

# Encouraging Anti-Racism Education Policy from Conflict Perspective

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## Abstract

Since discrimination and labeling of ethnic Chinese are still embedded in society. The goal of this paper is to encourage different policies that try to solve racial conflicts, especially through education as a preventive measure to raise a generation with a lot of knowledge and a lot of patience. This paper reviews various alternative efforts to eliminate the issue of racism among ethnic Chinese. This review finds that reconciliation can be achieved through education and other methods. It also demonstrates that efforts have been made by the government to initiate anti-racism education as part of the conflict resolution process. Nevertheless, this implementation is a long way from being adequate or successful. There are still many records that need to be corrected and evaluated by the government to encourage anti-racism education policies

**Keywords:** Anti-racism, Conflict Reconciliation, Education Policy



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## Introduction

One of the most important policies in social life in Indonesia, especially the minorities, especially the Chinese ethnicity, was the full recognition of ethnic beliefs in 2000 (Khotimah, 2013). Previously, racial issues between indigenous and non-indigenous people often occurred which led to tense conflicts. Beginning in 1972, conflicts between ethnic Chinese and Javanese people occurred in Surakarta due to misunderstandings regarding the alleged murder of pedicab drivers which led to tensions between the two parties (Atmaja & Sodik, 2017). Until the most gripping recorded in history is the 1998 conflict, which made ethnic Chinese victims both material and non-material. Destruction, rape of Chinese women occurred, and still leaves scars of trauma for the victims (Raditya & Millah, 2009). These minorities receive no protection at all and their cries are not heard by the authorities (Mustajab, 2017). Gradually changing government, this ethnic sentiment is still happening. Until President Abdurrahman Wahid's policy then gave birth to freedom for ethnic Chinese in carrying out their religious rituals, customs, and culture in Indonesia. Not only that, various rules or regulations that were racist and discriminatory at that time were also abolished by the fourth president (Mustajab, 2017). This policy is a concrete manifestation of the state's goal of protecting the entire Indonesian nation and the fifth precept, namely social justice for all Indonesian people. Where these two principles and philosophies have reflected the ideals of social life which uphold religious tolerance and eliminate all forms of racism and friction based on issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group (SARA).

However, in its development, discrimination and labeling of ethnic Chinese are still quite embedded in society. For example, the latest case regarding racism occurred in 2016. The case of alleged religious blasphemy committed by Ahok caught the attention of the public (Putra, 2017). Chronologically, this case is a case full of politics. However, the dynamics of tension conflicts that occur in it, make this political rivalry turn into a very thick issue of racism. Stereotypes for both camps appear in society. Meanwhile, the ball of the case then got bigger and culminated in 2019 by the claims and accusations of a number of community organization

groups with the slogan "The government is a foreign stooge, China" (Nursalim, 2019). Meanwhile, under these conditions, the government's attitude in dealing with this matter seemed disorganized and focused only on its interests in the 2019 presidential election. The re-increasing intensity of the issue of racism in Indonesia should be able to be taken seriously by the government and able to be suppressed without cornering other parties. Thus, this paper will review various alternative efforts to eliminate the issue of racism among ethnic Chinese. This paper aims to encourage various policies as an effort to reconcile conflicts on racial issues, primarily through education as a preventive measure to raise a better generation with insightful knowledge and high tolerance.

## Literature Review

### Conflict Reconciliation as Racial Issue Resolution

A number of definitions of reconciliation are given by various scholars. Asmal et al (1997) defines reconciliation as an attempt to confront unwanted truths, to align different worldviews. In order for there to be recurring, inevitable conflicts and disagreements that can be discussed and ultimately resolved. On the other hand, conflict reconciliation, according to Morrow (1999), is the restoration of a friendship that can foster enough trust between historical divisions. From these two definitions, it is clear that the psychological process of reconciliation, which involves the majority of society's members changing their motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions, is at its core (De Soto, 1999; Kelman, 1999; Lederach, 1997; Shonholtz, 1998; Tov, 2004; Wilmer, 1998). Then, Kelman (1999) in (Tov, 2004) describes the elements of reconciliation that are developed in what he refers to as "positive peace." According to this perspective, reconciliation entails (a) conflict resolution, which satisfies the basic needs and aspirations of the parties; (b) mutual acceptance and respect for the life and well-being of other groups; (c) the development of a sense of security and dignity for each group; (d) the formation of cooperative interaction patterns in various environments; and (e) institutionalization of conflict resolution mechanisms.

