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## ABSTRACT

*Religious Education for Freedom (A Critical Study on Thomas H. Groome's Educational Thought)*, by Ahmad Afnan Anshori, thesis advisors E.G. Singgih and Alef Theria Wasim.

This research aims at identifying and analyzing the factors caused "the failure" of religious education practice in Indonesia today and the contemporary need for reforming it by offering an alternative way and means of problem solving for controversial national education bill (*RUU Sisdiknas*) based on Thomas H. Groome's perspective.

This is a qualitative rather than quantitative research because it is a literature research. As a literature research, the data are collected from library resources. The used resources are limited to the works and thoughts of Thomas H. Groome, religious education and other works related to the subject of this research. The data collection contains the original intellectual works on Thomas H Groome on religious education as primary sources. Written data, including the complete works of Groome, the data written by interpreters or scholars on the thought of Groome, religious education, and the relevant works related to the subject of this research are used as secondary sources.

The research finding shows that Thomas H. Groome's educational concept can be used to make religious education approach more humane. Here, the student is not positioned as the object of education but as the free and responsible subject. The base of this approach is critical reflection and dialogue. The dialogue does not only emerge to the students and the teachers, but also among the students. Furthermore, the dialogue, in fact, does not only involve students and teachers, but also students, religious scripture (text) and life conditions of society (context). Therefore this approach does not use one-way system, but multi-way system. Based on Thomas H. Groome's educational concept, religious education discourse should not only stop at useless controversy but how it is returned to the understanding of education in general that is humanity oriented which empowers whole human's potency, and not merely God-oriented which does not touch global human's problems.

**Key Words:** *Religious Education - Thomas H. Groome - Freedom*



## INTISARI

*Religious Education for Freedom (A Critical Study on Thomas H. Groome's Educational Thought)*, oleh Ahmad Afnan Anshori, dosen pembimbing E.G. Singgih dan Alef Theria Wasim.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisa faktor-faktor penyebab "kegagalan" praktek pendidikan agama di Indonesia saat ini serta perlunya membenahi kekurangberhasilan tersebut. Salah satu alternatif pemecahan masalah kontroversi RUU Sisdiknas di atas adalah dengan menggunakan pendekatan pendidikan yang digagas dan dikembangkan oleh Thomas H. Groome.

Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif sebab merupakan penelitian kepustakaan. Sebagai penelitian literatur, data-data dikumpulkan dari sumber-sumber pustaka. Penggunaan sumber-sumber dibatasi pada karya-karya dan pemikiran Thomas H. Groome, pendidikan agama, dan karya-karya lain yang berhubungan dengan subyek penelitian. Pengumpulan data berupa karya-karya intelektual orisinal Thomas H. Groome tentang pendidikan agama merupakan sumber utama. Sedangkan data-data tertulis, termasuk keseluruhan karya Groome, data-data yang ditulis oleh penulis-penulis lain tentang pemikiran Groome, pendidikan agama, dan karya-karya yang relevan terkait dengan subyek penelitian digunakan sebagai sumber sekunder.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep pendidikan Thomas H Groome menawarkan pendekatan yang lebih manusiawi dalam pendidikan agama. Di sini, anak didik tidak diposisikan sebagai obyek pendidikan tetapi lebih sebagai subyek yang bebas dan bertanggungjawab. Dasar dari pendekatan ini adalah refleksi kritis dan dialog. Dialog antar subyek tidak hanya terjadi antara anak didik dan pendidik tetapi juga antar anak didik itu sendiri. Di samping itu, dialog juga terjadi antara anak didik dengan teks keagamaan dan dengan kondisi riil masyarakat. Oleh karena itu pendekatan ini bersifat multi-arah. Bercermin pada konsep pendidikan Groome, hendaknya diskursus tentang pendidikan agama tidak hanya berhenti pada kontroversi, tetapi bagaimana pendidikan agama dikembalikan pada pemahaman pendidikan yang berorientasi kemanusiaan yang memberdayakan segenap potensi yang dimilikinya dan tidak semata-mata berorientasi ketuhanan yang kurang membumi dan menyentuh persoalan-persoalan kemanusiaan global.

**Kata-kata kunci:** *Pendidikan Agama -Thomas H. Groome – Pembebasan*



## CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

If we pay attention to religious education in schools, the ability to memorize religious lessons and text of scriptures, etc. become a criterion in learning evaluation. It means that student's success in religious education is merely based on cognitive ability. As the result, moral, spiritual, and social problems have been appearing in society. These phenomena were caused by the fact that religious education could not give a moral and spiritual guide for students. Therefore, religious education is not different from education in general which only provides intellectual and skill needs for students. In other words, religious education has lacked its purpose as it is.

Ideally, the first place to learn democracy must be religious education class in schools. In the class, students are taught how to accept and appreciate human beings as the best God's creation. Also in the class, students should learn about human right and responsibility to God and other creations because of the dependence upon each other. Furthermore, students should also learn how to serve each other, not to exploit or manipulate each other just for individual interest. It is also important for them to learn how to appreciate each other difference as the special gift from God for every human (Santosa, 2001:288).

In my opinion, such kind of teaching is universal, meaning that most of religions teach this kind of teaching for all people. Therefore I assume that this model of religious teaching is appropriate for Indonesia as a pluralistic society. In this sense,



religious education, which stresses merely on normative-dogmatic aspect of religion, will lose its social-transformation function. If this happens, thus religious education is not more than a “religious teaching” that provides only indoctrination process, not transformation processes. Besides that, Government should not interfere with the contents of religious teaching because in this case, especially in Indonesia, government tends to politicize both religion and education sectors in the sake of their political interest, not to develop young generation.

Ideally, religious education should liberate human, not shackle them. It is parallel to Paulo Freire’s concept of education as a strategic vehicle to achieve freedom (Freire, 1999:439). But many governments choose the ways to tame the people with indoctrination and making people perception the same. This method is not only used by government to defend status quo but also by religious groups to teach people in order to be dependent upon them. This practice is different from what religion actually means.

Thomas H. Groome believes that the purpose of religious education is to enable others and ourselves to live freely and humanly. This belief is based on his assumption about Christianity as primarily a way of life, a way of being and doing in the world and the Christ who died and rose is the source of hope by which people can come to live freely (Groome, 1978:16).

This research is going to offer an alternative of religious education concept based on my exploration on Thomas H. Groome’s educational thoughts and how is the possibility to apply it into Indonesian educational system, more particularly to



open dialogical deadlock of debatable religious education system. Groome is a Catholic scholar, commentator, and author of a series of influential books on religious education, more particularly Christian religious education. He is also a member of the religious education faculty at Boston College.

Groome's religious education concept is called "Shared Christian Praxis" in which he defined as *a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and Its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith* (Groome, 1980:184). In a more comprehensive way, Groome defines it as follows: "Shared Christian Praxis" is *a participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their sociocultural reality, have access together to Christian Story/Vision, and personally appropriate it in community with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith toward God's reign for all creation* (Groome, 1991:135).

The theme of "educational praxis" (basically, practice thoroughly informed by, and in dialogue with, theory) was introduced in American Christian education discussion by Paulo Freire, whose most influential book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), proposed a radical plan for education in the form of a liberating adult education for preliterate South Americans. Stimulated by Freire, Groome developed the matter of education for freedom, but he was nagged by the need to introduce the Christian gospel explicitly into the process and by the need for an approach that would speak specifically to the American scene.



“Shared Christian praxis” is the proposal that has resulted. There are five movements of shared Christian praxis, they are: (1) naming present action; (2) participants' stories and visions; (3) the Christian community story and vision; (4) dialectical hermeneutic between the Story and the participants' stories; and (5) dialectical hermeneutic between the Vision and the participants' vision.

From the beginning of the history of the world religions, religious education has taken a central place in the life of the people. As it is said, education depends upon what Bernard Bailyn (1960:45) calls “the great axles of society - family, church, community and the economy.”

Religious education should be the systematic, definite teaching of the religious community, which helps its members in their faith formation so that they would become the agents of transformation in and outside the community. Thomas Groome's definitions on Christian education meets this understanding: “*Christian education is a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally attends with them to the activity of God in our present, to the story of the Christian faith community, and to the vision of God's kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us*” (Groome, 1980:25).

According to Groome (1980:15), education, especially religious education is a process to transform religious community to enter a life which has not established yet but a life that must be shaped by them. Further he writes that to avoid repeating the past, religious community needs a critical and creative attitude in order to get freedom to build a new future.



Furthermore Groome argues that we are now living in the post-modern era, so we are now on a new ground. According to this era, we have to look back to look a head. In other words, we have to move tradition into the future. Tradition can be an albatross or a wonderful source of new life and new images. Here we need to draw new images from the tradition, take from the tradition of the old and the new.

What makes me interested in discussing Groome's thought is caused by the fact that after reading some sources on him, I found that there is a similar principle between Groome's perspective and Islamic perspective of religious education; both lead to a concept of religious education for freedom. In addition, after elaborate Groome's thought more deeply, I also found that basically, Groome's way of thinking is similar to one of prominent Muslim scholars Fazlur Rahman especially in viewing post-modernity that is "Perpetuating anything good of the past and innovating better values." Moreover, this principle is also hold strongly by *Pesantren* world, a unique Islamic education institution (Madjid, 1993:24).

