

MUKTI ALI'S THOUGHTS ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze Mukti Ali's thoughts on multicultural education and their relevance to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. Mukti Ali's ideas, which emphasize the values of religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue, have the potential to serve as a vital foundation for developing a more inclusive, tolerant, and adaptive form of Islamic education in response to social and cultural diversity. This research is categorized as library research (Sugiyono, 2016). Data collection was based on a literature review, including Mukti Ali's works, scholarly writings, research reports, internet sources, magazines, and other relevant literature aligned with the focus of this study. The literature review was then analyzed and presented in a structured review format. The study refers to two types of data sources (Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, 2010). First, primary data were obtained from several of Mukti Ali's books, such as *Religion in the Struggle of Contemporary Society*, *Interfaith Dialogue*, *The Intellectual Landscape of Modern Islam in Indonesia*, among others. Second, secondary data were taken from various scholarly works (e.g., academic journals, theses, dissertations, etc.) that discuss Mukti Ali's thoughts on multicultural education and their relevance to contemporary Islamic education. The results of the study show that, although Mukti Ali's ideas are highly relevant to contemporary Islamic education, their application in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum remains very limited. Some of the main challenges identified include the lack of teachers' understanding of multicultural education, insufficient integration of pluralistic values into the curriculum, and cultural and social barriers within society that still lean toward exclusivity. Nevertheless, Mukti Ali's thoughts offer significant solutions in addressing radicalization and intolerance through a more moderate and diversity-respecting educational approach.

Keywords: Mukti Ali's Thought, multicultural education; contemporary Islamic education

I. INTRODUCTION

Orphans are children who are left to die by their father. The phenomenon of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity inherent in the Indonesian nation is an unavoidable social reality. In the context of education, especially Islamic education, this reality demands a more inclusive and tolerant approach to differences (Ali, 2021). However, there are still often educational practices that are less responsive to the values of diversity, which ultimately gives rise to an attitude of exclusivity, even intolerance among students. Allah SWT says in the Qur'an surah Al Hujurat verse 13 which reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Translation: "O man! Indeed, We have created you from a male and a female, and We have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing." (QS. Al-

Hujurat: 13) (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

This verse is the main basis of multicultural education. Allah affirms that differences in ethnicity, nation, and background are human nature to know and respect each other. Education should teach mutual respect, not discrimination. In the midst of these dynamics, Mukti Ali's thinking becomes relevant to be reviewed. Mukti Ali is known as one of the figures who reformed Islamic thought in Indonesia who emphasized the importance of dialogue between religions and the recognition of plurality as part of the nation's wealth. He encouraged Islamic education not only to be oriented to religious doctrine alone, but also to develop an attitude of openness, tolerance, and respect for differences through a multicultural approach. The phenomenon of increasing conflicts against the background of SARA (Ethnic, Religious, Racial, and Inter-Group), as well as the emergence of an exclusive attitude in some educational environments, shows the urgent need to integrate multicultural educational values into the Islamic education system. It is in this context that

Mukti Ali's thoughts on multicultural education are considered to have high relevance to the challenges of contemporary Islamic education (Ahmad, 2024).

Thus, research on the idea of Mukti Ali is not only historically important, but also has practical urgency as an alternative solution in developing Islamic education that is more tolerant, inclusive, and contextual with the needs of the times. In recent years, Indonesia has experienced an increase in incidents of intolerance on the basis of religion, both in the form of hate speech, bans on worship, and attacks on minority groups. Many of them involve young age groups, including students. This shows that the education system is still not optimal in instilling the values of tolerance and respect for diversity. In the midst of sharp identity polarization, moderate figures like Mukti Ali have become very relevant. He is known as an Islamic thinker who encourages interfaith dialogue and coexistence within the framework of pluralism. This kind of example is needed to form a generation of Muslims who not only understand their religious teachings, but are also able to live in harmony with followers of other religions. Today, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in many schools still focuses on normative and ritualistic aspects, while the strengthening of social values such as tolerance, empathy, and cross-cultural dialogue has not been a major concern (Hidayat, 2023).

In fact, Mukti Ali's thinking offers a balanced approach between Islam and humanity, which is very suitable to be applied in the context of contemporary education. The international community through institutions such as UNESCO emphasizes the importance of inclusive and multicultural education to create a peaceful and just society. Indonesia as a multicultural country with the largest Muslim population has a great responsibility in showing the face of a peaceful and tolerant Islam. Mukti Ali's thinking that encourages dialogue and inclusivity is very much in line with this direction. Today's Islamic education is faced with the challenges of globalization, differences of views between sects, and local cultural diversity. Mukti Ali's idea of the importance of understanding Islam contextually, being open to differences, and respecting local cultures, is very relevant as the basis for the development of Islamic education that is not rigid and exclusive (Sulaiman, 2023).