The reconciliation process can be carried out in numerous ways. Reconciliation is more likely to occur through activities or projects such as "truth telling," establishing appropriate forms of remembrance/remembrance, developing educational campaigns in civil society, and designing legal processes influenced by concepts of restorative justice, reparations, reparations, and apologies than through persecution, eradication, and confrontation (Hattam & Atkinson, 2006). In more detail, (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004) elaborate on some of these methods as follows: apology, truth and reconciliation commissions, public trials, reparations payments, writing a common history, education, mass media, publicized meetings between representatives of the groups, the work of non-governmental organizations, joint projects, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

## Method

To determining how anti-racism education is progressing in Indonesia, literature reviews were carried out using a wide variety of national and international literature sources. This method was selected to determine the breadth of the subject matter, and it was done so to ensure that the resulting analysis would be able to take into account a variety of viewpoints on anti-racism education policies from the various countries that will be investigated with regard to how they encourage the reconciliation of racial conflicts.

## Result and Discussion

### Anti-Racism Education Policy From Conflict Perspective

Some of the methods have been applied to overcome racial conflicts that never end through various reconciliation policies, this process is still ongoing today. One of them is in Australia for example. The Australian government passed the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991 / Act No. 127 of 1991. A reconciliation council was established to promote reconciliation processes between Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and wider Australian communities (Hattam & Atkinson, 2006). Various methods of apology or forgiveness to publicized meetings between representatives of the group have been compiled to find a point of peace between them. Until the most popular is "National Sorry Day" every May 26 which is a day of remembrance as an expression of public responsibility for human rights that weakened Aboriginal people and the indigenous people of the Torres Strait Islands in Australian history (Australia Reconciliation, 2020). Another example of a case that often becomes a model of reconciliation is the conflict resulting from the apartheid system that occurred in South Africa and the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a settlement method (White et al., 2013).

In Indonesian context, President Soeharto in his era showed great support among a group of businessmen, most of whom were of Chinese descent. But on the other hand, in there is also policies regarding the prohibition of Chinese religion, belief, artistic expression, culture, and literature, this act provided another form of discrimination for the Chinese ethnicity. In fact, without realizing it, this has become a time bomb of social chaos. The May 1998 tragedy is an example. In addition, the misguided assimilation policy has given rise to a wave of conflict. The assimilation policy is understood as uniformity, giving rise to the perception that the loyalty of the Chinese community can only be achieved through denying their cultural identity. As an ethnic minority, the Chinese ethnic needs to carry out a strategy and friction in order to fight for and maintain their cultural identity (Raditya & Millah, 2009). The assimilation policy was later collapsed by the policies of Gus Dur, who was then president by issuing Presidential Decree (Keppres) No. 6/2000 which revokes Presidential Instruction No.14/1967 concerning Chinese Religion and Customs. Gus Dur's policy then gave birth to freedom for ethnic Chinese in carrying out their religious rituals, customs and culture in Indonesia. This then brings Indonesia towards cultural pluralism (Suryadinata, 2014). Recently, racial issues between natives and non-natives, ethnic Chinese and Javanese and adherents of the majority religion, namely Islam, have risen again to the surface. However, the imbalance of power and conflicts that tend to be "cold war" verbally do not seem to find a solution. Meanwhile, today the various labeling utterances on the Chinese ethnicity which are heavily politicized are very easily consumed virtually by the younger generation.

This conflict over racial issues can be resolved by conflict reconciliation. This step is very important to be carried out and legalized by the government through a policy. First, that this reconciliation can be started from writing common history. Writing history back in detail from both sides can help understand the root of the problem. The existence of victims can bring reconciliation steps in public trials and apologies. It is at this stage of public trials that the state must be present to try as possible the perpetrators of the crimes that sparked the conflict. However, this solution certainly looks clichéd, imaginary, if you look at the socio-cultural patterns of the people who are still attached to various negative connotations for the Chinese ethnicity. Thus, the most concrete conflict reconciliation steps to break the chain of intolerant generations can be started from education. Reconciliation methods through policies on educational aspects have been implemented in several countries. In conflict-ridden South American society, peace education aims to teach young people about human rights, and how

to prevent structural violence and economic inequality (Garcia, 1983; (Tov, 2004). Peace education as reconciliation can also be found in Japan. This is due to self-awareness of the atrocities committed by Japan during World War II (Murakami, 1992) . In Northern Ireland, integrated education seeks to promote mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation, the aim of which is to create a culture of true peace within the Protestant and Catholic school systems (Pickett, 2008).

