

# Interfaith Religious Education in Indonesia



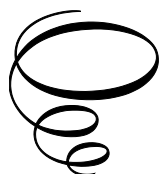
# Interfaith Religious Education in Indonesia

By

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book, *Interfaith Religious Education in Indonesia*, was born from my long academic and personal engagement with issues of religious pluralism, interreligious dialogue, and the urgent need for educational reform in Indonesia's multicultural society. The central question that animates this work is simple yet profound: how can religious education, instead of perpetuating exclusivism and intolerance, become a transformative space that cultivates empathy, critical thinking, and mutual respect among believers of different faiths?

Over the years, I have witnessed how religion, when confined to doctrinal rigidity, can unintentionally sustain prejudice and alienation. Conversely, when understood through dialogical and inclusive perspectives, religion has the power to liberate the human spirit, strengthen social cohesion, and nurture peace. These contrasting realities inspired me to explore the idea of interfaith religious education—an educational model that bridges the gap between theology and social experience, between belief and coexistence.

This book presents both a theoretical framework and empirical exploration. Theoretically, it builds upon the idea of positive pluralism, a concept that moves beyond passive tolerance to active engagement with diversity. This framework draws from classical and contemporary thinkers—ranging from Mukti Ali and Nurcholish Madjid to John Hick and Diana Eck—who have shaped our understanding of religious pluralism as both divine will (*sunnatullah*) and social necessity. Through this perspective, pluralism is not merely acknowledged but celebrated as a vital condition for human and national flourishing.

Empirically, this book documents and analyzes the pioneering practices of three interfaith organizations in Indonesia—*Interfidei* in Yogyakarta, the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP) in Jakarta, and *Jakatarub* in Bandung. These organizations represent living laboratories of interfaith education, where the dialogue of life, theological encounter, and collaborative action intersect. Their work demonstrates that interfaith understanding is not a utopian dream, but a tangible and teachable practice that can be integrated into formal and non-formal education.

The research process behind this book involved direct engagement with activists, educators, and participants from multiple religious backgrounds.

Through phenomenological inquiry, I sought to capture their lived experiences of learning, encountering, and reflecting across boundaries. The stories and insights gathered from these communities reveal that interfaith education, when designed thoughtfully, not only deepens students' understanding of others but also strengthens their faith and moral integrity.

At a broader level, this work is also a response to the alarming rise of intolerance and exclusivism within religious education in Indonesia. Empirical studies by institutions such as PPIM UIN Jakarta and The Wahid Institute have shown that many educators still carry exclusivist attitudes, which, consciously or unconsciously, perpetuate religious prejudice in schools. These findings call for urgent reflection and reconstruction. Religious education must evolve from being confessional and indoctrinative toward being dialogical and humanistic.

Interfaith Religious Education in Indonesia is thus a call for transformation. It urges educators, policymakers, and religious leaders to reimagine the function of religious education: not merely to form believers within their faiths but to form citizens capable of embracing difference as a blessing. Education should no longer isolate students within religious boundaries but prepare them for life in a shared, plural world.

This book would not have been possible without the contribution of many individuals and institutions. I am indebted to my co-author, **Reza Adeputra Tohis**, for his intellectual partnership and insightful collaboration. I extend my deepest gratitude to the members of Interfidei, ICRP, and Jakatarub, who opened their doors and shared their experiences with openness and sincerity. I also acknowledge my colleagues and students at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, IAIN Manado, for their encouragement and critical discussions that continually sharpened my perspective.

Above all, this book is dedicated to the young generation of Indonesia-students, teachers, and activists-who dare to envision a future where religious differences are not boundaries but bridges; where classrooms become spaces of dialogue, and education becomes a sacred act of building peace.

I hope this work contributes, even modestly, to that vision. May it inspire further scholarship, dialogue, and collaboration among those who believe that the true strength of faith lies not in exclusivity but in compassion, understanding, and the courage to coexist.

Manado, November 2025

Arhanuddin Salim

# FOREWORD

AL MAKIN

SUNAN KALIJAGA ISLAMIC STATE UNIVERSITY

Religious life is both an opportunity and a vital problem for national development in Indonesia, a varied country with hundreds of ethnic groups and six officially recognized religions coexisting in a complex cultural pluralism. The Indonesian pluralism experiment is at a critical crossroads in the twenty-first century, with challenges from globalization, rising religious conservatism, and the lingering legacy of colonial-era divisions. For far too long, interfaith conversation has been primarily an elitist undertaking, limited to ceremonial meetings of religious leaders and, at times, surreptitiously co-opted into state political goals. While these high-level discussions are valuable, this top-down approach has largely failed to reflect broader societal realities, leaving the younger generation—the nation's pluralistic stewards—as passive observers rather than active participants in shaping interreligious understanding.

Scholarly discourse on Indonesian pluralism typically manifests in three distinct genres, each with characteristic strengths and limitations.

The first theological-apologetic works rely only on the Qur'an and Hadith. Authors like Quraish Shihab, for example, methodically interpret texts to lay theological groundwork for tolerance. This method wields enormous power throughout Muslim communities because its intrinsic logic commands respect and credibility. Its main fault, however, is its insularity; it frequently fails to connect with secular or non-Muslim audiences, potentially preaching only to the converted.

The second genre emerges from practical experience, documented by NGOs like *Interfidei* or activists chronicling grassroots dialogue. These accounts provide invaluable, tangible proof of coexistence, offering relatable models and humanizing abstract concepts. Their strength is their grounded realism. Yet, their weakness is a frequent lack of theoretical depth; they can remain descriptive case studies without forging a broader conceptual framework to guide wider application.

The third genre engages in theoretical reflection, where academics like Azyumardi Azra or Zainal Abidin Bagir analyze pluralism through



lenses of political philosophy, sociology, or post-colonial theory. This kind produces robust, transferable frameworks and critically examines the very concepts of "tolerance" and "modernity." Its strength is its intellectual rigor and comparative scope. Its corresponding weakness is a potential disconnect from on-the-ground realities, sometimes speaking in specialized language that remains within academic circles without inspiring practical action.

A truly comprehensive understanding of Indonesian pluralism requires a synthesis that acknowledges the legitimacy granted by the first, learns from the praxis of the second, and is guided by the critical rigor of the third.

This book, *Interfaith Religious Education in Indonesia*, by Arhanuddin Salim and Reza Adeputra Tohis emerges from this urgent need to democratize the spirit of religious harmony from the ground and NGO perspectives. This book contends that for pluralism to be resilient, it must be cultivated through education rather than left to chance or occasional interfaith events. The central argument Salim and Tohis advance is the necessity for a fundamental paradigm shift: moving dialogue from conference rooms into the classroom, from occasional events to integrated curriculum, and from abstract theological discussions to practical engagement with differences.