In Indonesian context, such a kind of educational concept is represented by Romo Mangun's thought and action which are very applicable for Indonesian context. That is why I assume that Thomas Groome's concept of religious education is also applicable for Indonesian education context; more particularly as an alternative thought to solve the deadlock of debatable religious education system. Either Thomas Groome or Romo Mangun's educational thought focuses on one point that is "education as an effort to liberate human." Paradigm of education (religious education) for freedom proposed by Groome and Mangun has a strong relation to Paulo Freire's concept of education for freedom because in fact, their thoughts were



inspired by that Freire's perspective as they acknowledge (Groome, 1978:31, Nugroho, 2003:84-85).

## **B. Problem Formulation**

Based on the background of study explained above, a study of Groome's perspective on religious education is relevant and reasonable for Indonesian needs of today. The problems discussed in this research are formulated as follow:

1. What is the starting point of Groome's educational thought?
2. Why does the practice of religious education in Indonesia need to be reformed?
3. How to apply the contextualization of Groome's perspective on religious education to present day Indonesia?

It is expected that with these three problem formulations, a clear understanding will be gained. These three matters are described, examined, and analyzed in order to find clearly Groome's perspective of religious education. After constructing Groome's perspective on religious education, it is analyzed critically and then applied to present Indonesian case.

## **C. Significance of Research**

Academically, I decided to critically observe and analyze the concept of religious education offered by Thomas H. Groome by consideration that in fact, Groome is a contemporary scholar, commentator, and thinker who addressed issues around "post-modernity and religious education". His major is Christian religious



education and he has written a series of influential books on Christian education. Through educational process he teaches Christians how they should view others, how to move society toward learning communities, how to build children's collaborative need, and many other perspective in teaching religious education.

Practically, I hope that the study on Groome's perspective on religious education is useful for our society. In more specific significance, hopefully, the relevance of this research to Indonesian context is hoped as an alternative way to solve the problem of debatable education system.

#### **D. Purpose of Research**

It is appropriate to pay serious attention to the contemporary religious educational system in Indonesia by considering Groome's educational thought as an alternative way to open dialogical deadlock of debatable religious education system.

In more detail, this research is aimed:

1. To describe broadly and deeply Groome's concept of religious education.
2. To analyze the practice of religious education in Indonesia today and the contemporary need for reforming it.
3. To offer an alternative way and means of problem solving for debatable religious educational concept in contemporary Indonesia based on Groom's perspective.

## E. Theoretical Basis

The term of religious education seems to be inseparable. Religion is a way that human beings can respond their own God. Meanwhile, education is the deliberate and intentional attending in the present to the future possibility of the total person and of the community (Groome, 1978:10).

### 1. The Concept of Religion

The word 'religion' derives from the Latin word *religio*. Certainly, there is some uncertainty about where *religio* comes from. It may come from *relegere*, 'to gather things together' or 'to pass over things repeatedly.' Yet, most scholars think that it derives from *religare*, 'to bind things together.' That would emphasize religion's collective demands. Religion is not only private piousness but also draws people into common ritual, practices, and beliefs (Forward, 2001:1).

According to the Cambridge Encyclopedia (1990:1015), religion is a concept which has been used to denote: (1) the class of all religions; (2) the common essence or pattern of all supposedly genuine religious phenomena; (3) the transcendent or 'this-worldly' ideal of which any actual religion is as an imperfect manifestation; (4) human religiousness as a form of life which may or may not be expressed in systems of belief and practice.

There are many concepts of religion. Simply, Alfred North Whitehead views religion views religion as what people do in solitude whereas Paul Tillich sees it as the inmost source of culture's activity, its core significance. In more comprehensive



definition of religion comes from Robert N. Bellah (1970:21) who defines religion as “a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence.” Another concept of religion comes from Corbett (1999:7) who stated that religion is not only related to non-empirical problems but also related to the mundane problems such as institutions, human system, etc. In sum, he views religion as an integrated system of beliefs, life style, rituals, activities, in which man gives meaning to his life by orienting themselves to the Holy.

## **2. The Concept of Education**

According to Webster's New World Encyclopedia (1992:361) education is the process, beginning at birth, of developing intellectual capacity, manual skill, and social awareness, especially through instruction.

Practically, the Cambridge Encyclopedia (1990:392) defined education as what takes place when human beings learn something, often from others but sometimes from themselves. It may happen during the day in specially constructed buildings with qualified teachers following structured, approved courses based on books, equipment, or activities or more informally away from institutions in homes, streets, or meeting places. It is not confined to traditional school subjects such as mathematics or history, though these will usually constitute an important part of it, nor it is offered only by paid teacher, for parents and elder brothers and sisters may well play a central part in it.



Lawrence Cremin (1977:134) defines education as “the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort.”

Another useful is Alfred North Whitehead's definition (1929:39): “Education is the guidance of the individual towards a comprehension of the art of life; and by the art of life I mean the most complete achievement of varied activity expressing the potentialities of that living creature in the face of its actual environment.”

Those two definitions emphasize on two points. *Firstly*, education requires a holistic approach to the person that attends to the whole “art of life.” And *secondly*, education emphasizes on the “potentialities” of the students in the context of their social environment (Groome, 1980:21).

### 3. The Concept of Religious Education

The term “religious education” consists of two words: “religious” and “education”. Both have been defined above. “Religious” is an adjective derived from the noun “religion.” Based on the definition of religion and education explained above, placing the adjective “religious” in front of the noun “education” can be simply understood as the education which based on religious values or certain religious teaching. It can also be understood as the education which teaches certain religious teaching. But for me, all educations are religious because both education and religious education contribute to a fundamental unity in the both activities try to authorize people to comfort the limits of their lives and to reach beyond those limits.



That is why I agree when Whitehead writes “The essence of education is that it be religious” (1929:14).

Thomas H. Groome in his book *Christian Religious Education: Sharing our Story and Vision* (1980:22) defines religious education activity as *a deliberate attending to the transcendent dimension of life by which a conscious relationship to an ultimate ground of being is promoted and enabled to come to the expression.*

Practically, as we usually see in schools, religious education teaches the doctrines of a religion. Its usual purpose is to indoctrinate children in the religious beliefs of their guardians. A less common purpose is to indoctrinate new adherents of a religion.

Since all people hold different religious beliefs, government-sponsored religious education is a source of conflict. Countries vary widely in whether religious education is allowed in public schools. Those that allow it also vary in the type of education provided.

People who oppose religious education in public schools believe that if religion is taught in school, some children will be excluded because they do not belong to a mainstream religion or any religion at all. They suggest that teaching religion in schools seems to value one religion over another and may make people of other religions feel uncomfortable or pressured to believe what the school teaches. Proponents of school religious education argue that religious beliefs have historically socialized people's behavior and morality. They feel that teaching religion in school is necessary to encourage children to be responsible, spiritually sound adults.



#### **4. The Concept of Freedom**

In philosophical terminology, the concept of freedom has been one of the most fervently debated topics. The ancient Greeks, for example, understood freedom not as individual freedom of action or as freedom of the will, but as freedom of the state and of the citizen within it.

In more comprehensive understanding, freedom can be viewed from three emphasizes. The first is an emphasis on freedom as an ability to act to satisfy needs and tendencies. The second emphasis is on self-determination without any inner necessity for what is willed. And the third emphasis is on freedom as the ability to respond to a rational process of decision making (Groome, 1980:83).

According to Groome (1978:18-19), there are three dimensions of freedom. The first dimension is spiritual freedom. This is the highest form of freedom; the possibility of entering into communion with God and union with each other. The second dimension is personal-psychological freedom. Without this form of freedom that overcomes the person's alienation from one's self, spiritual freedom is impossible. The third dimension is social freedom. This kind of freedom is concerned with the economic, political, and cultural structure of our world. According to Groome, the purpose of religious education is to empower the quest for human freedom on all three of the above dimensions.

Freedom, both as an individual and as a social dimension, has been denied many individuals, groups, and nations. It has been often misunderstood and abused. The fact is that in no human society can man be free in the absolute sense of the



word. There must be some limitations of one sort or another, if the society is to function at all.

### **F. Scholarship on the Subject**

Even though religious education subject has been frequently written by Indonesian Scholars, nevertheless I have not found those who wrote about Thomas H. Groome, especially his thought on religious education and its relevance to contemporary Indonesian educational system.

Santoso (2001:286) for example is one who cited Groome's thought. In his article he says that education, especially religious education is a process to bring religious community to enter a life which has not established yet but a life that must be shaped by them. Further he writes that to avoid repeating the past, religious community needs a critical and creative attitude in order to get freedom to build a new future. Furthermore Groome argues we are now living in the post-modern era, so we are now on a new ground. According to this era, we have to look back to look a head. In other words, we have to move tradition into the future. Tradition can be an albatross or a wonderful source of new life and new images. Here we need to draw new images from the tradition, take from the tradition of the old and the new.

## **G. Methodology**

### **1. Type of Research**

This research is a qualitative rather than quantitative research because it is a literature research. As a literature research, I collect data from library resources. The used resources are limited to the works and thoughts of Thomas H. Groome, religious education and other works related to the subject of this research.

The data collection contains the original intellectual works on Thomas H Groome on religious education as primary sources. Written data, including the complete works of Groome, the data written by interpreters or scholars on the thought of Groome, religious education, and the relevant works related to the subject of this research are used as secondary sources.

### **2. Procedures of Research**

To make this research successful, I:

- a. Collect the data from literary references;
- b. Classify and identify the data, the classification and identification process of the data that was previously collected;
- c. And analyze the data, the discussion on the subject matter of the research that is written as a whole thesis.



### **3. Data Analysis**

As a qualitative research, this research emphasizes on a philosophical approach that is used in data analysis. Here I use description, interpretation, and personal reflection. All of information about Thomas H. Groome, religious education and what related to the subject are explained by using description. Meanwhile interpretation is used to interpret Groome's concept on religious education by explaining the advantages and disadvantages of his concept. In describing, interpreting, and reflecting Groome's concept on religious education, I use logical and intellectual comprehension. Finally general conclusion is formulated as well.