According to the Setara Institute Report (2023), there were 109 cases of violations of freedom of religion and belief (KBB) throughout 2022. Of these, the highest perpetrators came from state apparatus (53%) and community groups (47%). The trend of increasing cases of intolerance shows that the community is still not sufficiently equipped with multicultural understanding, especially from the aspect of religious education. Based on a content analysis by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Research and Development (2021) on Islamic Religious Education books at the junior high and high school levels, it was found that 83% of the content of the material was normative-doctrinal, not applicative-social, only 17% contained material on tolerance, interreligious harmony, or multiculturalism discourse. This big data shows that Islamic education currently still tends to

be exclusive. The high rate of intolerance demands a reformulation of religious education. Mukti Ali's thinking makes a real contribution in shaping an approach to Islamic education that is peaceful, open, and relevant to the conditions of pluralistic Indonesian society.

Mukti Ali is an Indonesian Muslim intellectual known for his moderate and inclusive views. One of his most significant contributions was his thoughts on religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. He considers Islam as a religion *Rahmatan Lil-'Alamin* (mercy for all nature) must teach tolerance, mutual understanding, and cooperation between religious communities. This thinking is reflected in his approach to education, where he advocates education that respects cultural, religious, and social background differences. However, although Mukti Ali's thoughts related to religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue have been widely discussed, the literature that specifically discusses his contribution to multicultural education in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia is still limited. Hasbullah (2005) in the *History of Islamic Education in Indonesia* which explains the role of Mukti Ali in modernizing Islamic education in Indonesia. Djohan Effendi (2002) in his book discusses Islamic diversity and education and how Mukti Ali encourages interfaith dialogue. Zainal Abidin Bagir in his various articles also raised Mukti Ali's ideas in introducing an inclusive and moderate Islam (Zahra, 2022).

However, although many have highlighted Mukti Ali's thinking from the aspects of religious pluralism and moderation, there has been no literature that has explored in detail how such thinking can be applied in contemporary Islamic education curricula, particularly in the context of multicultural education. Traditional Islamic educational approaches often focus on deepening religious texts and religious rituals, without much attention to the increasingly evident aspects of social and cultural diversity in a pluralistic Indonesian society. Islamic education in Indonesia tends to prioritize normative and doctrinal dimensions, which do not provide space for dialogue or cross-cultural understanding. Traditional Islamic educational approaches often focus on deepening religious texts and religious rituals, without much attention to the increasingly evident aspects of social and cultural diversity in a pluralistic Indonesian society. Islamic education in Indonesia tends to prioritize normative and doctrinal dimensions, which do not provide space for dialogue or cross-cultural understanding. Most of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum applied in Indonesian schools is still limited to the dimension of rituals and religious doctrines. A multicultural curriculum that integrates the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and interreligious dialogue in the context of Islam as a religion of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*, is essential to be implemented (Ismail, 2021).

Mukti Ali's thinking that emphasizes education based on pluralism and religious moderation can be a strong foundation for developing a curriculum that is more responsive to diversity. Many studies related to multicultural education and interfaith dialogue in the Indonesian education world focus on Western perspectives or general theories, the existing

literature tends to ignore the concrete application of Mukti Ali's thought in the world of Islamic education which is multicultural. Therefore, research gap What exists is the need for an in-depth study that connects Mukti Ali's thoughts on religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue with the implementation of multicultural education in contemporary Islamic education. This research is important to produce new literature that can help design an Islamic education curriculum that is more open, tolerant, and responsive to diversity in Indonesia. Addressing the problems of radicalization, intolerance, and social polarization is still rare. Therefore, it is important to conduct further research to fill this literary gap and adapt Mukti Ali's thought to the needs of modern Islamic education that is more inclusive and adaptive to the changing times (Nawawi, 2024).

One of the main problems in the world of Islamic education in Indonesia is the incompatibility between the existing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum and the principles of multiculturalism embraced by Indonesian society. Although Indonesia is known as a country with very high religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, the PAI curriculum implemented in schools tends to still focus on textual and normative approaches. This ignores the need to teach tolerance, interreligious harmony, and cultural dialogue that should be an integral part of Islamic education (Muhammad, 2023). Mukti Ali's thinking about Islamic education that is inclusive and respects differences has not been widely applied in educational practice, so it does not create space for the strengthening of multiculturalism in Islamic education. Another challenge that arises is the lack of training for Islamic Religious Education teachers in understanding and implementing the values of multiculturalism taught by Mukti Ali. Many PAI teachers are still accustomed to a conservative and exclusive approach to teaching religious material, which tends to prioritize uniformity of religious views without taking into account the diversity of cultures and social backgrounds of students (Jannah, 2025).