This work posits that students at secondary and university levels must be empowered not merely to tolerate difference but to engage with it directly, confidently, and critically. The models of theological dialogue, dialogue in action, and the dialogue of life—which the book explores in depth—must be integrated into the very core of religious pedagogy. This represents a significant departure from the current approach to religious education in Indonesia, which largely remains confessionally segregated and focused on intra-religious formation rather than inter-religious understanding.

What makes this exploration particularly valuable is that it is grounded not in theoretical speculation alone but in the tangible, pioneering efforts of three key Indonesian non-government organizations that have courageously charted this path: Interfidei in Yogyakarta, the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP) in Jakarta, and Jakatarub (Interreligious Cooperation Network) in Bandung. These groups serve as living prototypes, demonstrating through their innovative programs and methodologies that a more down to earth approach to interfaith education is not only possible but already yielding results in various communities across the Indonesian archipelago.

Through ground data analysis, this book reveals how such education fosters remarkable development in students who participate in these programs. They emerge not with diluted religious commitment, but

rather as individuals more secure and reflective in their own faith, yet simultaneously more open to a fair and accurate understanding of other traditions. Furthermore, these models develop what we term "inter-religious methodology"—an approach that allows all religions and beliefs to be examined objectively and analyzed critically, thereby mitigating the dogmatism and absolutist claims that often fuel conflict in plural societies.

This book is designed to lead readers through an exploration of this critical topic. The book begins by laying the theoretical groundwork for what we call "Positive Pluralism"—a framework that goes beyond mere tolerance to active engagement. The book then explores the conceptual and historical roots of interreligious communication, offering critical background for understanding current activities. The central theme of this work is an in-depth examination of the three organizational models stated above, focusing on their approaches, obstacles, and accomplishments. Finally, the book discusses how these findings have far-reaching implications for Indonesian religious education policy and practice.

My sincere hope is that this work will serve as a catalyst for educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and community leaders to reimagine religious education as a powerful force for building an inclusive society—one in which religious diversity is celebrated as a source of national strength and cultural richness rather than simply managed. The future of Indonesian pluralism may rest on our willingness to embrace this educational reform.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Is religion significant in promoting the education system in today's global world? This critical inquiry is raised by Katherine Marshall<sup>1</sup> in her research. In his view, religion and religious institutions play a significant role in advancing the education system in the present era. However, they are frequently underappreciated due to the ongoing debates within religious teachings, as reflected by religious leaders. Nonetheless, the prioritization and primary agenda in today's pluralistic societies involve implementing education that engages intra- and interfaith communities. Yet, such endeavours often encounter tensions and obstacles.<sup>2</sup>

The tension arises from the insufficient interaction among followers of various religions. However, engaging in dialogue among adherents of different faiths in a harmonious setting can lead to a "conscious process" in understanding the meanings and beliefs of others' religions.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, interfaith dialogue can serve as a space for breaking down and eradicating negative biases towards the beliefs and religions of others.<sup>4</sup> Interfaith dialogue is also a sincere endeavour to counteract animosity towards other religions. This initiative reflects a full awareness of stepping out of the

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<sup>1</sup>Katherine Marshall, "Education for All: Where Does Religion Come In?", *Comparative Education*. Vol. 46, No. 3 (2010): 273-287.

<sup>2</sup>Charlene Tan, "Dialogical Education for Interreligious Engagement in a Plural Society", In *International Handbooks of Religion and Education*, ed. Kath Engebretson, et al (Netherlands: Springer, 2010).

<sup>3</sup>R. Urbano, "Levinas and Inter-Faith Dialogue". *The Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (2012): 148. See also D. Seljak, "Dialogue Among the Religions in Canada". *Horizons*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2009): 22–32. Compare with P. Knitter, "Toward a Liberative Interreligious Dialogue", *Cross Currents*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (1995): 72. Knitter emphasized that interreligious dialogue is not only a vehicle for exchanging "theological beliefs" but more than that as a form of media in promoting respect for differences, encouraging cooperation and preventing conflict.

<sup>4</sup>D. R. Smock, *Building Interreligious Trust in a Climate of Fear an Abrahamic Trialogue* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2003). Compare with Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aqalliyāt al-Dīniyya wa'l-Hall al-Islami* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1996), 44.

comfort zone, aiming to explore fresh inspirations beyond one's current faith.<sup>5</sup> Interreligious dialogue does not occur in empty spaces, nor is it about casual discussions. Dialogue among faiths is a debated, advocated, and endorsed phenomenon on one side while being avoided and disliked on the other.<sup>6</sup>

Religious education emphasizing the significance of dialogue is paramount in the present time. This educational approach is a component of fostering harmony among different faiths. Current conflicts with religious undertones have reignited tensions in interfaith relations. Instances of violence purportedly in the name of religion, ranging from fundamentalism to terrorism, are on the rise in recent times within the country.<sup>7</sup> Numerous indicators revealing indications of national fragmentation are openly observable. The conflicts in Ambon, Papua, and Poso resemble sparks among embers, capable of igniting at any time, despite repeated efforts to contain them.<sup>8</sup> The incident not only took many lives but also wrecked hundreds of places where people pray, like mosques and churches.<sup>9</sup> The latest observable occurrence involves the violence and religious conflicts in

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<sup>5</sup>C. J. Mews, "The Possibilities of Interfaith Dialogue", *Meanjin*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (2006): 78.

<sup>6</sup>Douglas Pratt, "Pluralism, Postmodernism and Interreligious Dialogue", *Sophia*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (2007); 245.

<sup>7</sup>Just as an example of this attitude and behaviour, one of the three death row convicts in the Bali bombing, Mukhlis alias Ali Ghufron, once said enthusiastically: "During 10 years in Medina, the Prophet SAW only made the Hajj once and Umrah only three times, but he did war against the infidels 70 times... Allahu Akbar". See Muhammad Arif's writings "Inclusive-Multicultural Islamic Religious Education within the Framework of Islamic Principles and Indonesian Identity", *Al-Fikr Journal*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (2011): 157. Compare with Muhammad Nasiru al-Din al-Albani, *Finatu al-Takfiri* (Riyadh: Darul Ibn Khuzaimah, 1998).

<sup>8</sup>The inter-religious conflict in Indonesia reached its peak with the outbreak of civil war in Maluku and Central Sulawesi from 1999 to 2002, resulting in approximately 8,000 fatalities and hundreds of thousands of refugees, some of whom could not return to their hometowns. The underlying causes of violence in these two regions are highly complex. Part of the background for the violence stems from the historical and cultural tendencies towards warfare within local communities, as well as being associated with ethnographic factors and changes in economic and political dynamics at both local and national levels. Nevertheless, for some individuals, more than three years later, the answer to the question, "Are you a Muslim or Christian?" is a matter of life and death. See Franz Magnis-Suseno, "Religious Harmony in Religious Diversity: The Case in Indonesia," in *Religious Harmony: Problems, Practice and Education*, ed. Michael Pye (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 9-10.