### **H. Outline**

To make this research easier to understand, it is organized into six chapters: *The first chapter* discusses the starting point of this research. *The second chapter* deals with who Thomas H. Groome is through his biography, his works and his perspective on religious education. *The third chapter* contains the analysis on religious education practice in Indonesia and the contemporary Indonesian needs for a liberalizing religious education concept. *The fourth chapter* analyzes Groome's religious education concept and the possibilities to apply it into contemporary Indonesian context. And *the fifth chapter* includes some concluding remarks.

## CHAPTER II

# THOMAS H. GROOME'S BIOGRAPHY AND THOUGHTS

### A. Groome's Life and Works

Thomas Groome was born in County Kildare, Ireland. He is professor of theology and education at Boston College. He holds the equivalent of a master degree in divinity from St. Patrick's Seminary in Carlow, Ireland and also holds a master degree in religious education from Fordham University. He completed doctoral studies at Columbia University's College and Union Theological Seminary, New York. He has lectured widely throughout the world. His primary area of interest and research is the history, theory and practice of religious education. He has been working for some years on an approach to Christian education that he calls "shared Christian praxis." His interest in developing the approach comes from a concern that arose during his doctoral work, and he has pursued it diligently in his dissertation, in a series of essays in which now becomes a book entitled *Christian Religious Education: sharing our story and vision* (1980).

Thomas Groome is a Catholic scholar, commentator and author of a series of influential books on Christian education such as: *Christian Religious Education: sharing our story and vision*. This book is regarded as the most important and influential contemporary work on religious education of the century and likely the most widely read and translated book on the subject. This monumental work is



published in 1980's. At the time, many religious educators were excited by the emergence of Thomas Groome's truly fresh approach to Christian religious education. They used shared praxis to bring together themselves, their contemporary situations, scripture, and tradition to understand their faithful practice.

This educational model is proposed as theologically and educationally adequate, as "politically" significant and potent, and as useful with children, youth, adults, and intergenerational groups in a variety of cultural settings. The quest for theological and educational adequacy results in a fantastic survey of the critical dialectic of the development of educational thought from Aristotle to the present, and includes valuable critical expositions of the thought of key Christian educators along the way. Learners are seen as "pilgrims in time" (Groome, 1980:12), creating a future in the present with an eye to the past, thus being essentially involved in a "political" enterprise, implying the use of power for the ordering of individual and social life. Largely from his own experience, Groome demonstrates the use of the approach with groups of various ages and combinations of ages, insisting in effect that the model has universal applicability.

In arguing his case, Groome (1980) makes use of six theoretical categories: the nature of Christian religious education, its purpose, its context, the approach (where shared Christian praxis is outlined, argued, and illustrated), educational readiness, and the co-partners involved. With the focus on the one particular approach, these categories serve their purpose.



Groome's masterwork, which describes his comprehensive approach to religious education, is *Sharing Faith: a comprehensive approach to religious education and pastoral ministry*, a foundational work on Christian ministry. This book is published in the 1990's. Groome's *Sharing Faith* will lead as to a needed assessment of our Western philosophical and educational tradition, aided by a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and a multicultural perspective. This approach informs not only the field of religious education but all pastoral ministries, including liturgy and preaching, social ministry for justice and peace, and pastoral counseling.

Based on his experience developing the K-8 curricula *God with Us* and *Coming to Faith*, this in-depth inquiry into the theological, philosophical and educational theories for sharing faith. Specifically, this *Sharing Faith* focuses on:

- deepening and amplifying the theoretical foundations of the now-famous shared praxis approach;
- developing shared praxis into a complete approach to practical theology in all its dimensions;
- clarifying the concrete operations of such an approach as well as the process of training teachers in this styles of religious education;
- broadening the use of process into other areas of pastoral ministry, delineating its potential for pastoral counseling, liturgy, peace and justice work, and value education in the context of public education.



*Sharing Faith* is continuation of Groome's earlier work in the classic *Christian Religious Education*, which will be a must-read resource for religious educators and pastoral professionals of all kinds. Groome expands his inquiry beyond religious education and quite appropriately includes the whole field of pastoral ministry within the challenge of shared Christian praxis. His compelling vision is for all those working to share the faith. Groome has a very strong understanding of theology and philosophy, so that he is able to write on his subjects deeply. In my opinion, compared to his earlier book *Christian Religious Education*, the discussion in *Sharing Faith* is much more profound and comprehensive because it completed the book formerly published.

Another Groome's monumental work that is considered as his "magnum opus" is a book entitled *Educating for Life: A Spiritual vision for every teacher and parents*, published in 1998. In this book Groome proposes a spiritual vision certain to inspire the heart of every teacher and parent.

With ecumenical sensitivity, Groome draws upon the core conviction of Catholic Christianity and its rich educational tradition to weave away of educating that has universal appeal. He addresses and brings wisdom to the foundational issues that concern all educators regardless of their religious tradition.

This philosophy-cum-spirituality of education is deeply humanizing. A vision of educating for life, it will enhance the work of every teacher and parent, in every school –public and private-- in every faith community and family context.

At a time of urgent concern for the quality of education taking place in our schools, programs, and families, Groome's work comes as a symbol of hope. With



sensitivity, optimism, and lots of practical suggestions, he points the way forward with a holistic vision of education needed very much in our time.

Groome is also the principal author of the "Coming to Faith" series, the bestselling K-8 religion curriculum in Catholic schools and parishes today. His most recent book, *What Makes Us Catholic*, reminds Catholics of the rich legacy that joins them together in their faith.

Groome is former priest, and then he decided to come out from his order to deepen his academic interest in religious education discourse. After that, he got marriage with a professor of theology, Colleen Griffith (Groome, 1991:6, 1998: 31).

## **B. The Thoughts Influencing His Perspective**

Some contemporary philosophical, theological, and educational literatures have influenced Groome's way of understanding on the concept of praxis and the paradigm of liberation in education.

The term of praxis is used frequently today in both theological and educational context. In this sense, Groome uses the paradigm of praxis in formulating his concept of religious education, which called "shared Christian praxis." Related to this, Groome says: "*People who obviously intend something very different from its accurate meaning often use it, however. It is imperative for Christian educators who use it to understand it correctly because it represents a radical epistemological shift and thus should also represent a shift in our way of educating*" (Groome, 1978:20).



Aristotle (in Groome, 1980:153-154), borrowing the term of Pythagoras, saw that basically, there are three ways of knowing: *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis*. *Theoria* is a contemplative form of knowing, a standing back to reflect upon the world. The reflection is from a distance and concerned with knowledge for knowledge's sake. *Poiesis* is form of knowing but it is more accurately describe as an active skill. It is largely unreflective and yet a "knowing" is involved. If *theoria* is predominantly reflection, *poiesis* is predominantly action.

*Praxis* is a combination of *theoria* and *poiesis*. It combines the twin moment of reflection and participation. *Praxis* is action that is reflectively done, or it can be said that it is reflection in action. Epistemologically, it is only in being reflectively done that knowledge is known and "knowledge is not knowledge until it is done." Aristotle equated *praxis* of knowledge with the living of an ethical life. All three epistemologies are valid ways of knowing, but different (Groome, 1980:154).

Theory is seen as something to be known in itself first and then to be applied to practice. This meaning causes a gap between theory and practice that has been a difficult to bridge one another. It was Marx, in a dialectical relationship with Hegel's concept of *Geist*, who reunited theory and practice and reintroduced *praxis* as the primary way of knowing (Groome, 1980:164). Instead of taking theory as something to be formulated and then applied to practice, Marx reestablished the dialectical relationship between *theoria* and *praxis* and claimed that knowledge is primarily something that is done and is not knowledge until it is done. For Marx, theory is articulation of the awareness that emerges from human praxis and in turn it leads to further action (Groome, 1980:167).



But there is a problem in Marx's concept of the reflective moment in praxis. The problem was amplified in his followers. Marx was no crude materialist. However because he saw that which mediates between the subject knowing and the object known exclusively as human labor, and saw the dialectical process as the objectification and reappropriation of that labor, Marx reduced the reflective moment to the level of "production feedback." Habermas points out that for Marx the synthesis that is knowledge "no longer appears as an activity of thought as one of material production." This left two problems to later Marxists and to people who would attempt a praxis epistemology. First, it gave limited concept of praxis as if all life could be talked of as economic praxis. Secondly, since production feedback was seen to be inevitable, it led later Marxists to reify the evolutionary process and to see it as happening regardless of human cooperation (Groome, 1980:168-169).

The Marxist traditional understanding of praxis has been corrected and broadened by the critical theories of the Frankfurt school and especially by Jürgen Habermas. It is not possible in this short people to trace the developments. Habermas and the other critical theories mainly influence Groome's understandings of both reflection and action. In summary, Habermas expands the action dimension of praxis beyond the technical labor-oriented activity of the person to include the hermeneutical and critical activities of men or women as well. He also reestablishes the necessity of the personal reflective dimension of praxis. He argues for the necessity of critical self-reflective subjectivity that uncovers the interests that lie at the genesis of present action. And, of special importance to our interests here,



Habermas also argues convincingly that if the reflection is authentically critical than it is capable of causing emancipation (Groome, 1980:169-173).

Groome has formulated five reasons why a praxis epistemology is more appropriate for the task of Christian education than the *theoria* approach. But a key reason rests on the emancipatory possibilities of praxis to which Habermas points. If the epistemology used in Christian education is an authentically critical one, then it can facilitate the emancipation and freedom.