This has the potential to increase the gap in understanding the concepts of religious pluralism and tolerance between religious communities, even though both are values that are highly emphasized in Mukti Ali's thought. Radicalization in the world of education is one of the serious problems in Islamic education in Indonesia. There are many phenomena that indicate that the religious education sector, including PAI, is often a means of spreading extreme thinking and intolerance. One of the reasons is the lack of education based on the values of multiculturalism that can provide an understanding of diversity in society. Mukti Ali, with his thoughts on multicultural education, offered a more moderate and inclusive solution. However, implementing these concepts in the PAI curriculum is still a major challenge that needs to be faced by policymakers and educators. Another problem that is quite profound is the limited academic studies that connect Mukti Ali's thought with multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia. Although many works have commented on religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue

in Mukti Ali's thought, there are still few studies that relate his ideas to Islamic education curriculum that is more applicable in contemporary contexts. Research on the implementation of multicultural education in the PAI curriculum is still very rare, which has led many education practitioners and policymakers to find it difficult to find appropriate references in formulating more inclusive and tolerant education policies. Although there are many theories and ideas about multicultural education, its practical implementation in Islamic education still faces obstacles (Amtiran & Kriswibowo, 2024).

Mukti Ali's thoughts on moderate and tolerant Islamic education have not been fully translated into the daily educational practices of Islamic schools. Often, educational practices place more emphasis on dogmatic teaching of religious teachings and leave less room for the development of inclusive attitudes towards differences, be it religious, cultural, or social backgrounds of students (Khalid, 2022). These issues show that although Mukti Ali's thinking on multicultural education is very relevant and important to be applied in contemporary Islamic education, there are still many challenges that need to be overcome. From the inadequate PAI curriculum, the lack of training for teachers, radicalization that threatens diversity, to the lack of literature that connects theory with practice, all are issues that must be resolved so that Mukti Ali's thought can be implemented more effectively in Islamic education in Indonesia. Reforms in religious education, which focus on inclusive values, tolerance, and respect for diversity, are indispensable for Islamic education to contribute to the creation of a more peaceful and harmonious society. Presenting Mukti Ali's thoughts on the importance of inclusive education based on interreligious dialogue, as well as how this thinking can be the foundation for Islamic education that is more open to cultural and religious diversity, the Hadith of the Prophet PBUH reads:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
"خَيْرُ الْأُمُورِ أَوْسَطُهَا"

Translation: "The best thing is the middle (HR. Abu Dawud no. 4799 is authenticated by Al-Albani).

This hadith emphasizing the importance of moderation (Tawassuth) in living life, including in religion and education. Mukti Ali's thinking is very close to this spirit, as he developed an inclusive approach to religion and rejected extreme attitudes, both liberal and narrowly fanatical. In the context of multicultural education, this hadith shows that a moderate, fair, and open approach to differences is the main principle in shaping the Islamic education curriculum that is in accordance with the reality of a pluralistic society. The specific purpose of the article on Mukti Ali's Thoughts on Multicultural Education and Its Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Education, presents in detail Mukti Ali's thoughts on the concept of education that prioritizes multicultural values, such as tolerance, interreligious harmony, and respect for

diversity in society, as well as how Islamic education can be a forum for building an inclusive society (Salim, 2021).

Examining the extent to which Mukti Ali's thoughts on multicultural education are still relevant in the context of modern Islamic education in Indonesia, especially related to the formation of the character of students who are more open, tolerant, and respectful of religious and cultural differences. Analyze the various challenges faced in the implementation of multicultural-based Islamic education, both in terms of curriculum, learning, and teacher training, as well as other obstacles that hinder the application of multicultural educational values in Islamic education. Compile recommendations to integrate Mukti Ali's thoughts into the development of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is more relevant to the social and cultural conditions of Indonesian society, with an emphasis on character education based on the values of multiculturalism. Identifying the positive impact of the application of Mukti Ali's thought in the world of contemporary Islamic education, with the aim of improving the quality of Islamic education that is more inclusive, tolerant, and ready to answer existing socio-cultural challenges. With these goals, this paper is expected to provide new insights into the relevance of multicultural education in contemporary Islamic education and strengthen the position of Mukti Ali's thought as one of the important foundations in shaping a more inclusive and moderate education in Indonesia (Muliadi, 2024).

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Research is categorized as literature research (*library research*) (Scott, 2016). Data collection is based on literature review in the form of books by Mukti Ali, scientific papers, research report results, the internet, magazines and several literature in accordance with this research study. Furthermore, the literature review is analyzed and then presented in the form of a structured review. This study refers to two data sources (Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, 2010). First, primary data was taken from several books written by Mukti Ali such as *Religion in the Struggle of Contemporary Society*, *Interreligious Dialogue*, *Modern Islamic Mind in Indonesia*, and others. Meanwhile, secondary data were taken from several scientific works (scientific journals, theses, dissertations, and so on) that discussed Mukti Ali's Thoughts on Multicultural Education and its relevance to contemporary Islamic education.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Yayasan Nurul Hasanah

Multicultural education is an educational approach that aims to develop an attitude of mutual respect in a diversity of cultures, religions, ethnicities, and beliefs. In the context of Indonesia as a pluralistic country, this discourse is important, especially in Islamic education. One of the Indonesian Islamic thinkers who is quite vocal in talking about pluralism and diversity is Mukti Ali. His thoughts on interfaith dialogue,

tolerance, and inclusivism are an important foundation in the development of multicultural education, especially in Islamic educational institutions (Mariani, 2022).