<sup>9</sup>Nur Achmad, (ed.), *Pluralism of Religion: Harmony in Diversity* (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia, 2001).

Myanmar. The Muslim Rohingya community<sup>10</sup> is displaced from their own country due to conflicts that are religious and racially motivated. This situation is an irony in the dynamics of religious harmony in today's 21st-century world. Ironically, attitudes and behaviours like these are systematically developed through education systems, including religious education, which tends to produce absolutist individuals.<sup>11</sup>

This idea is reinforced by a study carried out by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) at IAIN (now UIN) Jakarta in 2001, which examined countries with predominantly Muslim populations like Indonesia. The study revealed that individuals who become more devout tend to exhibit greater intolerance. They sometimes justify violent actions such as vandalizing places of worship and physically assaulting those they consider misguided.<sup>12</sup> Violence in the name of religion, justified by interpretations of sacred texts from various religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and others around the world, is a phenomenon of "intolerant faith" that sanctions violence and killings in the name of God.

Moreover, in late 2016, the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) at UIN Jakarta published its recent research results. This study focused on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as participants scattered across 11 regions across Indonesia. PPIM UIN Jakarta's findings revealed that approximately 78% of these teachers supported implementing Islamic law in Indonesia. What is even more startling, as per PPIM UIN Jakarta's discovery, is that 87% of respondents disagreed with non-Muslims assuming roles as school principals, 80% opposed non-Muslims holding positions as heads of departments, 89% objected to non-Muslims becoming regional leaders, and 81% were against granting permission for the establishment of places of worship for other religions in their respective areas.

Even worse, the respondents who work as Islamic religious teachers not only exhibit intolerance towards non-Muslims but also towards minority Muslim groups, including Shia and Ahmadiyya communities. According to the findings released by PPIM UIN Jakarta, approximately 80% of respondents disagree with accommodating Shia and Ahmadiyya

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<sup>10</sup>See "RI Sees Myanmar's will to Care for Rohingya People" *The Jakarta Post*, Vol. 33 No. 25, Friday May 22, (2015). See also Ribut Lupiyanto, "Rohingya, Humanity, and Peace" *Opini Media Indonesia* (No. 12430, Friday Edition, 22 May 2015), 6.

<sup>11</sup>Zakiyuddin Baidhawry, *Multicultural-Informed Religious Education* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2005), 13.

<sup>12</sup>Muhammad Arif, "Inclusive-Multicultural Islamic Religious Education within the Framework of Islamism and Indonesianism." *Journal Al-Fikr*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (2011): 157.

groups, and 23% of respondents agree with the closure or destruction of mosques belonging to minority Muslim groups.

The findings of the PPIM UIN Jakarta research highlight that radicalism and intolerance have permeated the heart of the religious education system in this country. Instead of nurturing tolerant, inclusive, and pluralistic attitudes among students, religious teachers, who are supposed to guide and guard, are exacerbating intolerance. This intolerance is further aggravated by the dissemination of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks in public schools (elementary, middle, and high schools) that promote radical ideologies and intolerance.<sup>13</sup>

Education that promotes liberation is consistently championed and advocated by individuals who embody freedom. Free individuals can resist the pressures and pitfalls of structural intolerance and radicalism on personal and social levels. Hence, how can a teacher (of religion) lacking the mindset and essence of freedom possibly serve as an inspiration and role model for their students?

This situation is worsened by the instructional content of religious education subjects (specifically in Islamic Religious Education, as noted by the PPIM research mentioned earlier), which promotes intolerance<sup>14</sup> and radicalism in religious practices. This condition is also supported by the family environment and the community increasingly close to appreciating differences. This fact can be seen further from the results of The Wahid Institute's research in 2015 on violations of freedom of religion/belief, which reached 52% with the main actors being the State (government officials) and the remaining 48% of the actors are non-State (socio-religious groups).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>PPIM UIN Jakarta, *Policy Brief: The State's Responsibility Towards Religion* (Jakarta, September 2016). See more PPIM UIN Jakarta, *Executive Summary; The Dissemination of Exclusive Ideologies in Islamic Education* (Jakarta, September 2016).

<sup>14</sup>Religious intolerance is a broad definition, including negative prejudice motivated by belief towards certain religious affiliations or practices, both towards individuals and groups. This negative prejudice gives way to, at times, manifest in acts of intimidation or violence motivated by ignoring the rights of a person or group to carry out their worship and ignoring the fundamental rights of religious adherents. See The Wahid Institute, "Inherited Debt Yet to be Repaid", in *Report on Religious Freedom/Belief in Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute & Canada, 2015), 21.

<sup>15</sup>See The Wahid Institute, "Inherited Debt yet to be Repaid", 32-35. In this report, it is made clear that what is meant by "State" actors are government officials, including the police, district/city governments, regents/mayors, sub-district heads, Satpol PP, Ministry of Religion Offices, TNI, DPRD, and so on. Meanwhile, "non-State" actors include the masses, MUI, FPI, ANNAS, FUI, ISIS sympathizers, FKUB, etc.

The facts above increasingly raise awareness that our nation is facing significant challenges. The main issue is that society, day by day, is increasingly eroding from the values of respecting diversity, especially religious and ideological diversity. What is even more alarming is that some or even the majority of acts of violence and intolerance against people of different religions/beliefs are practised within educational institutions.

The recent occurrences that have stirred public discourse (such as widespread pro-Islam demonstrations, hate speech, the rise of neo-conservative groups<sup>16</sup> shaping public opinion, and suicide bombings) are, to some extent, the result of systemic flaws in education, especially in the realm of religious education as it has been implemented until now.

At the educational system level, all the issues existing within the Indonesian education system are also found in implementing religious education in schools or universities. Although religious education is not included in subjects tested in the national exams, its connection to educational administration, including curriculum and evaluation, further burdens religious education. Moreover, the heavy burden of religious education serves as an anchor in building the moral values of students.<sup>17</sup>

This situation also ensnares a majority of religious educators in administrative and technical education matters rather than focusing on creating engaging instructional content for students. Consequently, students may exhibit apathy and lack motivation to participate actively in religious education courses in school and university settings.

On the contrary, in certain public schools and universities with a heterogeneous student body in terms of religion, students are segregated based on their religious affiliation during religious instruction periods.<sup>18</sup> Among the students themselves, it is easy to observe that they are generally very relaxed in facing differences. However, this separation portrays and instills in the students the awareness that religion separates people.