Among the thoughts influencing Groome's perspective, Paulo Freire is that who influenced him most. In connection with this, he clearly acknowledges:

"The philosophical background to my understanding of a praxis way of knowing would not be complete without pointing to the educational work of Paulo Freire. Freire is the most significant exponent of a praxis approach to education today. He argues for such an approach precisely because he believes it is capable of promoting human emancipation. My first attempt to use a praxis approach in religious education began after meeting Freire and reading his foundational work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in 1972" (Groome, 1980:175).

Freire's thought is essentially a situated thought, which attempt to promote education as the way to achieve freedom especially in the third world countries. By this attempt, they will be able to open the way either to the true liberation of all mankind or to its more specific purpose that is for domestication. In this way the thought of Groome finds its link with the thought of Freire that is both are attempting to search for a critical and radical education either in theory and practice to promote human freedom and emancipation through education.



Here, Paulo Friere speaks of two concepts of education. Firstly, the banking concept of education and secondly, problem solving concept. In the first concept it is the teacher who is said to have a deposit of knowledge which he must impart to the ignorant student. The banking concept of education does not give any opportunity for the learner for dialogue. This is very much against the values of freedom and human dignity (Freire, 2000:72).

The second model which Paulo Freire suggests is that of problem solving education where the critical reflection of both the learner and the teacher bring the fruits of learning. It is mutual. Paulo Freire's new educational theory has been called "problem posing education" which responds to the essence of consciousness-intentionality, rejecting communiqués and embodying communication (Freire, 2000: 79). In this model, the teacher and learner relationship is based on mutuality, free from fear and domination. Learning is non-repressive but actualizing. Thomas Groome (1980:184) for his "shared Christian praxis approach" takes a great deal from Paulo Friere's praxis approach to education. Groome writes that in Paulo Freire's praxis approach, the role of the pedagogue is to be "with" rather than "over" people, enabling them to name their world and through dialogue come to act creatively on their historical reality. Furthermore Groome acknowledges:

"I have drawn upon Freire's description of a praxis approach to education many times already and will continue to cite him throughout the remainder of his work. To achieve such an end he proposes a "problem-solving" critical reflection on present reality approach, in opposition to what he calls the "Banking method" for doing education. Promoting critical consciousness ("conscientization"), that disposes



people to act and arises from reflection on their historical experience is essential to his praxis approach" (Groome, 1980:176).

Freire's most recognized work is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Through this book he argues for system of education that emphasizes learning as an act of culture and freedom. He is most well known for concepts such as "Banking system" of Education, in which passive students have pre-selected knowledge deposited in their minds. Specifically, Freire (2000:73) describes some characteristics of education in which he calls "Banking concept":

1. The teacher teaches and the student is taught.
2. The teacher knows everything and the student knows nothing.
3. The teacher thinks and the student is thought about.
4. The teacher talks and the student listens.
5. The teacher makes disciplines and the student is disciplined.
6. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice and the student agrees.
7. The teacher acts and the student has the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
8. The teacher chooses the program content and the student (who is not consulted) adapt to it.
9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the student.
10. The teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the student is mere object.



Other important concepts developed by Paulo Freire include: dialectic, empowerment, generative themes/words, humanization, liberatory Education, mystification, praxis, problematization, transformation of the world and so forth. And the most important concept for Groome is praxis concept.

Practically, Freire's model of pedagogy begins with the teacher's involvement among the community, asking questions of the people and gathering a list of words used in their daily lives. The teacher must begin to understand the social reality of the people, and develop a list of generative words and themes which could lead to discussion in classes, or "cultural circles." By making words (literacy) relevant to the lives of people, the process of *conscientization* could begin, in which the social construction of reality will be critically examined. *Conscientization* is a process by which the student advances towards critical consciousness; the "Culture of Silence," in which dominated individuals lose the means by which to critically respond to the culture that is forced on them by a dominant culture.

For Freire, the educational process is never neutral. People can be passive recipients of knowledge --whatever the content-- or they can engage in a 'problem-posing' approach in which they become active participants. As part of this approach, it is essential that people link knowledge to action so that they actively work to change their societies at a local level and beyond.

There are, at least, four aspects of Paulo Freire's thoughts, which have significance for Groome's concern. *First*, Freire's paradigm is based on dialogue. His emphasis on dialogue was influenced by his parent's way in educating him. That is why John W. Donohue states that "love and dialogue are the central themes of all



freire's ideas" (Rahman, 2001:366). For Freire, education is a dialogical (or conversational) rather than a curricula form. However, he is able to take the discussion on several steps with his assertion that dialogue involves respect. It should not involve one person acting on another, but rather people working with each other (cooperation). Too much education, Paulo Freire argues, involves "banking system" - the educator making "deposits" in the pupils.

*Second*, Paulo Freire is concerned with praxis - action. Dialogue is not only about deepening understanding, but also part of making a difference in the world. Dialogue in itself is a mutual activity involving respect. The process is important and can be seen as improving community and constructing social capital and to leading us to act in ways that make for justice and human prosperousness. Educators have had a long-standing orientation to action, so the emphasis on change in the world is useful.

*Third*, Freire's awareness to naming the world has a great significance to those educators who are oppressed. The idea of building "pedagogy of the oppressed" and how this may be carried forward has formed a significant momentum to work. An important element of this is his concern with conscientization (developing consciousness), but consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality (Taylor, 1993: 52).

*Fourth*, Paulo Freire's assertion on putting educational activity in the lived experience of participants has opened up a series of possibilities for the way educators can approach practice. His concern to look for words that have the possibility of producing new ways of naming and acting in the world when working



with people around literacies is a good example of this. In this sense, Freire's pedagogy of literacy education involves not only reading the word, but also reading the world. This involves the development of critical consciousness that is a process known in Portuguese as *conscientização*. The structure of critical consciousness enables people to question the nature of their historical and social situation --to read their world-- with the purpose of acting as subjects in the creation of a democratic society. For education, Freire implies a dialogical exchange between teachers and students, where both learn, both question, both reflect and both participate in meaning-making.

### **C. Groome's Perspective on Religious Education and Freedom: A "Shared Christian Praxis" Approach**

#### **1. General Description of Shared Christian Praxis**

Shared Christian praxis appears in the sake of fulfilling the need for finding an effective approach to Christian religious education. As an approach, this model stresses on dialogical process of education. The purpose is to motivate students, based on the communication between their tradition and vision of life with Christian tradition and vision. This model begins from student's experiences of life and then critically reflected in order to find its meaning and then confronted to Christian belief and vision in order to find a new understanding, attitude, and awareness that motivate students to a new involvement. In other words, since the beginning, the orientation of this approach is praxis; thus this approach is also called praxis model.



Shared Christian praxis underlines the role and existence of student as a free and responsible subject. Based on the critical reflection towards their life experience and in its relevance to concrete situation of their society, the self-awareness of students as education subject can be actively and creatively realized. The dialogue between students (inter-subjectivity) stressed in this model, not only emergence to the students and the teachers, but also among the students (participants). Furthermore, the dialogue, in fact, does not only involve students and teachers, but also students, "text" and life conditions of local society. Therefore this approach does not use one-way system, but multi-way system.

In shared praxis model, the student is usually called "participant." It is probably caused by the nature of this model, which is inclusive, open, and flexible. Thus, it is applicable to various education activities and intentional teaching-learning events such as class, seminar, workshop, pastoral encounter and etc. (Groome, 1991:146).

## **2. The Main Components of Shared Christian Praxis**

As showed in name (shared Christian Praxis), this model consists of three main components: praxis, Christian, and shared.

### *a. Praxis*

Praxis refers to human action that has the purpose to achieve a life transformation in which includes dialectical unity process between theory and



practice i.e. creativity, between historical awareness and critical reflective i.e. a new involvement. Parallel to such explanation, praxis has three components, which relate to each other: activity, reflective, and creative. Those three components function to arouse imagination development, to affirm intention, and to motivate a new praxis that can be morally and ethically accounted.

*Activity* includes mental and physical activities, awareness, and personal and social act, personal and public activities, which are mediums to realize human-selves as the subjects. Human's life activities need to be placed in the context of time and place because it is historical in nature (Groome, 1991: 137).

*Reflective* aspect of praxis is critical reflection on personal and social-historical aspect, on personal and society life praxis. Critical reflection enables students to analyze and understand their position and role understand society conditions and their problems (Groome, 1991: 137).

*Creative* is a combination of activity and reflective that underlines "transcendental nature" of human being. This component stresses on the dynamics of praxis in the future that develops continuously until it can create a new praxis (Groome, 1991:137).

#### *b. Christian*

Shared Christian praxis model attempts to make the faith of Christian community accessible, close, and relevant to student's life in present time. Through this process, it is hoped that Christian faith treasure along the history develops and becomes Christian community's experience of nowadays (Groome, 1991:138-139).



*c. Shared*

The term of Shared refer to mutual communication, active and critical participation of all students, egalitarian attitude, open/inclusive, and dialogue with oneself, with others, and with God. This term also stresses on education process, which underlines the aspects of dialogue, togetherness, involvement, and solidarity among each other. In the process of “sharing” all students (participants) are required to be ready to listen by heart and communicate with freedom of the heart. Term of “sharing” also includes the dialectical relationship between student’s factual experience of life and Christian tradition and vision (Groome, 1991:142-143).