Biography of Mukti Ali

Prof. Dr. H. Mukti Ali is one of the leading Islamic reformers in Indonesia who is widely known for his thoughts on pluralism, interreligious dialogue, and reform of Islamic education. He was born in Cepu, Central Java, on August 23, 1923, in a religious family that provided a strong Islamic foundation from an early age. His father was a cleric and religious teacher who instilled Islamic values, a spirit of learning, and openness to diversity of views. Mukti Ali received his primary education at Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS) and then proceed to MULO (More extensive primary education). After completing secondary education, his enthusiasm in studying led him to migrate abroad. He continued his higher education at Jamia Osmania, Hyderabad, India, and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Islamic Studies and Arabic. His journey did not stop there, Mukti Ali then continued his doctoral studies at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, in the field of Comparative Religions (Comparative Religion), where he interacted and dialogued with modern Islamic intellectuals such as Fazlur Rahman and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (Yanti, 2021).

After returning to Indonesia, Mukti Ali devoted himself to the academic world by becoming a lecturer at IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. On this campus, he also served as the Dean of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and was later appointed as Rector. He is known as a thinker who pushed for the modernization of the Islamic education curriculum and introduced an academic approach to the study of religions. One of his important contributions was to pioneer the comparative study of religion in Indonesia through a scientific and objective approach, known as religious understanding an effort to understand other religions with empathy and openness. The peak of Mukti Ali's service in the realm of national religious policy occurred when he was appointed as the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in the Development Cabinet I during the administration of President Soeharto (1971-1978). In his capacity as Minister of Religious Affairs, Mukti Ali is known as a reformist who pushes for inclusive and tolerant religious policies. He emphasized the importance of dialogue between religious communities, strengthening rational and contextual religious education, and affirming the role of Islam in supporting national development (Sari, 2023).

Mukti Ali's thinking is very progressive and contextual. He believes that Islam must be understood openly and dynamically, in accordance with the times. In his various writings, he often emphasized the importance of multicultural education, respect for diversity, and the values of tolerance in religious and national life. His works such as *Comparative Science of Religion in Indonesia*, *Why I Understand Islam*, and *Some Problems of Muslims Today* are important references in the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia. For his services and broad thoughts, Mukti Ali is dubbed as one of the figures of Islamic pluralism in Indonesia.

He is also considered a pioneer in building a bridge of dialogue between Islam and the Western intellectual tradition in a critical and constructive manner. His thoughts not only influenced Islamic education policy in the country, but also became an important reference in contemporary Islamic discourse that is inclusive and humanist. Mukti Ali died on May 5, 2004 in Yogyakarta. Although he is gone, his legacy of thought lives on and continues to be used as a source of inspiration in the development of Islamic education that is moderate, contextual, and relevant to the multicultural reality of the Indonesian nation (Fauziyah, 2024).

Mukti Ali's Thoughts on Multicultural Education

Mukti Ali is one of the important figures in the development of modern Islamic thought in Indonesia, widely known for his contributions in the fields of comparative religions, interfaith dialogue, and moderate and inclusive religious education. In the context of the multicultural life of the Indonesian nation, his ideas about education that respects differences and encourages tolerance are very relevant and important to study. Allah SWT says in the Quran surah Al Hujarat verse 13 which reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

He said: "O people! Indeed, We have created you from a male and a female, and We have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing." (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13).

Mukti Ali's multicultural educational background and life experiences both in Islamic boarding schools, Indian Islamic colleges, and advanced studies at Western universities such as McGill University provide a broad and in-depth insight into the plurality of religions and cultures (Alam, 2021). He views diversity not as a threat, but as wealth that must be managed wisely through education (Muthia, 2025). According to Mukti Ali, the understanding of religion cannot be separated from the social context of a pluralistic society. Multicultural education in Mukti Ali's perspective is not just an introduction to ethnic, cultural, or religious diversity, but an educational project to build understanding, appreciation, and living together in differences.