The students are asked to attend classes according to their religious affiliation. Muslim students will be provided with an Islamic Religious Education teacher, Christian/Catholic students will be given a

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<sup>16</sup>Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary Development in Indonesian Islam, Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

<sup>17</sup>Listia, Laode Arham, Lian Gogali, *The Issue of Religious Education in Schools: Findings from a Study on Religious Education in Yogyakarta City 2004-2006* (Yogyakarta: Interfidei, 2007), 208.

<sup>18</sup>See The Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 Regarding the National Education System (Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta: 2003).

Christian/Catholic Religious Education teacher, and so forth. The students recognize religion as dividing lines or boxes of categorization. Compliance with religious studies is more emphasized than understanding. In short, religious education is provided doctrinally.<sup>19</sup>

Such practices have persisted from the earliest stages of education, including Early Childhood Education (PAUD), Kindergarten (TK), Primary School (SD), Junior High School (SMP), Senior High School (SMU), and up to tertiary education institutions. This excludes the religious teaching activities conducted by extracurricular organizations like Islamic spiritual groups (Rohis) in public school settings or similar instructional sessions such as "Islamic Studies" in public universities. The latter two often lean towards teaching religion as an alternative ideology.<sup>20</sup>

Certainly, acquiring education in one's religion is a highly important right. However, solely receiving instruction in one's religion while disregarding and even dismissing knowledge about the religions and beliefs of others will only shape individuals who always feel self-righteous, prone to prejudice, closed-minded, have difficulty cooperating with others, and so forth.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, efforts are needed to initiate reforms in religious education. Strategic reforms (both conceptual and technical) must be continuously advocated, given that learners are highly dynamic and unique individuals. Coupled with the unavoidable progress in technology and information, a conception of religious education that fosters students' open-minded, tolerant, inclusive, and pluralistic characters is required. Of course, this is not an easy task, as numerous obstacles and challenges may hinder reforming religious education.

Similarly, numerous challenges are encountered in fostering inclusive religious attitudes, including the persistent influence of fiqh (Islamic Religious Education), which introduces less positive perspectives towards followers of other religions. Several fiqh texts tend to contain discriminatory ideas towards followers of other religions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Hairus Salim HS, "Religious and Ethical Education in Higher Education Institutions" in *Interreligious Ethics Manual for Indonesia*, ed. Nina Mariana Noor (Geneva: Globethics, 2015), 31.

<sup>20</sup>Hairus Salim HS, "Religious and Ethical Education in Higher Education Institutions", 32.

<sup>21</sup>Hairus Salim HS, "Religious and Ethical Education in Higher Education Institutions", 32.

<sup>22</sup>Abd. Moqsiith Ghazali, *Religious Pluralism Argument: Constructing Tolerance Based on the Qur'an* (Jakarta: Kata Kita, 2009), 9-10.



In the fiqh tradition, the relationship between religions, Muslims and non-Muslims, seems to have not been resolved fairly due to several reasons: (1) fiqh was written during a time when relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were not conducive, (2) fiqh was written in a period when the internal situation of the Muslim community was not very solid, and (3) the existence of religious symbols implicitly advocating a harsh attitude towards other religions.<sup>23</sup>

For religious believers, faith is a fundamental and foundational issue. Fundamental because every religious individual must possess faith, and foundational because it serves as the basis of religious belief. For the faithful, religion is the source of all life.<sup>24</sup> The issue of faith is so urgent that it serves as the starting point for anyone who wishes to embrace a religion.<sup>25</sup>

Faith serves as a source of motivation for individuals to embrace all aspects of responsibility and adhere to the religious commandments they believe in. A sincere faith (*hanif*)<sup>26</sup> can serve as a point of convergence among people of different religions within a peaceful and amicable community. In the context of religious education, establishing interfaith dialogue as the fundamental basis of comprehensive understanding for each participant (learner) is a primary requirement for fostering social unity in the present era.<sup>27</sup>

Religion is not merely positioned as a basis of belief alone. Rather, religion has become the foundation of social cohesion. Factors including internal religious factors, historical context, and positive views towards

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<sup>23</sup>Mun'im A. Sirry (ed.), *Interreligious Fiqh: Constructing an Inclusive-Pluralist Society* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2004), 143.

<sup>24</sup>M. Yudhie Haryono, *Resisting with Text* (Jogjakarta: Resist Book, 2005), 1. Compare with Kranti Saran, "Faith and the Structure of the Mind", *Sophia*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2014): 467-477. Faith is the basis of everything we hope for and proof of everything that is not seen, and faith is also a form of certainty of the soul that is one with God.

<sup>25</sup>Nurcholis Madjid, et al, *Interreligious Fiqh: Constructing an Inclusive-Pluralist Society* (Paramadina: Jakarta, 2005), 17.

<sup>26</sup>Genealogically, what is meant by *hanif* is the religion brought by the Prophet Ibrahim a.s. As stated in the Qur'an, the religion brought by Prophet Abraham was a religion of straightness, tolerance and total surrender to God (*hanifan musliman*). QS. Ali Imran [3]: 67). مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ. Translation: "Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright man who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters." See Zuhairi Misrawi, *The Quran: A Book of Tolerance-Inclusivism, Pluralism, and Multiculturalism* (Jakarta: Fitrah, 2007), 177.

<sup>27</sup>Rito V. Baring, "Plurality in Unity: Challenges Toward Religious Education in the Philippines". *Religious Education*, Vol. 106, No. 5 (2011): 467.

other religions largely influence the harmonious coexistence among adherents of various religions. The existence of dialogue itself, in turn, will lead to the reinforcement of harmony and mutual understanding.<sup>28</sup> God has revealed various religions on the face of the earth to save humanity and its existence from destruction.<sup>29</sup>

Forcing religious doctrines onto others fundamentally contradicts the core mission of those doctrines, potentially resulting in conflicts, human suffering, and environmental degradation on the earth.<sup>30</sup> Essentially, religious humans are alike in their belief in a transcendental reality and The Almighty.

This paradigm provides a reference for the religious attitudes that believers in the Indonesian archipelago must inevitably possess.<sup>31</sup> Religion, sourced from God and laden with teachings and fundamental values that serve as guiding principles for humanity, evidently cannot escape the issue of interpretation. Consequently, it gives rise to diverse perspectives.<sup>32</sup> The conflict among religious communities, leading to division, violence, anarchism, and even vandalism (destruction), is a truly ironic and concerning reality.<sup>33</sup> Without interfaith dialogue, the likelihood of "hegemony of belief" is inevitable.<sup>34</sup> This can lead to conflicts of interest in justifying the teachings of each religion, which certainly poses a significant threat to interfaith relationships in the future.

