Religions. It is in this laboratory that they will be brewed with many classes outside of general courses. This is a place where they can practice writing and be taught to become future researchers. In the future, the Religious Studies Laboratory is expected to become an embryo in the formation of the Center for Religion and Peace Studies under the auspices of the Study Program of Religions at several UINs in Central Java.

Apart from the problems above, the Study Program of Religions is also required to build a lot of collaboration with other interfaith institutions that have almost the same concern. This form of cooperation is not only focused on institutions at UIN and IAIN in the Central Java region, but also with other institutions outside Central Java and even abroad. Inviting people of different faiths to come and share their understanding in the Study of Religions Study Program is an attempt to show that in this Study Program, religion is studied with an inter-religious model, not with a multi-religious model alone. It is very important to study religion with an inter-religious model because the inter-religious model provides opportunities for dialogue between adherents of religions.

Another hope that arises is how in the future this department can accept non-Muslim students who are also interested in studying the study of religions at PTKIN in Central Java. This is certainly a bold step that can be taken by the Study Program of Religions. Another bold step is to make the Study Program of Religions an International Study Program that is able and willing to accept international students. The presence of international students in the Religious Studies Study Program will certainly give its own color to this study program.

E. Conclusion

Despite the challenges and improvement efforts he has made, it is legitimate to hope that the strengthening of Religious Studies is expected to be one of the solutions in overcoming the rise of radicalism in Indonesia. Efforts to stem radicalism can be one of the tasks for the department of religious studies, especially the Study of Religions at PTKIN in Central Java. The Religious Studies Study Program must have the courage to be at the forefront of voicing an attitude of religious inclusiveness, anti-religious radicalism and also building a spirit of inter-faith tolerance.

The aspiration to become a leading Center for Religious Studies in Indonesia must continue to be inflamed by all academics in the Study Program of Religions. It's not easy of course, but like a human being who must have dreams so that he continues to be excited to move forward, so is the Study Program of Religions. That dream is an encouragement so that the study program can move forward. And to achieve that dream, the Religious Studies Study Program must provide evidence that they deserve this recognition. []

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