Religious Understanding

The concept of Religious Understanding that he developed. Mukti Ali's thinking has become very relevant in the midst of a plural Indonesian society in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, and language. The results of this study show that Mukti Ali offers an inclusive, dialogical, and rooted approach to universal human values in building multicultural education, Mukti Ali introduces the concept of Religious Understanding as a form of approach in understanding different religions empathic, not apologetic or polemic, the same thing Allah explains in the Qur'an surah Al-Ankabut verse 46 which reads:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

Translation: "And do not argue with the People of the Book except in the best way, except with the wrongdoers among them. Say: 'We have believed in the (Book) that was revealed to us and that which was revealed to you; Our Lord and your Lord are one, and we surrender only to Him'." (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

This verse emphasizes the importance of a polite and wise dialogue with believers of other religions (Experts of the Book). This is the basis for interfaith understanding in Islam. He emphasized that religious understanding It is not intended to standardize beliefs, but to open a space for dialogue between religious communities based on mutual understanding, respect, and the willingness to coexist peacefully. This concept makes a very significant contribution to multicultural education, as it encourages learners to value diversity as wealth, not as a threat. Religious understanding instilling an attitude of active tolerance and avoiding prejudice against adherents of other religions, so that it becomes one of the main pillars in shaping the character of moderate and inclusive students (Salma, 2024).

In conducting a literature review of Mukti Ali's thoughts, the researcher examined several important works that became the main reference in discussing Religious Understanding, Mukti Ali rejects an approach that aims to attack or defend religion blindly. Instead, he prioritizes a scientific, objective, and empathetic attitude in looking at the diversity of beliefs. Understanding (understanding) is not only limited to knowing, but also includes trying to put oneself in the shoes of others to deeply understand the beliefs they hold. Religious understanding encourage one to not only be passively tolerant, but actively involved in building bridges of communication and cooperation across religions. According to Mukti Ali, the main purpose of education in a pluralistic society is to form human beings who have sensitivity to differences, are able to respect the beliefs of others, and remain firm on universal moral principles (Nasri, 2024). Mukti Ali discusses concepts that are very relevant to multicultural education, although the term is not used explicitly. He emphasized the importance of mutual respect between religious communities and developing interfaith dialogue as a way to achieve harmony living together. One of its main ideas is the concept of "agree in disagreement", which invites religious people to accept differences as part of diversity that must be respected and maintained together (H. A. Mukti Ali 1997).

Concept Religious Understanding Mukti Ali is very much in line with Banks's approach, especially in the aspect of prejudice reduction (prejudice reduction) and the integration of grades into the curriculum (content integration). John Hick argued that all religions are the path to the same truth. Although Mukti Ali does not explicitly state the same, his approach of being open and respectful of differences reflects the spirit of religious pluralism. Swidler proposed the principles of interfaith dialogue, such as equality of participants, openness, and mutual learning. Mukti Ali has already voiced this in the Indonesian context by prioritizing a

dialogical and scientific approach. The results of the literature study show that Mukti Ali was a pioneer of thought religious understanding in Indonesia which is very relevant to be applied in multicultural education. His thinking invites people to coexist peacefully, by making interfaith understanding as a moral and social foundation in the life of the nation. This concept has a strong compatibility with contemporary theories in the study of multiculturalism and interreligious dialogue, making Mukti Ali a visionary figure in shaping an inclusive and tolerant educational framework (Amtiran & Kriswibowo, 2024).

b. Education as a Means of Creating Tolerance

Mukti Ali, as one of the figures of the renewal of Islamic thought in Indonesia, placed education as a strategic instrument in forming a tolerant and pluralistic society. In his various writings, as summarized in the book "Some Aspects of Islam in Indonesia", "Comparative Science of Religion in Indonesia", and a number of other essays, Mukti Ali said that education is not just the transmission of knowledge, but the process of forming inclusive attitudes, values, and views on life, Allah swt. Saying in the Qur'an in Q.S Surah An-Nahl verse 125 which reads:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

Translation: "Call (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and refute them in a better way..." (Q.S Surah An Nahl verse 125) (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Islamic education must be based on wisdom (wisdom), good advice, and polite debate, as a means of creating tolerance and harmony. Mukti Ali is of the view that education must develop students' insight to get to know other religions and cultures, without suspicion or hatred. He emphasized the importance of comparative religious studies that are conducted academically, objectively, and without apologetic motives. The goal is not to justify or blame, but to understand and appreciate differences. In his book, he wrote: "To foster a peaceful and harmonious society, education must provide space for understanding of other religions, because from understanding is born understanding, and from understanding is born an attitude of respect and tolerance (Mukti Ali, 1970).

According to Mukti Ali, the ideal education encourages students to dialogue, not debate. The dialogue in question is an intellectual and spiritual dialogue that opens up space to learn from others. This is what he calls Religious Understanding, and education is the main space to practice this ability, Allah SWT says in the Quran surah al baqarah verse 256 which reads:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

Translation: There is no coercion in religion; Surely the right path is clear from the wrong path." (Q.S Al Baqarah

verse 226). (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

This verse affirms the principle of freedom of religion. In the context of education, it supports an approach that respects the beliefs of others and fosters tolerance towards religious diversity. Mukti Ali also highlighted the importance of the role of teachers in forming a tolerant generation. Teachers are not only material presenters, but also models of open and thoughtful attitudes in diversity. He suggested that religious teachers be given interfaith training so as not to be exclusive and dogmatic. In Mukti Ali's view, one of the roots of intolerance is ignorance of other beliefs and cultures. Therefore, education that emphasizes the values of pluralism, openness, and empathy needs to be developed from the elementary level to the university level (Nasri, 2024).