Here lies the importance of acknowledging religious pluralism within a community of believers that prioritizes the principle of inclusivity,

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<sup>28</sup>Adib, "The Discourse of Religious Pluralism in the Qur'an: A Comparative Study of Tafsir al-Manar and Tafsir fi Zhilal al-Qur'an", *Dissertation* (The Graduate School of State Islamic University of Jakarta, 2008), 213. Compare with Diana Eck "What is Pluralism," The Pluralism Project, 2014. Diana Eck said that pluralism does not only lie in the point of diversity but also in active involvement in supporting the values of diversity to create peace between religious communities.

<sup>29</sup>Asep Syaefullah, *Reconciling Religious Communities: A Study of Tarmizi Taher's Thought on Interfaith Harmony* (Grafindo: Jakarta, 2007), 21.

<sup>30</sup>See Tabroni and Syamsul Arifin, *Islam: Cultural Pluralism and Politic Pluralism* (Yogyakarta: Sippres, 1994), 1.

<sup>31</sup>Said Agil Husin Al Munawar, *The Fiqh of Interreligious Relations* (Jakarta: Ciputat Press, 2003).

<sup>32</sup>Muhaimin, *New Directions in Islamic Education: Empowerment, Curriculum Development, and the Redefinition of the Islamization of Knowledge* (Bandung: Nuansa Publisher, 2003), 55.

<sup>33</sup>Muhammad Ali, *Pluralist-Multicultural Theology: Appreciating Diversity to Foster Unity* (Jakarta: Kompas Book Publisher, 2003), 11.

<sup>34</sup>Yasin al-Wurzadi, "al-Wai al-Maqasidi wa Dawwaruhu fi Khiwar al-Adyan wal-Hadarat," *Majallatu al-Babu* (Maroko: Rue Gabes, 2013).

a principle that emphasizes accommodation rather than conflict, among various claims of religious truth within culturally and religiously heterogeneous societies.<sup>35</sup> The development of tolerance-inclusivism is highly necessary for interfaith relations, serving as a healing balm for the emotional wounds resulting from conflicts that have occurred in the past.<sup>36</sup>

Recognizing the profound significance of diversity in life, ideally, religious individuals should learn to appreciate existing differences, as this path will foster harmony and peace in society.<sup>37</sup> All religions, especially those within the Abrahamic religious tradition (*samawi*),<sup>38</sup> share a common goal, which is the well-being of both the worldly life and the hereafter.

This is the principle underlying the understanding of the commonalities among religions, whereby Islam affirms the principles of previous religious teachings. The principle of religious Pluralism or diversity is an axiomatic reality and a historical inevitability that is universal.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, this underscores the importance of formulating a religious education model that teaches the doctrines of specific religious truths and requires a cross-faith religious education model that educates learners about other religions. The content and curriculum of future

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<sup>35</sup>Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Different Yet Equal: Islamic Perspectives on Non-Islam* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2004), 49.

<sup>36</sup>Aloys Budi Purnomo, *Constructing an Inclusive-Pluralistic Theology* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2003), 2.

<sup>37</sup>See Imam Tholkah, *Humanity, Religion, and Peace* (Ciputat: Al-Ghazali Center: 2007), 10.

<sup>38</sup>See the work of Sa'dullah Affandy, *Abrogation of Pre-Islamic Religions: A Study of Qur'anic Verses 2:106 and 3:85* (Magelang: PKBM Ngudi Ilmu, 2014), 207. Heavenly religion comes from heavenly revelation, which includes the Hanif religion, Judaism, Islam and Christianity. These religions originate from one breed, Ibrahim; therefore, this heavenly religion is called in the family of Ibrahimi religions because it originates from revelation (revealed religion), compared with Kamaruddin Hidayat, *The Revelation in the Heavens and the Revelation on Earth: The Doctrine and Civilization of Islam on the Stage of History* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2003). The opposite of heavenly religion is *Wad'iyyah*, a religion or culture that relies on human creations. See Samih Daghim, *Adyan wa Mu'taqidat al-'Arab Qabla al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar el- Fikr al-lubnani, 1995), 48.

<sup>39</sup>Pluralism does not only mean actual plurality (plurality or diversity), which describes fragmentation. It is not just a "negative good" as opposed to fanaticism. However, it must be understood as "the true connection of diversity in the bonds of civilization" (*Genuine Engagement of Diversity within the Bonds of Civility*). See Hendra Riyadi, *Surpassing Pluralism: The Ethical Insights of the Qur'an Regarding Religious Diversity* (Jakarta: RMBooks, 2007), 59.

religious education subjects should incorporate acceptance of religious Pluralism.

The content of the religious education curriculum should encompass teachings regarding the conception of human values inherent in all religious teachings, which are not confined to one specific religious doctrine.<sup>40</sup> The conception of interfaith education must meet certain primary criteria.

First and foremost, joint religious education programs must strive diligently to promote tolerance development without infringing upon the rights of religious freedom and conviction. Second, programs should be designed to advance attitudes of respect for universal human rights and equal human dignity.<sup>41</sup>

Efforts to cultivate tolerance and respect for religious freedom can be pursued through the practice of religious dialogue, an integral component of the interfaith education model.<sup>42</sup> Dialogue among students as representatives of diverse communities and beliefs can be a crucial step in discovering shared values within each religion they adhere to.

In this context, according to the author, interfaith religious education provides students with the opportunity to study and understand beliefs different from their own religious convictions. However, it is important to understand that interfaith education is not a pedagogy that teaches all religions to students and lets them choose, but rather an educational model that teaches that alongside their religion, there exist other religions.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, Bigger states that interfaith education aims to provide understanding to students from various religions in today's pluralistic society. Most importantly, it aims to break deadlocks and unravel the seeds of emerging racist attitudes.<sup>44</sup> The significance of interfaith education is also emphasized by Matemba, who suggests that strengthening religious character among students by providing a comprehensive understanding of different

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<sup>40</sup>Azakin Barzani, "Tatwiru Mazahi al-Tarbiyah al-Diniyah Sayusaidu ala Ta'ziz Makanatu al-Kulliyat fil-Bilad" (PNA-Peyamner News Agency, Irak-Kurdi, 2014)

<sup>41</sup>Ingvill Thorson Plesner, "Promoting Tolerance Through Religious Education", in *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook*, Ingvill Thorson Plesner (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 808.

<sup>42</sup>Ingvill Thorson Plesner, "Promoting Tolerance Through Religious Education", 809.