*Partnership* aspect is that underlines inter-subject relationship that is between teachers and students and between student and others students (inter-subjectivity; I and Thou relationship). The dialogical relation of this model is not alienated and manipulated in nature. Students do not only passively accept and teachers are those who master the class (Groome, 1991:143).

*Participation* aspect is closely related to partnership, but it stresses more on the *participative* dimension of *shared* approach. In this sense, either students or teachers can be informants. In the “sharing” all students (participants) according to their own styles and characteristics, give specific their contribution. Here, student’s existence is respected and acknowledged as the unique, autonomous, and responsible subject. Inter-subject relationship that leads to inter-personal relation will produce awareness on the importance of solidarity because they have the vision. Therefore all



students become the partners who are actively involved to critically manage their experience and factual condition of their society. In addition, with a creative-critical awareness and in a dialogical condition, the students are motivated to make affirmation, do evaluation, and take decision in which motivate them to the new involvement (Groome, 1991:144).

*Dialogue* aspect is begun from *reflective* and personal experience management and then it will be beginning of collective affirmation. In the process, honesty, openness, sensitivity, and respecting become the spirit. It shows us the importance of listening, not only by ear, but also by heart: sympathetic listening. Dialogical aspect contains affirming aspect and desire to make progress together. More than that, dialogue also underlines dialectical relation between student's factual praxis and Christian spirit and values (Groome, 1991:144, 1980:188-191).

After doing critical interpretation on personal experience and the society, based on such critical reflection the students confront it to Christian tradition and vision. In interpreting Christian tradition and vision, the students use critical understanding, analytical recalling and creative imagination. In this confrontation, based on the dialogue of experience and vision, the student's affirm basic Christian values (fundamentals), questioning irrelevant understanding, and motivated to find new values, which is appropriate to student's life context (Groome, 1991:145).



### 3. The Movements of Shared Christian Praxis

As a communication model on the meaning of life experience among students, shared Christian praxis can be understood as a continuous process. Groome (1991:146) mentions the process is much like a free-flowing process to be orchestrated, much like the movements of a symphony or a dance. This process consists of five pedagogical movements in which relate each other but practically, they can overlap, recur, and recombine in other sequences. Typically, shared praxis is most effective when intentional teaching/learning events has some particular historical issues or life-centered as its focus of attention.

#### *Movement 1: Naming/Expressing "Present Praxis"*

This movement invites students/participants to express their life experience and involvement in various forms. In this process, the students can use their feelings to explain the values, attitude, and belief. Through this way, it is hoped that the students become critical and aware of their own life experience. Besides that, the student's can also express their society's experience and other people. The communication of student's factual experience, hopefully, can produce basic themes that will be critically reflected in the next movement. This first movement is objective in nature because it expresses what actually happen (Groome, 1991:146-147, 1980:208-211).



### *Movement 2: Critical Reflection on Present Action*

This second movement motivates students to be more critical, active, and creative in understanding and managing the life involvement of their own and society. In this critical reflective, the students are invited and encouraged to use critical and social reasoning, analytical and social remembering, creative and social imaging. The purpose is to deepen the reflective movement and bring students to critical awareness of their involvement: its reasons, interests, assumptions, prejudices, and ideologies (reason); its sociohistorical and biographical source (memory), its intended and preferred consequences (imagination). With critical reflective on student's concrete experience, it is hoped that students will be able to share in dialogue their own "stories" and "visions" (Groome, 1991:147, 1980:211-214).

### *Movement 3: Making Accessible Christian Story and Vision*

This movement makes accessible Christian tradition and vision, closer and more relevant to students of nowadays. As has been explained before, Christian story symbolizes the faith life of the Christian community over the history and in the present days. What the tradition means is not only limited by Church teaching (dogma), but also scriptures, traditions, liturgies, leadership, etc. Whereas Christian vision reflects the promises and demands that appear from holy tradition/story to empower, mandate, and affirm Christian belief in their involvement to realize God's reign for all creation (Groome, 1991:147, 1980:214-217).



*Movement 4: Dialectical Hermeneutic to Appropriate Christian Story/Vision to Student/Participant's Stories and Visions*

This movement invites students/participants in order to be able to affirm, question, develop, and complete important fundamentals that have been found in the first and second movement and then confronted to the interpretation result of Christian tradition and vision in the third movement. This Dialectical hermeneutic/interpretation will enable students/participants to internalize and socialize the value of Christian tradition and vision in order to be appropriate to their own life and context (Groome, 1991:147, 1980:217-220).

*Movement 5: Decision/Response for Lived Christian Faith*

This last movement has the purpose to encourage students/participants in order to arrive in their concrete decision/response how to live Christian faith in the life context that has been analyzed, understood, critically reflected, and creatively evaluated. The concrete decision of this movement is understood as the most important point/result of this movement. And also, the decision can be made by personal ones, each student/participant or collectively by the learning community agreement. Here, the students/participants are influenced by the basic themes reflected, Christian values internalized, and the context of religious, social, politic, and economic interests of the students/participants (Groome, 1991:148, 1980:220-223).



## CHAPTER III

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN INDONESIA TODAY

### A. Religious Education System

Religious education is one of important divisions in education in general especially in Indonesia as a nation, which based on religious values. This assumption is hold by those who are still "close" to religious belief. Different from secular people who consider religious belief is not that important thing, so that religion is a personal business of everyone and that is why it should be separated from public affairs.

In Indonesia, religious education provided in schools either state or public is one of public policies. This policy is based on the assumption, which considers religion as the main source of moral and spiritual values. This policy is strongly supported mainly by Moslems as the majority, more particularly by those who view that religion should be integral with all aspects of life, it cannot be separated from the aspect of social, political, economic, education, etc.

In fact, religious education provided formally in schools and informally in religious institutions such as *pesantren*, Church, Islamic educational foundations, Christian educational foundations etc. is considered "has not succeeded yet" because it has not achieved its goal yet. The failure of religious education can be seen from the fact that religion failed of preventing social-horizontal conflicts, whereas in fact religion is considered as: *firstly* spiritual power of national community, which is able to bring society become more civilized, religious, humane, and free. *Secondly*, it



should be a basic potency to form thinking tradition, maturity, openness and tolerance. And *thirdly*, it should be able to answer the basic need of society from generation to generation in order to live freely but still in harmony and tolerance among various religions, ethnic, cultures, etc.

To disclose the weakness of religious education system in Indonesia, a more comprehensive and analytical exploration is needed in order to prove that in fact, we need to reform not only education in general but also religious education.

In Indonesia, formal education began before the occupation of Dutch colonial, since the establishment of VOC. But according to Ki Hajar Dewantara, the most prominent figure of Indonesian national education and the founder of *Taman Siswa*, the schools established by VOC were aimed to support their interest that is to provide workers rather than educating people. Even when the governance was changed by Dutch who applied a policy called politic of ethic, still the purpose of education was the same that is to educate and provide candidates of government servants who would be placed either in governance offices or Dutch companies.

Further Dewantara describes that in one side, indigenes or local people were not given a chance and provided an adequate ability to be the same with Dutch people. In other side, the indigenes were uprooted from their indigenous or local root among society. HIS graduations who were indigenes might only be second level workers in which their salary would not become the same even more than Dutch workers might. The most crucial problem was that they loosed their local identity and character which enabled them to live freely and humanly among their society. In addition, Dutch government did not prohibit indigenes to continue their education to



the higher level like MULO and universities because of their status as the people of second level class (Santoso, 2001:283-09).

Although VOC and Dutch colonial already left Indonesia since several decades ago, but their inheritance and spirit are still left. In education, the Dutch inheritance can be seen from the fact that *firstly*, the educational bureaucracy is still colored by colonial spirit. *Secondly*, the main purpose of education is still aimed to provide workers in the sake of continuing government development programs without considering other important purpose of education, that is to educate people in order to be able to live freely, humanly and autonomous

The most strategic function of education is to arouse critical awareness of student specifically and people generally in order to be able to think deeply, logically in criticizing social, political, and cultural conditions of the society. In more significant extent, they are able to liberate or free themselves from colonization of tradition, shackling system, and even state structure domination. Through this function, education is able to play its role to transform the ideas to people in order to carry out radical social change movements.

In many developing countries like Indonesia where in one side the domination of government is still larger, in other side the democratic awareness is still questioned, the government tends to arrange political process in order to be in accordance with their status quo interest.

According to Tadjab (1994:114), there are four characteristics belong to developing countries: *The first*, politically the countries just got freedom or independence from the West colonization. *The second*, economically, the countries



are generally still poor and depend entirely on their natural resource and donor countries. *The third*, demographically the countries are generally densely populated, and the growing of population number is relatively high where the birth extent cannot be controlled. And *the fourth*, culturally, people of the countries still strongly hold traditional cultural inheritance from generation to generation.

The characteristics described above usually influence largely to the characteristic of educational system. The usual phenomenon we can identify from developing countries like Indonesia is that education as a strategic sector is frequently interfered by the state. It is not amazing if the government of such the state produce regulation, which shackles education autonomous and makes education dependent upon the state. Technically, the government interferes with educational system, curriculum, regulation, and finance as the main points in making education "powerless" in front of such totalitarian and repressive government.

Actually, this inclination had been socialized by Paulo Freire when in the early 1970s he wrote a book entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which describes about education as a 'political activity.' In this sense, nation-state views education aspect as integral to its responsibility. Whether it directly or indirectly sponsors the educational institutions, the state has a right to monitor the education of its citizen. The state educates, not only in the sake citizen's future and the rising new generation, but also for its own future. Even though democracy sponsors always control totalitarian regimes for their ideological control of education, in fact every state's survival depends on how its citizens are educated. Thus, the way the state educates its citizen is appropriate to its interest (Groome, 1994:36).