From Mukti Ali's perspective, education is not just a tool to educate, but a means of building a peaceful, just, and tolerant society. Through a scientific and dialogical approach in religious studies, as well as openness in the learning process, education is the main foundation for the creation of social harmony in a multicultural society like Indonesia. John Rawls in his book Political Liberalism emphasizes the importance of tolerance between various 'comprehensive doctrines' (moral and religious beliefs) (Pransinartha, 2023). According to Rawls, a healthy democratic state can only stand if its citizens are willing to show tolerance for other different beliefs. Correlation with Mukti Ali is Mukti Ali's thought in line with Rawls in emphasizing that tolerance is not only passive, but active, namely through social interaction and education that forms a common awareness of the importance of peaceful coexistence in different beliefs. Mukti Ali's thoughts on education as a means of creating tolerance are strengthened by various theories of multicultural education and the philosophy of tolerance. He has instilled a solid foundation that tolerance is not a passive result of diversity, but the fruit of an educational process that touches the heart and intellect in a balanced manner (Marbun, 2023).

The Importance of Cross-Cultural and Religious Knowledge

Mukti Ali emphasized that cross-cultural and inter-religious understanding is an important part of education that forms modern humans who are tolerant, inclusive, and open to diversity. "Understanding other religions is not just to look for similarities, but to respect differences and avoid prejudice." Mukti Ali (in his book entitled Religion in the Struggle of Contemporary Society). He is of the view that strengthening interreligious and cultural understanding is not a threat to one's faith, but a path to spiritual and social maturation. When a person knows the diversity of cultures and religions scientifically and objectively, respect and a dialogical attitude will grow in social life (Nasri & Tabibuddin, 2023). Milton Bennett developed the model Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), which explains a person's stages in understanding cultural differences, from the attitude of rejection to the integration stage. The correlation with Mukti Ali is that Mukti Ali wants the religious people to rise to the level of "acceptance" and

"adaptation" that is, being able to appreciate differences and adjust to the interaction between cultures and religions, as explained by Bennett Gadamer emphasizing the importance of hermeneutical dialogue, which is the process of understanding each other through conversation and openness to the horizon of other people's meanings (Irmawati & Mardiana, 2024).

Dialogue becomes a medium to achieve common truth. The correlation with Mukti Ali is that in the comparative approach of religion introduced by Mukti Ali, dialogue is not just a method, but a core value in building interfaith knowledge. With dialogue, we do not negate differences, but cultivate respect for them. Ken Robinson emphasized that education should not be uniform and accommodate the diversity of students' backgrounds. Cross-cultural and religious knowledge is essential to shaping an inclusive and creative generation. The correlation with Mukti Ali is that Mukti Ali wants the Islamic education system not to be exclusive or to favor only one group, but open to cross-religious and cultural knowledge to strengthen unity. Mukti Ali's thoughts on the importance of cross-cultural and religious knowledge are becoming very relevant in an increasingly pluralistic world. Education that introduces diversity scientifically will give birth to a generation that is not only intelligent, but also wise in responding to differences.

Pluralism as a Social Reality

Mukti Ali views pluralism not only as a normative concept, but as an inevitable social reality in the midst of the multicultural and multireligious life of the Indonesian nation. He rejected the notion of religious exclusivism that denied the truth of other religions. For Mukti Ali, every religious believer has the right to believe in his religion as the truth, but must not deny the existence of the beliefs of others in a social context. This is where the importance of pluralism lies as a social and cultural approach, not a theological one. Mukti Ali contributed greatly to the introduction of non-sectarian religious education. He encouraged educational institutions to teach pluralism as the basis for peaceful coexistence, not just as an added value. John Hick in his theory posits that all religions are an authentic response to Transcendental Reality.

Although each religion differs in expression and doctrine, all can be considered a path to spiritual understanding. His correlation with Mukti Ali does not explicitly follow Hick's pluralistic theology, but he acknowledges the importance of respecting religious diversity as a social fact that must be answered with an open-minded education. Ramadan emphasizes that pluralism is not only about coexistence, but mutual respect and cooperation in differences, whether religious, racial, or cultural. His correlation with Mukti Ali is very much in line with the spirit of Ramadan. He views that pluralism requires active interaction in building a harmonious and civilized society, especially in the diverse Indonesian context. Mukti Ali presents a progressive approach in seeing pluralism as something that must be consciously accepted, not rejected. This idea is very relevant to be applied in contemporary Islamic education, so that students grow into

spiritually resilient individuals, and mature socially in the face of a life full of diversity (Janah, et al., 2024).