Since school systems are frequently the only institutions that society can use formally, intentionally, and extensively to change the psychology of community members, education is one of the most important strategies for promoting reconciliation (Tov, 2004). Peace education aims to shape students' worldviews (e.g., their values, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, skills, and behavior patterns) so that they are prepared to live in an era of peace and reconciliation. In other words, the educational system must provide students with knowledge in line with the principles of reconciliation (for example, about other ethnic groups, course of conflict, future peaceful relations, nature of peace, and conflict resolution). In addition, education for peace building should seek to instill new attitudes and abilities in students (eg, tolerance, self-control, sensitivity to the needs of others, empathy, critical thinking, and openness). Setting educational goals, developing curricula, specifying textbook content, developing teaching materials, training teachers, creating a climate in schools that is conducive to peace education, etc., are all required for this massive undertaking (Aspeslagh, 1996; Bjerstedt, 1993; Harris & Morrison, 1998; Hicks, 1988; Reardon, 1988; Tov, 2004).

Looking at the context in Indonesia, education regarding cultural diversity has been taught through Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) subjects. Since elementary school (SD) can be seen in the 2013 curriculum published by the Ministry of Education and Culture which includes "Showing discipline, cooperation, tolerance, learning to accept defeat and victory, sportsmanship and responsibility, respecting differences" in the basic competencies of Civics, as well as the basic competencies of "Accepting the diversity of individual characteristics in religious life, ethnicity, physical characteristics, psychology, and hobbies as a gift from God Almighty in the home and school environment" in religious subjects. Meanwhile, in senior high schools (SMA) with the addition of sociology subjects in the Social Sciences (IPS) major, they added the basic competence "Showing tolerance and social empathy towards social and cultural diversity".

Conceptually, the preparation of the curriculum as part of education policy is quite capable. However, in the preparation stage each of these basic competencies is only normative in nature and is not structured in an evidence-based and problem-solving oriented manner. As far as the author's observations and experiences as students who receive Civics education, the substance of the lessons focuses on the practice of Pancasila in everyday life. Not that the substance focus is bad. However, one-way teaching by only exemplifying the practice of Pancasila values then becomes useless without practice or knowledge development. Without a larger social campaign, peace education in schools is ineffective and disconnected from social reality (Bar-Tal, 2002). In fact, the design of an education curriculum for peace can be a means of reconciliation, a long-term capital in efforts to suppress racial conflict, especially in Indonesia.

The process of conflict reconciliation on the issue of racism is not only the responsibility of schools and educators. The cooperation of various stakeholders to create a high coexistence circumstance (coexistence) must begin to be re-examined by the government. Several steps to create such a situation are disclosed by Sadigbayli (2006) can be passed through the following efforts, including:

- a) Involve both formal and planned processes (such as in schools) and informal processes (such as through the media).
- b) The participation of national and community-level political, social, cultural, religious, and educational leaders in spreading the concept of coexistence.
- c) At all levels and institutions of society—political, social, cultural, educational, economic, and religious—including schools, religious centers, and the military, coexistence must be reconciled.
- d) Coexistence programs should be reflected in all forms of social communication, including advertisements, films, television, and schoolbooks.
- e) The coexistence program must be accompanied by the development of new norms that will be enforced through informal social sanctions.
- f) To uphold the new values of coexistence, laws against racism, discrimination, and exploitation must define coexistence (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004).

The explanation related to these efforts can then be adopted by the government to formulate policies that support efforts to suppress SARA conflicts from recurring in society. In fact, not only the Chinese ethnicity, education that instills the values of this diversity can also minimize friction with various other ethnicities and tribes. Teaching about the history of a conflict also needs to be taught from various sources, and not just handbooks for student teaching materials. This can develop students' critical thinking skills to understand conflict in various cases and increase reasoning power for the creation of peace building in the environment.

## Conclusion

Conflict on racial issues is not an easy thing to resolve. However, this does not rule out the possibility of putting a stop to its expansion and making it less severe. The review conducted above demonstrates that efforts have been made by the government to initiate anti-racism education as part of the conflict resolution process. Nevertheless, this implementation is a long way from being adequate or successful. There are still many records that need to be corrected and evaluated by the government to encourage anti-racism education policies. It has also been realized that this study still has many limitations because it does not look more broadly and assess the extent to which anti-racism education is being implemented in the field, as well as the role of various stakeholders, ranging from the government to schools, teachers, and parents, to participate in reconciling this conflict. As a result, it is hoped that subsequent research will be able to address the shortcomings of the current investigation.

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