In Indonesia context, the case of controversial national education bills (*RUU Sisdiknas*) several times ago was a proof how totalitarian the government is. Even though national education bill was already legalized, it does not mean that the educational problem is settled. On the contrary, the legalization brings about many problems especially in religious education.

The way used by national education regulations will make religious education more dogmatic and not develop student's mind even makes it dull. Consequently, the student will be bent in submission especially to the state and the superior.

Ideally, education should make the student's mind sharper, clever and intelligent. More than that, it should be able to develop his mentality more agile. The agility is a mind ability that will make the life better. The agility does not only include mind and mental agility, but also the agility in all aspects of life. In other words, the expression of "making the life of nation agile" in our constitution preamble implies that the national education is aimed at the "agile Indonesian people" who are able to realize the "freedom" to fulfill national Independence. Here, what the preamble of constitution 1945 expresses, is parallel to what many educational experts like Paulo Freire (*Education in general*) and Thomas Groome (*Religious Education*) mainly propose, education should lead to freedom which make the mind freely, not shackled by narrow-mindedness, compartmentalizing, backwardness, and so forth.

A lot of critical analyses and sharp criticisms were addressed to religious education practice. One of criticism is the assumption that religious education has no impact on the student. It is strengthened by the fact that even though religious education is regularly provided in educational institutions either in schools or



university, but we frequently see that there still many students are involved in various criminal cases.

Another criticism is addressed by Zuly Qodir (2003) who views that religious education is the inheritance of new order regime under the governance of Suharto. Furthermore, he accuses that the regime well “manipulated” religious education not to be the moral and spiritual inspiration for student but to be a medium to justify the regime’s interest. In the other words, religious education –besides other aspects such as ethnic, race, culture, etc– was politicized by the regime to preserve their status quo. Nugroho (3003:3) identifies this phenomenon as one of developing country characteristics and which just got its independence.

Haidar Bagir (2003) analyzes that there are two factors caused the failure of religious education in Indonesia. *Firstly*, because religious education provided today stresses more on symbolic-ritualistic aspects of religion. In this sense, religion is threatened as the collection of symbols that must be taught to student repeatedly, without thinking the relevance of such symbols to reality and activity of life in student’s surrounding. Here, the teacher frequently presents to the student a series of legalistic norms that has loosed its spirit. *Secondly*, Religious education in Indonesia is evaluated ‘failed’ because denying the basic requirements of education: intellectual (cognitive), emotional (affective), and behavioral. Practically, there is no balance in applying these three components.

The cognitive aspect of religious education refers to the need of recording and remembering religious knowledge where intellectually, one is demanded to instill his brain as much as possible with knowledge. The affective aspect of religious education



refer to the need of inspiring religious values where emotionally, one is demanded to not only remember what he instilled in his mind but also experience it. And the behavioral aspect of religious of education refer to the need of applying religious knowledge and values where practically, one is demanded not only remember and inspiring what he learned but also practice it in his daily life.

Paul Suparno (2003:32-33) identifies that religious education problems can be classified into six factors: *Firstly*, religious education is actually not more than religious teaching because it stresses mainly on cognitive aspect rather than affective and behavioral aspects. Consequently, student knows the fact even memorizes them, in the evaluation he gets a good result, but the knowledge he knows and memorizes has no impact on his daily attitude and behavior. Religious education practice that stresses mainly on cognitive aspect will lead to “unbalanced” because only intellectual which is fulfilled by knowledge, whereas in fact, the soul also needs moral and spiritual fulfillment.

*Secondly*, religious education is the other technical term of indoctrination process. In this model, teacher is the only who active and student just carefully listen to what the teacher says. Paulo Freire calls this model of education as “Banking” concept of education in which the teacher prefer to explain all materials and the student should only follow what the teacher instructs (Freire, 2000:72). Here, student is not activated to search for his life values together with the teacher and other students, consequently the values are considered “strange” because it is not he himself who finds and experiences them. An approach to searching for religious value together is parallel to religious educational concept proposed by Thomas Groome in



which he names his approach to Christian religious education as “shared Christian praxis.” Both models of education will lead to a more dialogical approach because togetherness aspect underlines the relation of students and teacher (Groome, 1991:143).

*Thirdly*, in many cases, religious education stresses on practical ritual or formal worship but it loses its experience dimension. In Islam, every ritual has its social dimension or humanity. But, in fact it often loses such dimension as the consequence of religious education practice, which stresses more on vertical dimension rather than horizontal-social dimension. As the result, it has loosed its real spirit that is social solidarity. Ideally, formal ritual always has two dimensions, which cannot be separated vertical (godliness) and horizontal (humanness). For example, the command of *Shalat* (prayer in Islam) in the *Qur'an* is always followed by the command of paying *Zakat* (tithe paid to help those who need such as: poor people and orphans, etc). In fact, the practice of religious education fails to arouse student's social awareness because experience aspect of formal ritual is often forgotten.

*Fourthly*, in evaluation, the stress is more on memorization ability. Practically, religious education grades are determined by a final exam, which consists of multiple choice form of exam. In fact, student's success and failure is merely being assessed from partial aspect. If the evaluation is merely determined by one aspect, for example cognitive aspect only, so the teaching dimension is more dominant than education dimension. As the result, what we have been practicing in our schools is not religious education but only religious teaching or religious knowledge.



*Fifthly*, religious education is rarely related to other humanity aspects such as emotional, spiritual, social, etc. Because the most important purpose of education is for student empowerment in order to be ready to face his better future, so that the understanding of humanity discourses must become a priority. In this sense, religious education should be able to relate abstract-normative values received by student with social-facts in society. Thus, student will be motivated to be critical and creative in facing such social facts. In this sense, we can take the way used by Christian educators to relate abstract-normative teaching to social-analytical context as an example. Jack L. Seymour in *Approaches to Christian Education* (1987:25) clearly describes: *"the social context of suffering and exploitation, of dehumanization and oppression, are to set the agenda for the church's educational ministry. Liberal educators begin with the biblical promise and vision of the kingdom of God. This vision, combined with a social analysis, is to inspire the mission of the church."*

*Sixthly*, The support of environment and system is not adequate. It is often that appropriate environment, condition, and system in the family and society do not support religious values taught in the schools. For example, in the school, student is taught to respect all God's creations, but apparently, in the house, student sees his parent killed an animal coming to their house to seek for something to eat. Another example, in religious education class student is taught that we have to love and respect orphan and poor people, but in fact, when there is an orphan or poor comes to his environment, then his neighbors come to give nothing, even rebuke and chase the orphan or poor away. Such two examples are contradicted to what is taught in the



schools. Consequently, the student will be confused to determine which must be followed.

## **B. Syllabus of Religious Education in Indonesia**

Syllabus refers to curriculum used in an educational system. Curriculum is a practical translation of the grand purpose of education, which is designed to bring education process; successfully achieves its goal (Waidl, 2000:24). If we critically view Indonesian educational system, more particularly religious education system, we will come to a conclusion that our educational syllabus follows a paradigm called absolutism.

According to absolutism paradigm, syllabus is defined as 'objective' knowledge that is an absolute truth and the only considered urgent by a certain science discipline. It is agreed that the content of a syllabus is unchanged and therefore unquestionable. The syllabus content is 'dictated' from the upper to the lower. Borrowing Paulo Freire's terminology, this kind of syllabus is followed by the way of teaching called "Banking" concept of education in which the teacher reads off all syllabus content and student just listens/write what the teacher says (Freire, 2000:72).

In Indonesian context, the government is that determines the content of curriculum --more particularly in formal schools--as the consequence of centralization policy. Here, society is not given a room for enriching the content of



curriculum in the sake of education empowerment because the government is the only who knows the need of society (Waidl, 2000:20).

Consequently, the curriculum is not free from government's interest or orientation in realizing their policies and purposes. In this sense, government invites some experts --either educational or non-educational experts-- compile our national syllabus. The source of syllabus content is taken from textbooks written by expert of certain discipline. Practically, this curriculum must be nationally implemented without any exception and question. In fact, this kind of paradigm does not involve teachers in composing the syllabus.

Besides national curriculum content, there is also local curriculum content. In fact, the process of curriculum arrangement is not far different from national curriculum paradigm in which the role of local teacher is not involved. The difference lies on the fact that national curriculum is arranged by national expert who live in Jakarta, whereas local curriculum is arranged by local expert who live in certain province. The source of local curriculum content is taken from textbooks written by expert either nationally or locally. But still, the involvement of local teacher is almost nothing except a number of certain school officials that are gathered to agree with the superior's decision.

Consequently, material list of a syllabus is considered as merely true. Therefore, the role of teacher in front of the class is only to deliver such the truth to student. Even, sometimes many students views teacher as the only source of study. In this case, Sutrisno (2001:207) calls the teacher as the 'agent' of knowledge transfer.



This kind of curriculum, of course, must be criticized in order to give a chance for student to choose subject material, which is appropriate most to his own interest and career opportunity in the future. If the curriculum is liberated, not interfered by the government, so the teacher will be able to choose the most appropriate materials for the student depends on the need and condition of student and his environment (society). Here, the teacher is demanded to be always active and creative in making improvements and doing scientific study.

Besides that, the curriculum must also give the room for argument. The student has a chance to take the most appropriate attitude for him and through this curriculum also, he is trained to be a responsible decision-maker (Suparno et al, 2002:70).

To realize such purpose, religious education syllabus/curriculum must be integrative. Integrated curriculum attempts to deny the limits among subject-material. In this sense, religious values, morality, and ethics are taught in every subject, not only in religious subject (Assyaukanie, 2003). It is hoped that this kind of curriculum will be able to form student's personality to be integrated, not to be student whose split personality.