Mukti Ali considers pluralism to be a gift, and therefore needs to be managed in ways that prioritize interreligious and inter-cultural understanding and dialogue. He invited the public not to see pluralism as a threat to faith, but as an opportunity to build better relationships between individuals and groups. In this context, education plays an important role as a means to instill the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding of differences (Khoir, 2025).

"Pluralism is a social reality that must be accepted, not feared. Tolerance and understanding across cultures and religions are the key to living together in differences."

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural and religious diversity. With more than 300 diverse ethnic and religious groups (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and local faiths), pluralism is not an option, but a social reality that Indonesian people must face every day. Mukti Ali understands this very well, and in his work, he argues that in order to maintain social harmony, Indonesian society must be able to manage pluralism in a way that is based on understanding, not prejudice. Based on the results of the study, in Indonesia, although there are many potential conflicts rooted in religious and cultural differences, pluralism can be used as a positive force. Education that instills an understanding of pluralism allows for the formation of a generation that is better prepared to accept differences without fear or prejudice. In this case, inclusive religious education, not exclusive, is indispensable.

Mukti Ali argues that Islamic religious education in Indonesia should teach an inclusive attitude towards other religions. As we know, many religious education materials taught in schools tend to prioritize their own religious teachings and ignore the understanding of other religions. This can foster intolerance. Therefore, Mukti Ali encourages the Islamic religious education curriculum to be updated, so that students not only know their own religious teachings, but also have a deeper understanding of other religions. According to research conducted by several Islamic education experts, interfaith and cultural education in schools can reduce sectarian tendencies and increase interfaith understanding. Thus, religious education based on pluralism will teach the value of tolerance and create a peaceful society, regardless of religious and cultural differences. Mukti Ali emphasized that pluralism is not only a religious issue, but also a social and cultural issue (Nur, 2018).

In a pluralistic society, social dialogue is very important to create mutual understanding between different groups. Through dialogue, each group can learn to respect diversity and avoid one-sided judgment. The results of the study show that open interreligious and cultural dialogue can strengthen social relations in a pluralistic society. In many countries, interfaith dialogue has become one of the solutions to reduce social tensions and conflicts. This is in line with the view of Mukti Ali who considers dialogue as the key to creating social harmony. Mukti Ali argues that pluralism does not threaten an individual's religious or cultural identity, but can instead

enrich that identity (Munawaroh & Hidayatullah, 2024). In a pluralistic society, each individual must learn to live with his or her own identity, but also to respect the identity of others. Education that emphasizes pluralism helps create a more inclusive social identity, where each individual feels part of a larger society despite their differences. Research in this context shows that in a pluralistic society, social identities formed through an understanding of pluralism have a positive impact on social acceptance and cooperation between groups. It also helps prevent conflicts that are rooted in misunderstanding of other groups (Aijudin, 2017).

Based on Mukti Ali's thoughts and the results of existing research, it can be concluded that pluralism as a social reality must be used as a basis in the formation of the educational curriculum in Indonesia. Instilling the values of tolerance and mutual respect from an early age through materials that focus on pluralism. Encourage dialogue between religions and cultures in the classroom, so that students are accustomed to diversity and are not easily influenced by intolerance. Teaching the history and positive contribution of each religion and culture in shaping the culture of the Indonesian nation, so that students can see pluralism as a social asset, not a threat. Pluralism as a social reality is inevitable in a country like Indonesia that is rich in diversity. Mukti Ali's thinking teaches us that education should be the main medium to manage pluralism in a positive way. By prioritizing interfaith and cultural understanding, education can create a peaceful, just, and inclusive society (Scott, 2022).

The Relevance of Mukti Ali's Thought to Contemporary Islamic Education

Mukti Ali's thinking as an Indonesian Muslim intellectual made a great contribution to the world of Islamic education. Through his various works and thoughts, Mukti Ali seeks to develop an educational paradigm that is not only based on religious knowledge, but also pays attention to the social and cultural needs of the community. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, Mukti Ali's thinking is particularly relevant, especially related to pluralism, multicultural education, and an inclusive approach to religious and cultural differences (Saumantri, 2022).

This research aims to explore the relevance of Mukti Ali's thought to contemporary Islamic education and how his ideas can provide solutions to the challenges faced in the Islamic education system today. In an increasingly global and connected world, pluralism is becoming a very relevant theme. Mukti Ali believes that Islamic education should emphasize the importance of tolerance and accept the fact that different religions and cultures are all around us. In contemporary Islamic education, a curriculum that includes material on pluralism and comparative religions will help reduce tensions between religious communities. Many Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia still apply an exclusive approach, which only teaches the teachings of Islam without giving space to know and respect other religions. Mukti Ali's thinking offers solutions by instilling interfaith understanding and building a culture of interfaith dialogue. Therefore, the relevance of his thinking is very great in an

effort to create a more open and inclusive Islamic education (Melchizedek et al., 2024).