<sup>43</sup>Abuddin Nata, "The Multi-Religious Education Paradigm and Its Implementation Possibilities in Indonesia", in *Modernization of Islamic Education in Indonesia* (Jakarta: UIN Jakarta Press, 2006), 200.

<sup>44</sup>Stephen F. Bigger, "Multi-Faith Education in the Shires: Two Projects in Primary RE." *Westminster Studies in Education*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1987): 37.

religions leads to the creation of harmony and relevance in today's modern society.<sup>45</sup>

Essentially, interfaith education entails fulfilling interreligious "dialogue" by students within a school community. Interfaith communities have primarily practised interreligious dialogue without involving students intensively in a planned and systematic teaching and learning process.<sup>46</sup>

For the author, this is where the importance of the "concept of religious pluralism" as a mode of thought in implementing interfaith education lies. The concept of religious pluralism serves as the foundation for comprehensive understanding for students as part of the actualization of spiritual consciousness and acknowledgement of diversity to complement each other.<sup>47</sup> With a brief overview of the aforementioned background issues, the author is convinced that instilling values of religious pluralism in students from an early age can prevent conflicts with religious undertones.

Hence, there is a need for the formulation of religious education that not only teaches the doctrines of their respective religious beliefs, be it Islam or Christianity, but also views religion as a comprehensive body of knowledge that anyone can study regardless of their religious background or beliefs.

As described above, the interfaith religious education model has been practised and implemented by several interfaith institutions/communities existing in Indonesia today. Interfaith institutions that have implemented the interfaith religious education model include the Dian/Interfaith Foundation (Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia) or the Institute for Dialogue in Indonesia (Interfidei) in Yogyakarta, ICRP (Indonesian Conference on Religion Peace) in Jakarta, and Jakatarub (Interfaith Network) in Bandung.

These three interfaith institutions serve as the primary data sources in this research. This is done to effectively capture and analyze the practical aspects of the interfaith religious education model, which is the subject of this study.

This study aims, in general, to formulate and discover a model of "interfaith religious education" that can be theoretically and practically utilized for the development of religious education, particularly Islamic education. Specifically and in more detail, this research aims to uncover and analyze the following: First, the argumentation of religious pluralism in

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<sup>45</sup>Yonah Hisbon Matemba, "Multi-faith Religious Education in Botswana 1." *Religious Education*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (2005): 404.

<sup>46</sup>Rito V Baring, "Plurality in Unity: Challenges toward Religious Education in the Philippines", 459.

<sup>47</sup>Michael Grimmitt, "Religious Education and the Ideology of Pluralism." *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1994): 133-147.

interfaith religious education. Second, the formulation of interfaith dialogue in interfaith religious education. Third, the sociological implications of interfaith education and its application at Interfidei Yogyakarta, ICRP Jakarta, and Jakatarub Bandung.

Many studies have been conducted related to the study of interfaith religious education. Most of these studies incorporate the concept of religious pluralism as a theoretical basis for formulating interfaith religious education models. The main argument developed in this research is that implementing interfaith religious education models can foster students' attitudes to become open, tolerant, inclusive, and pluralistic.

Several studies supporting this argument include John Hick's work in his book *God and the Universe of Faiths*.<sup>48</sup> Hick's work, including this one, while not directly related to the concept of interfaith religious education, is important as a foundation for comprehensively understanding the idea of religious pluralism.

Put, John Hick endeavours to establish a transcendent unity among religions and the creation of a theology of divine universality. Hick desires to foster a religious atmosphere in a society where religions do not negate or claim normative truth of their own.

Geoffry Teece's dissertation entitled *A Theoretical and Empirical Exploration, a Religious Approach to Religious Education: The Implications of John Hick's Religious Interpretation of Religion for Religious Education*.<sup>49</sup> This dissertation discusses various approaches in religious education applying John Hick's theory in the concept of religious education. Geoffry's work predominantly examines John Hick's fundamental concept of religious pluralism and its relevance to the dimension of future religious education.

Rito V. Baring's writing entitled *Plurality in Unity: Challenges Toward Religious Education in the Philippines*<sup>50</sup> delves further into the conception of religious diversity within unity internalized within the dimension of religious education. The analysis in this article suggests that the existing religious education in the Philippines should emphasize the aspect of diversity within a cohesive unity among the adherents of religions

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<sup>48</sup>John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979).

<sup>49</sup>Geoffry Teece, "A Theoretical and Empirical Exploration, a Religious Approach to Religious Education: the Implications of John Hick's Religious Interpretation of Religion for Religious Education", *A Thesis Submitted to The University of Birmingham for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (University of Birmingham: College of Social Sciences School of Education: May 2010).

<sup>50</sup>Rito V. Baring, "Plurality in Unity: Challenges Toward Religious Education in the Philippines".

in the Philippines. This condition allows for establishing interfaith interests that are more tolerant and inclusive amidst the current Philippine society.

Cristian Kastner's dissertation, entitled *The Conditions of the Possibility of Philosophical Interfaith Dialogue: a Theoretical and Empirical Exploration*.<sup>51</sup> This work explains that the discourse on religious truth in interfaith dialogue is fraught with controversy. Cristian Kastner elucidates the conception of interfaith dialogue from a philosophical perspective. His findings clarify that religious leaders must, from a theological standpoint, reinterpret their well-established religious doctrines to facilitate interfaith dialogue.

The work by Denise Cush and Catherine Robinson, entitled *Developments in Religious Studies: Towards a Dialogue with Religious Education*.<sup>52</sup> This paper elaborates on the development of interfaith dialogue discourse within religious education, popularized by universities in the UK. It involves academics, educators, and teachers in schools. The effort to strengthen the concept of interfaith dialogue in the dimension of religious learning in schools enables the creation of a learning environment where religions do not view each other with suspicion, tolerate their religion, are intolerant, and far from valuing diversity and appreciation of differences. This study further discusses the phenomenological perspective of interreligious relationships and the changes occurring within each religion amidst today's society.

The writing of Leona M. English<sup>53</sup> Entitled *Informing the Pedagogical Practice of Interreligious Education: Critical Social Science Directions*, this work employs a critical-reflective approach. The author proposes an interfaith dialogue approach that assumes the first step in building an interfaith education system is to encounter individuals of different beliefs. This is done so that learners can critically reflect on their beliefs and be open to the truths of others' beliefs.

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<sup>51</sup>Cristian Kastner, "The Conditions of the Possibility of Philosophical Interfaith Dialogue: a Theoretical and Empirical Exploration", *Submitted in Accordance with the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (The University of Leeds School of Philosophy: Religion and the History of Science, 2012).

<sup>52</sup>Denise Cush and Catherine Robinson, "Developments in Religious Studies: Towards a Dialogue with Religious Education", *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2014).