### **C. Pedagogy of Religious education in Indonesia**

Pedagogy refers to all activities practiced in the class to deliver teaching material to student. According to absolutism paradigm, it relates to everything pertaining to delivering the truth. This paradigm views teaching as transfer activity of



knowledge from the expert to the student through a mediator that is teacher. In this sense, the expert is the donor, the student is the recipient, and the teacher is the agent who transfers something from the donor to the recipient. This is a short description to explain how if we understand and apply religious education not more than a teaching process. Therefore, it will be better if we firstly, differentiate between religious education and religious teaching. According to Azyumardi Azra (1999:4) the difference lies on the stressing of education, which is more on the formation of student's personality and awareness besides also the transfer of knowledge and skill. Through this kind of process, a nation or state can bequeath religious values, thought and skill to its young generation, so that they will be ready to welcome their future.

Different from education, teaching is merely a transfer process of knowledge. With this way of pedagogy, there will be a dependence of student upon teacher; consequently, the student is not active. The student's focus will be on what is assigned by the teacher. Furthermore, the student is not required to have his own outlook in what he studies. If he has, it will not be paid attention either by teacher or by other students. Because scientific tradition is not accustomed since the beginning of class, so that the dialogue and discussion is considered a wasting time.

As the result, the student assumes that the knowledge transferred by the teacher is something "taken for granted", so that it must be followed by student without any critical view. In this case, criticism is considered not proportional because in schools, student needs only to receive materials prepared by the teacher. To eliminate this uncritical way of thinking, discussion and dialogue must be introduced and accustomed as early as possible to the student. Because in fact,



education, including religious education is the initiation of student into a discussion in which he is taught to understand, to take seriously, and to think critically about the contending voices in our world.

Practically, religious education in schools, in fact, is not more than indoctrination process because it just includes one aspect of education that is cognitive aspect. Here, religious education is stressed merely on memorizing knowledge of fact. Consequently, the success and failure of student is viewed and assessed from his ability in memorizing religious materials. Relating to this, Soedjatmoko (1984:274) argues that religious education will not have relevance to the effort of social change management through various development efforts and to educate the student in facing this changing era positively as decent human being.

That is why education including religious education must be differentiated from indoctrination, and even socialization and training. In this sense, student is different from soldier. Student is educated to provide him with a measure of critical distance on his subjects, enabling him to think in informed and reflective ways about alternatives. By contrast, soldier is trained to march and is socialized to follow the order of his officer.

Such distinction describes us how education is also different from just learning. The distinction lies on the fact that learning is more a matter of drill, discipline, and habit, whereas education leads student to use critical thinking. In addition, in matters of morality, politics, and religion we usually use the way of indoctrination rather than training and socialization. Here, we indoctrinate student



when we teach to accept doctrines or a point of view uncritically (Nord & Haynes, 1998:42).

#### **D. Evaluation of Religious Education in Indonesia**

Evaluation includes all activities aimed to know what has been learned in the class. Evaluation in religious education is determined by the nature of syllabus and pedagogy. Syllabus and pedagogy which, functions as the transfer of knowledge requires knowledge and skill reproduction as the evaluation system. The knowledge reproduction approach to educational evaluation system demands student to show what he know and remember in the end of teaching-learning process. The form of question is usually close question, which only requires the accurate answer. In this evaluation model, the student is not given a chance to demonstrate his creative ability in answering the creative questions. Even, there is no room for student to develop his critical analysis in responding the evaluative questions.

Religious Education that still stresses mainly on cognitive aspect usually uses multiple choice questions as the form of evaluation. This model of evaluation is parallel to the model of religious education, which based on memorization. In multiple choice model of evaluation, student is considered successful if he gets a good mark. But the evaluation process just stops at how much the student gets the mark. It is not amazing if in one side there are many students who get a good mark but in other side they are also involved in various crime cases. Of course this phenomenon is very ironic because in fact the practice of religious education is not



more than religious teaching in which there is only one aspect of religious education called cognitive aspect that is the transferring process of knowledge.

Ideally the evaluation of religious education must include all aspect of religious education: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. These three cannot be separated because each completes one another. The student's progress must be viewed during studying process, not only in the end of it that is at the final exam (Suparno et al, 2002:72).

In sum, in the new context of religious education, evaluation must be comprehensive includes the aspect of process and study result that gradually describes behavior change. In this sense, the behavior must include aspect of cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE RELEVANCE OF GROOME'S PERSPECTIVE TO ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

### A. Critical Analysis to Groome's Religious Education Thought: "Shared Faith Praxis"

After exploring Thomas Groome's thoughts deeply, I underline some important things we can take into consideration, especially to increase our religious education quality.

Generally, Groome's "shared Christian praxis" model can be applied into religious education system in Indonesian context because it consists of fundamental paradigm which places student as the central subject in religious education. Besides its possibility to be applied into educational sphere, because of its flexibility, shared praxis model can also be applied to many fields. Groome asserts: *"the word between "shared" and "praxis" can be whatever is appropriate. In fact, the US Department of Forestry uses this approach to educate its trainee foresters - so there; it is "shared forestry praxis" and so on."*

The issue raised by Groome in introducing his educational concept is also up to date, parallel to what Paulo Freire proposes as education for freedom, he also put religious education as a way to achieve freedom. It seems that what Groome proposes is to make Freire's notion more complete because we acknowledge that religious education is a part of our national education.



The most important criticism I address to Groome's shared Christian praxis is the need to change the paradigm of merely Christian faith into a more universal and inclusive spirit. In this sense, I view that Groome's paradigm of shared Christian praxis need to be combined with other perspective, especially the world religious perspectives. In addition, shared praxis should also be combined with multicultural education paradigm. This effort must be done in order to be more accepted by all religious faith and cultures.

In other words, the paradigm of "shared Christian praxis" should be situated to a "local" interpretation specific to Indonesian characteristic in which consists of various religions, ethnics, cultures, etc. That is why it will be more appropriate if the term "shared Christian praxis" is changed to be "shared faith praxis," so that it seems to be more inclusive and open for all religious traditions. In the context of religious pluralism in Indonesia, especially to fulfill the requirement of inter-religious dialogue agenda, Groome's model can be applied to create inter-religious dialogue more humane and dialogical. Related to this need, it will be more appropriate if the term of "shared Christian praxis" is changed to be "shared inter-faith praxis." Based on this model, the result of dialogue does not only stop at discourse or agenda, but also being realized into a real action through real cooperation among religious community.

Groome assumes that in Indonesian context, "shared interfaith praxis" is appropriate, but here Groome anticipates that if a group of Christians and Muslims are meeting regularly for conversation, then at movement 3, both traditions should be accessed - or perhaps draw from one on one occasion, and the other on the next



occasion. The key would be to honor both faiths - bringing "life" to both traditions, and both traditions to life.

Furthermore Groome emphasizes that the conversation/dialogue will itself be a praxis as it is "done reflectively" in community. And this will be a source of bonding with and appreciation of "the other." It will also heighten our community if we can take on some concrete praxis together - for example, some act of compassion or justice. An old saying from the Christian ecumenical movement goes, "doctrine divide; service unites." There is much truth to this.

What will it require of both communities to participate in such conversation. Groome supposes each tradition must find "within itself" the warrant for such outreach to "the other" and conversation/bridge building. Without a clear rationale from within Islam and from within Christianity for the conversation, it is not likely to take place, or to be superficial and token.

In my pinion, among Groome's five movements of "shared faith praxis," the most difficult one to apply until now is the second movement that is critical reflection because since the beginning we have no critical thought tradition. Through shared praxis, Groome encourages students to develop critical view. Critical reflection can involve students in all activities of critical and social reasoning, analytical and social identification, creative and social imagining. The purpose is to deepen the reflective movement and bring students to a critical consciousness.

In addition, critical reflection enables students to come to a critical appropriation of present praxis in their place and time, symbolically it can be carried out through a sharing or dialogue their faith. I also view that this notion is the most



important things in the Groome's perspectives because this effort will empower religious education as a way to encourage students to develop their critical outlook.

I view that at practical level, shared Christian praxis arouses only professional religious teachers' interest, a small number of those who have already provided training in its use. The different religious background and life experience of teachers and students mean that not all participants of shared praxis are ready, willing or able to share their religious faith during the religion class. Therefore an adaptation and even training is needed for those who have not been familiar with this model.

In addition, the praxis approach offers a sophisticated form of theologizing applied to the design and presentation of religious education class. For many teachers, especially those inexperienced or untrained in religious education, the challenges of implementing this approach are many. It requires teachers to be ready and to have a broad understanding of the certain religious tradition, and also to have a capacity to bring this understanding to the unique circumstances of a class session which, as Groome encourages, can follow unpredicted directions.

Groome's shared Christian praxis consists of several "movements" that none may be omitted. For example, Groome states that if the educator bypasses movement 3, then the process "would not then be shared Christian praxis" anymore (Groome, 1991:218). I assume that not all religious education teachers in Indonesia have readiness to apply shared praxis in complete way, so that they need time to learn and the try to apply this model step by step.



Another obstacle is that Groome's ideas are not so popular in Indonesia, compared to Paulo Freire's ideas for example. Only few students know Groome's thoughts, most of them from Catholic schools and fewer are from other Christian traditions and other religions. The first agenda we must do is, socializing and introducing Groome's shared faith praxis model to those who are not familiar to it. Many program we can do, for example by carrying out seminars and trainings on shared faith praxis model. In addition, publications on the advantages of this model must also be increased.