Mukti Ali also emphasized the importance of education that respects cultural and religious diversity. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, the concept of multiculturalism is relevant in facing the challenges of an increasingly diverse society. By introducing a multicultural perspective in Islamic education, we can create a more harmonious and respectful educational environment. The implementation of this multicultural education can also help students understand that cultural and religious diversity is an inevitable part of life. Contemporary Islamic education that adopts the values of pluralism and multiculturalism can encourage the realization of a more peaceful, tolerant, and open society (Sembiring et al., 2024).

Islamic education that teaches interfaith understanding and diversity is very important in the context of today's global world. In this increasingly pluralistic world, understanding other religions with empathy, as Mukti Ali taught, is very relevant. This encourages the creation of mutual understanding and reduces the potential for conflict between religious communities. Applying interfaith understanding in Islamic education can be done by including comparative religious materials and interfaith dialogue in the educational curriculum. With this approach, students are not only taught to understand and practice the teachings of Islam, but also to appreciate the teachings of other religions as part of the diversity of the nation. Mukti Ali argues that education is a tool to form a tolerant character. In contemporary Islamic education, character education must include the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and coexistence with diversity. A pluralistic Indonesian society needs a young generation that is trained to respect and cooperate despite their differences. Thus, Islamic education needs to teach the value of tolerance and respect for the rights of others (Manalu et al., 2023).

Mukti Ali strongly emphasized the importance of cross-cultural and religious knowledge. In this increasingly connected world, understanding different cultures and religions is not only a social skill, but also an important competency in the world of education. Teaching students about cultural and religious diversity gives them broader insight and equips them with the ability to live in a multicultural society. Thus, contemporary Islamic education needs to introduce a cross-cultural and religious approach in its curriculum to improve interreligious and intercultural understanding. This approach will result in students who are not only competent in religious studies, but also have the ability to live peacefully and harmoniously in a pluralistic society. Mukti Ali's thinking has made a huge contribution to contemporary Islamic education, especially in creating an education that is inclusive, tolerant, and prioritizes pluralism. The relevance of his thinking is very great in facing the challenges of an increasingly pluralistic society. By adopting the principles of Mukti Ali's thought, Islamic education can play a greater role in creating a peaceful, just, and mutually respectful society (Sembiring et al., 2024)

"Personally, I have a plan to make this program spread widely to every village in Percut Sei Tuan District. Therefore, we have not built a special room for coaching activities. However, as the foundation grows, especially in terms of funding, we have agreed to build a special space as a place to learn and coach for children." (interview with Mr. Z., chairman of the Foundation)

Even though Haris (2016) stating that adequate facilities and infrastructure are important factors in supporting the achievement of educational goals, including in the formation of religious character, the reality at the Nurul Hasanah Foundation shows that there is no special learning space for children's religious development. Various coaching activities are still carried out on the terrace of the Nurul Hasanah Mosque, this condition shows that even though the limited facilities are a challenge, the foundation still makes maximum efforts in carrying out religious character development through a consistent and structured approach. Educational facilities and infrastructure play an important role in supporting the achievement of educational goals, including in fostering children's religious character.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Mukti Ali's thinking on multicultural education offers a very relevant approach in the context of contemporary Islamic education. As a Muslim intellectual who was very concerned about the social realities of a pluralistic society, Mukti Ali emphasized the importance of teaching that respects cultural and religious diversity in Islamic education. The main concepts in his thinking, such as pluralism, tolerance, religious understanding, and cross-cultural and religious knowledge, provide crucial insights in creating a peaceful, harmonious, and inclusive society. Multicultural education initiated by Mukti Ali focuses on the importance of interreligious dialogue and understanding as a means to enrich students' and society's insights. Mukti Ali believes that by understanding and respecting differences, both in religion, culture, and outlook on life, we can build a nation that is not only tolerant, but also cooperates with each other in facing global challenges. Mukti Ali's thinking is very relevant in creating inclusive Islamic education and prioritizing tolerance between religious communities. In a pluralistic Indonesian society, Islamic education must teach that diversity is a social reality that must be accepted with open arms. Mukti Ali emphasized that tolerance between religions and cultures is not an option, but a necessity in living together. Mukti Ali's thoughts on multicultural education provide a clear direction for the development of contemporary Islamic education that is more open, inclusive, and prioritizes the values of pluralism. In an increasingly global and connected world, Islamic education must be able to be a bridge to create better understanding between religious and intercultural communities. Mukti Ali's thought provides a strong foundation for religious education that is not only based on the teachings of Islam, but also respects and learns other religions, as well as introduces the values of diversity and

tolerance in social life. Thus, contemporary Islamic education that follows in the footsteps of Mukti Ali's thought will not only create individuals who are obedient to their religious teachings, but also become part of a society full of mutual respect, dialogue, and coexistence in differences. This thought makes a significant contribution to the formation of a peaceful, just, and mutually understanding society.

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