<sup>53</sup>Leona M. English, "Informing the Pedagogical Practice of Interreligious Education: Critical Social Science Directions," in *International Handbook of Inter-Religious Education*, ed. Kath Engebretson, et al (Netherlands: Springer, 2010), 425-440.

Furthermore, the book titled *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions* is authored by Anna Halafoff.<sup>54</sup> This work explains the benefits and challenges faced by the interfaith dialogue movement, with the principle and objective of firstly developing an understanding of religious differences and the reality of non-singular beliefs; secondly, normalizing exclusivity by instilling the concept of pluralistic ideology; and thirdly, creating a multi-actor peace network to anticipate and address global risks and injustices.

The article by Katherine Marshall<sup>55</sup> titled "*Education for All: Where does Religion Come In?*" discusses the significant role of religion in addressing the challenges of the education system in the current global era. It is explained that the efforts of religion and religious leaders to advance the education system are often underappreciated due to the complex issues existing within religious teachings and institutions. However, according to the author, hope for harmony and social cohesion can be enhanced by implementing pluralistic religious education, which respects diversity and the right to freedom of belief.

Charlene Tan,<sup>56</sup> wrote an article about *Dialogical Education for Interreligious Engagement in a Plural Society*. This article discusses the efforts of the Singapore government to promote religious harmony in schools. Religious education utilizes a phenomenological approach where multifaith subjects are taught in schools. The article explains that interfaith dialogue can be incorporated into all school curriculum areas. This creates an atmosphere and spirit of mutual respect. As a result, students can develop empathy awareness with a reflective approach to various religions.

The dissertation by Sachi Teresa Edwards,<sup>57</sup> "*Intergroup Dialogue and Religious Identity: Addressing Christian Privilege and Religious*

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<sup>54</sup>Anna Halafoff, *The Multifaith Movement, Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions* (Netherlands: Springer, 2013). In this book, the author thoroughly explains various themes about the Multifaith Movement. Compare with Anna Halafoff, "Social Movements, Cosmopolitanism and Multifaith Engagement", in *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions* (Netherlands: Springer, 2013), 9-34, 95-114, 137-161.

<sup>55</sup>Katherine Marshall, "Education for All: Where does Religion Come In?", *Comparative Education*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (2010): 273-287.

<sup>56</sup>Charlene Tan, "Dialogical Education for Interreligious Engagement in a Plural Society", in *International Handbook of Inter-Religious Education*, ed. Kath Engebretson, et al (Netherlands: Springer 2010), 361-376.

<sup>57</sup>Sachi Teresa Edwards, "Intergroup Dialogue and Religious Identity: Addressing Christian Privilege and Religious Oppression in US Higher Education," *Dissertation* (Dissertation Digital Repository at the University of Maryland-College Park, Md: 2014).



*Oppression in US Higher Education*", explains the reality of interfaith dialogue communities in the United States. Various initiatives are taken to foster cooperation among religions to prevent religious violence globally and respond to religious tensions in America. The case studies conducted in this work find that there are still realities for marginalized minority students. This dissertation recommends expanding initiatives for implementing dialogue-based education to enhance awareness and understanding of issues related to minority-majority (Christian) religious relations in the United States. It emphasizes the obligation for interfaith dialogue practitioners, higher education institutions, and education practitioners to become more sensitive in understanding students' experiences with minority religious identities.

The various literature presented above serves as a foundation for analyzing the themes raised in this book. This is done to strengthen the argumentative basis in understanding and delving deeper into the concepts and models of interfaith religious education.

# CHAPTER II

## RESEARCH METHODS

### 1. Research Type

The methodology is systematic and purposeful.<sup>58</sup> In research, the methodology can refer to the way an individual collects and analyzes data.<sup>59</sup> The techniques and procedures used in the data collection process.<sup>60</sup> Methodology can be defined as the framework used by researchers to select data collection and analysis procedures to investigate specific research problems.<sup>61</sup> A more theoretical-philosophical explanation in the research process undertaken. This includes assumptions and values that serve as rationalizations for the research and the standards or criteria researchers use to interpret data and reach conclusions. In brief, methodology is the examination, explanation, and justification of methods, and not the methods themselves.<sup>62</sup>

Burke Johnson and Larry Christenson explain that the importance of research lies, *firstly*, in making discoveries that may be more intriguing than previously thought, leading to the exploration of interesting and beneficial materials and thought processes; *secondly*, research fosters critical thinking in researchers; *thirdly*, another significant reason for the importance of research studies is to aid in better understanding discourse by

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<sup>58</sup>James H. McMillan and Sally Schumacher, *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction* (Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, 2000), 688. Compare with Joseph A. Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach: An Interactive Approach*. (London: Sage Publication, 2012).

<sup>59</sup>Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), 7.

<sup>60</sup>See Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>61</sup>James H. McMillan and Sally Schumacher, *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction* (Publisher: Allyn & Bacon, 2000), 688.

<sup>62</sup>Lichtman, Marilyn, *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide: A User's Guide*. Sage, 2012. Compare with Robert C. Bogdan & Sari Knopp Biklen, *Qualitative Research in Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, 1998).

listening and observing through media such as television, radio, the internet, or professional gatherings.<sup>63</sup>

This research employs qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is a conceptual umbrella that encompasses several research formats aimed at understanding and explaining the meaning of social phenomena within natural settings.<sup>64</sup> Consistent with the definition above, Lexy J. Moleong states that qualitative research is aimed at understanding phenomena concerning what is experienced.<sup>65</sup> The qualitative research method is based on *post-positivism* philosophy. It is used to investigate natural object conditions where the researcher serves as the key instrument.<sup>66</sup>

Another definition states that qualitative research is a type of study in which findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or other forms of calculation.<sup>67</sup> Creswell states that qualitative research is a scientific research process intended to understand human issues in social contexts. It aims to create comprehensive and complex portrayals by reporting detailed views from information sources. It is conducted in natural settings without any intervention from the researcher.<sup>68</sup>

## 2. The Data Source

Data sources in the research are determined through purposive sampling while still considering their relevance to the research interests. The use of purposive sampling is a suitable step according to the type of research employed (qualitative), thus making the sought-after aspects prominent and their meanings easier to discern.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Burke Johnson and Lary Cristenson, *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches*, (Boston: Pearson Educational, 2004), 4.

<sup>64</sup>Sharan B. Mariam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Application in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 5.

<sup>65</sup>Lexy, J. Moleong, *Qualitative Research Methodology* (Bandung: Rosdakarya, 1995), 25. See also Bruce Lawrence Berg & Howard Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Pearson, 2004).

<sup>66</sup>Sugiyono, *The Methods of Quantitative, Qualitative, and R & D Research* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2008), 11.

<sup>67</sup>Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research: Procedures and Theoretical Data Techniques* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009), 4.

<sup>68</sup>John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Approaches* (Jogjakarta, Pustaka Pelajar: 1998).

<sup>69</sup>Noeng Muhadjir, *Methodology of Qualitative Research* (Yogyakarta, Rake Sarasin, 2000), 149.

The primary sources utilized in this research are primary data originating from direct observations of the implementation of interfaith education programs conducted by Interfidei Yogyakarta, ICRP Jakarta, and Jakatarub Bandung. This primary data is associated with the administrators/management of Interfidei Yogyakarta, ICRP Jakarta, and Jakatarub Bandung, as well as participants in the interfaith education programs, including individuals from the Islamic, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist faiths, and several figures with expertise in interfaith education and interreligious dialogue. This data is crucial to the research as it serves as the primary reference for formulating future models of interfaith education. Additionally, the research incorporates secondary data from various scholarly sources and references as an initial framework for conceptualization or as literature review material.

### 3. Data Collection Techniques

To ensure this research can discover and explore data comprehensively, accurately, and holistically, in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation are used simultaneously. In this regard, the researcher employs semi-structured interviews, which combine open-ended interviews with guided interviews.<sup>70</sup>

The technique involves the interviewer outlining the topics to be addressed. Interviews are conducted with members and activists of Interfidei Jogjakarta, ICRP Jakarta, and Jakatarub Bandung, representing Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and figures involved in interfaith dialogue. Consistent with the purposive sampling technique for selecting data sources, interviewees and observers<sup>71</sup> are chosen based on their depth of knowledge, roles, and positions relevant to the focus of this study.

The documentation technique is employed to delve into and extract data and information from documents. In this regard, documents related to the curriculum of interfaith education programs at Interfidei Yogyakarta, ICRP Jakarta, and Jakatarub Bandung, including curriculum materials, teaching aids, media, methods, and articles/papers used as references in the learning process, are examined. The observation technique also captures the social backdrop of the research locus, the learning process, and the

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<sup>70</sup>Suharsimi Arikunto, *Research Procedures: A Practical Approach* (Jakarta: Rienka Cipta, 1991), 227.

<sup>71</sup>Observation techniques are techniques carried out through observation, including focusing on an object using all the sense organs. In this study, observations were carried out to explore the meaning and visible behaviour of the Interfaith School (SLI) learning process and explore the essence contained therein.

sociological conditions that encompass and influence the ongoing interfaith education programs at Interfidei Yogyakarta, ICRP Jakarta, and Jakatarub Bandung.

#### 4. Approach and Data Analysis Method

This research employs a phenomenological perspective.<sup>72</sup> Research using a phenomenological approach aims to understand the meaning of events and interactions among individuals in specific situations. This approach requires a set of assumptions different from the ways used to approach human behaviour to uncover "facts" or "causes".<sup>73</sup>

The phenomenological investigation begins with silence. The state of "silence" attempts to capture what is being studied by emphasizing the subjective aspects of human behaviour. Phenomenology seeks to enter the conceptual world of its subjects in order to understand how and what meanings the subjects construct in their everyday lives.<sup>74</sup>

In short, researchers aim to understand the subject from the subject's perspective without disregarding or interpreting it through the creation of conceptual schemes. Researchers emphasize subjective aspects but do not reject the "there" reality that exists in humans and can influence actions toward it. Qualitative researchers emphasize subjective thinking because, in their view, the world is dominated by imaginings that contain more symbolic elements than concrete ones. If researchers use a phenomenological perspective within the social definition paradigm, this research typically operates at the micro-level of analysis.<sup>75</sup>

Phenomenology seeks to uncover, study, and understand a phenomenon, along with its unique and distinctive context experienced by individuals up to the level of their "beliefs." Thus, in studying and understanding it, one must be based on the direct perspective, paradigm, and

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<sup>72</sup>Linda Finlay, *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011). See also Amedeo Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: a Modified Husserlian Approach* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2009).

<sup>73</sup>Engkus Kuswarno, *Phenomenological Communication Research Methodology: Concepts, Guidelines, and Research Examples* (Bandung: Widya Padjajaran, 2009), 55.

<sup>74</sup>Clive Erricker, "A Phenomenological Approach" in, *Various Approaches to Religious Studies*, ed. Peter Connolly (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2009), 68.

<sup>75</sup>Rev. Emeka C. Ekeke dan Chike Ekeopara, "Phenomenological Approach to the Study of Religion a Historical Perspective", *European Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2010): 158.

beliefs of the individuals involved, as subjects who experience it directly.<sup>76</sup> According to Creswell, there are several procedures in conducting phenomenological studies.

First, the researcher must understand the perspectives and philosophies underlying the approach, particularly regarding studying "how individuals experience a phenomenon that occurs." The concept of *epoche* is central when researchers begin to explore and collect their ideas about the phenomenon and attempt to understand the phenomenon that occurs from the perspective of the subject involved. The concept of *epoche* involves setting aside or eliminating all biases (judgment) the researcher may have towards a phenomenon. This means that the perspective used is truly not the researcher's perspective but purely the perspective of the research subject.<sup>77</sup>

Second, the researcher formulates research questions that explore and delve into the meaning of the subjects' experiences and asks the subjects to explain their experiences. Third, the researcher seeks, explores, and collects data from subjects directly involved with the phenomenon under study. Fourth, after the data is collected, the researcher conducts data analysis structured in analytical stages. Fifth, the phenomenological research report concludes with an essential understanding and an invariant structure of an individual's experience. Recognizing each smallest unit of meaning obtained based on the individual's experience.<sup>78</sup>

Consistent with the approach above, operationally, the researcher will not stop at the reality of subjects and easily observable experiences. Like the process of learning in interfaith religious education, which includes curriculum, methods, media, and teaching materials, the researcher will instead critically reflect on the epistemological foundation that underlies the learning process. Similarly, this applies to the condition of the students who willingly participate in the program.

Furthermore, it entails thorough reflection on the prevailing ideologies that impact the students, enabling them to embrace the comprehensive framework of interfaith religious education fully. Lastly, societal expectations serve as a reflective arena for the researcher, essential in fostering interfaith dialogue to promote harmony among religious communities.

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<sup>76</sup>Haris Herdiansyah, *Qualitative Research Methodology: A Guide for Social Sciences* (Jakarta: Salemba Humanika, 2011), 66-67.

<sup>77</sup>Haris Herdiansyah, *Qualitative Research Methodology: A Guide for Social Sciences*, 68.

<sup>78</sup>Haris Herdiansyah, *Qualitative Research Methodology: A Guide for Social Sciences*, 69.