It is probably that Indonesian school classrooms are more complex than what Groome imagine as "praxis circle." As the result shared faith praxis will encounter opposing differences with the reality of Indonesian school classrooms. The issue is not simply a strong diversity of faith perspectives, but simply that most of the students have not gathered in the religious education classes for the purpose of directly sharing their religious faith. Gabriel Moran has concerned that all teachers, before speaking in a classroom, need to answer the question: why are the students are collected in the class? (Moran, 1997:83). It means that teacher cannot apply shared faith praxis model directly without identifying what is the real condition of students, because in fact, they come from different background of faith, culture, ethnic, etc.

If the praxis approach is considered as the only way suggested for teaching all topics in religious education, many teachers will find that this single model was not appropriate or helpful because they will feel forced to fit their material to the praxis method, even when an alternative approach may have been more appropriate for a



particular class or topic. Furthermore, when topic is designed to follow a particular approach, teachers and students will find out that class lessons can become forced, unnatural or too predictable. This realization is not appropriate to the spirit of shared praxis approach that is considered as flexible and adaptable.

The way to improve the teaching-learning of religion in school is: teacher must be well prepared with a strong understanding and appreciation of their subject matter who also understand how to effectively engage students in learning that subject matter. This implies that a variety of methodologies is required by the teacher, not a single approach.

Another kind of criticism has been addressed by Helen Raduntz who argues that Groome's approach, while appearing to be radical and critical in the tradition of Freire and other radical educators, is in fact the opposite. She argues that, in reality, shared Christian praxis serves "to preserve the institutional church and its tradition rather than renew the Christian message and aid transformative action" (Raduntz, 1994:12). She affirms that Groome recognizes the Christian tradition as the standard for participants' decision making in the process of shared praxis. For Raduntz, this places the Christian tradition itself beyond criticism and limits the field of participants' judgment.

A parallel remark has been raised by Don Browning who acknowledges that, while most discussions in a shared praxis group will not push to the limit of the critique, "the possibility for carrying the conversation that far must always be



allowed.” For Browning, this is necessary since “the openness of the discussion must be established in principle” (Browning, 1991:221).

Groome cannot notice an educational process where critical reflection might end in “total discontinuity with the preceding tradition and the primordial revelation on which Christianity rests” (Groome, 1980:199). Students in classrooms will notice soon their assessment of issues and topics in religion are really and truly open to critical analysis. Some indication that the “correct” answer will finally be shaped by an authority figure --teacher, religious leader, authoritative text etc.-- will bring about an increasing in doubt and suspicion among students: they will neat their reaction and outlook about the religion class according to the level of freedom they recognize.

Undoubtedly, Groome raises a significant issue for religious education teachers. I think that teachers should be faced with the challenge of balancing their dedication and concern in the subject matter they are teaching in the religious education class, and the requirement to give students an intellectual space to come to understand and appreciate that subject matter on their own provisions. This necessary balance cannot arise when teachers seek to influence, persuade or force their will on their students. It does not mean that this vision will eliminate teachers from the classroom background, but it will provide them with a more creative and realistic role in designing the religion class than persuading their students towards religious belief and practice.



## B. The Relevance of Groome's Perspective to Islamic Education

Before attempting to relate Thomas Groome's perspective on religious education to Islamic education perspective, it is better to describe a little bit about the essence of Islamic education, its purpose, and Islamic education for human freedom.

According to Azyumardi Azra (1999), the meaning of education in general and then related to Islam –as a system of belief- sets up new meanings in which imply its characteristics. Originally, definitions of Islamic education are derived from some words which come from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*.

The first word is *tarbiya*, comes from the root *raba* means to grow, grow, and it refers to the goal-oriented process of rearing or bringing a child up to a state of completeness or maturity. The second word is *Tadib*, comes from the root *aduba* means *to be refined, disciplined, cultured*, and it refers to the process learning as sound basis for social behavior within the community and society at large. It includes coming to understand and accept the most fundamental social principles such as justice (al-Attas, 1979:2-4). The third term is *ta'lim* comes from the root *'alima* means *to know, be informed, perceive, discern*, and refers to the imparting and receiving of knowledge, usually through training, instruction, or other forms of teaching (J. Mark Halstead, 1995:27).

The different emphasis of these three terms suggest a possible analysis of education in terms of (1) aiding individual development (2) increasing understanding of the society of which the individual is part and its laws and values and (3)



transmitting knowledge though of course such an analysis is by no means exclusive to Islamic thinking.

These three words include a very deep meaning about human, society, and environment, in their relation to God, in which each relates another. Based on these formulations, religious education definition can be concluded as follows:

- Education is an action which is consciously done in the sake of preserving and developing human resource potency for formation of *al insan al kamil* (perfect human).
- Education is an activity process, which is gradually and continuously done in rhythm with student's development.

There are many Islamic education definitions. Abdurrahman An Nahlawi, for example, defines it as individual and social structuring that can lead a Moslem to obey Islam and its application perfectly in his individual and social lives (Nahlawi, 1992:41).

In detail, Yusuf Qardhawi defines Islamic education as a totality human education, which includes his mind and heart, his physical and spiritual aspect, and his moral and skills. Thus, Islamic education prepares human to live better and to prepare him to face his community in all conditions, whatever it is (Qardhawi, 1980:157).

From the above formulations, it can be seen that the stress of Islamic education is more on "education," and not on "teaching" which contains an authoritative connotation. Therefore, students have an adequate room to actualize and express their potency. In this sense, teachers' role is only as facilitators or guides who



assist to students to empower his potency. Thus, teachers are not everything in teaching-learning process, avoiding what Paulo Freire's "banking concept" that treats students as a passive recipients of knowledge, as if the whole education activity is no more than a transfer of information from the knowledgeable heads of teachers to the empty heads of students.

One of Islamic education purpose is what formulated by the first international conference on Islamic education: "*Education should aim at the balanced growth of the personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational, self, feeling, and bodily senses...*" (Tadjab, 1992:63).

Based on the purpose formulated above, it can be viewed that Islamic education required a balance of the basic requirements of education: intellectual (cognitive), emotional (affective), and behavioral. Similar to what Groome (1980:21), states: "*...the better educational theorists have all emphasized that good education must be cognitive, affective, and behavioral.*"

As the liberating force, Islamic education cannot be separated from those three domains of education: intellectual (cognitive), emotional (affective), and behavioral. Freedom in Islam is measured through religion, moral, responsibility, and justice as the criterions. These four are needed to control and limit, so the freedom does not lead to anarchism (Karim, 1991:39)

In this context, education is required to be able to develop human's personality in a whole and balanced senses through the training of soul, rationality, feeling and so forth. In addition, education must also be able to achieve human's



growth in all of his aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imagination, either individually or socially to get perfection.

Islamic education leads to a balance in vertical (godliness) and horizontal (humanness). For example, the command of *Shalat* (prayer in Islam) in the *Qur'an* is always followed by the command of paying *Zakat* (tithe paid to help those who need such as: poor people and orphans, etc). Without the balance between these dimensions, so that one's ritual is considered not completed.

Islamic education also stresses the balance between knowledge and mercy. Al-Attas points out that the qualitative emphasis of *tarbiyah* is mercy (rahmah) rather than knowledge ('ilm), whereas the emphasis of *ta'dib* is knowledge, rather than mercy. We prefer to affect a balance between knowledge and mercy, so that neither is emphasized over the other, for just as mercy without knowledge can foster weakness, delusion, ineffectiveness and foolishness, so knowledge without mercy can lead to egotism, self-aggrandizement, arrogance, intolerance and high-handedness.

Curriculum in Islamic education emphasizes on a holistic curriculum, which aim to reconcile conventional and stereotyped oppositions such as art and science; creativity and rigor; analytic and synthetic styles of learning; logic and intuition; memorization and comprehension; collaboration and competition; goal-directed learning and exploratory, discovery or investigative learning; innovation and tradition; teaching methods which facilitate learning and those which direct learning; and so on. Such curriculum includes all human's potencies. Groome calls this kind of curriculum as a humanizing curriculum.



Guided by the need for balance, moderation, and harmony, and the existence of complementary pairs of opposites as the underlying fabric of everything in the created universe, it seeks to avoid a vested interest in any one-sided model, paradigm, position conceptual “package,” or ephemeral fashion in educational philosophy or methodology.

Islam is religion that stresses on the importance of balance between theory and practice, action and reflection. This concept is similar to Groome’s concept of praxis which consists of dual moments: action and reflection.

Groome’s shared praxis model –especially movement 2– is mainly aimed to develop critical thinking tradition of students. This is parallel to Islamic educational vision which sees the best schools as “thinking schools” and “active learning environment” which uphold the sacred trust to seek and acquire knowledge, and that through the quality of their education they dispense with the false idea that “faith” is somehow in opposition to “reason,” and that the knowledge attained through divine revelation is somehow in opposition to acquired human knowledge.

Thomas Groome’s paradigm on religious education for freedom is parallel to the spirit of Islamic education in which both lead to an effort to liberate human from everything inhibit human freedom. The spirit of Groom’s educational though can be mediation for enriching the paradigm of Islamic educational for freedom. What he proposed enables students to understand their religious texts critically and comprehensively.



To get a more detail understanding on how to apply shared praxis in Islamic education practice, here I attempt to relate five movements of Groome's approach to Islamic education perspective.

As a communication model on the meaning of life experience among students, shared praxis can be understood as a continuous process. This process consists of five pedagogical movements in which relate each other. Typically, shared praxis is most effective when intentional teaching/learning events has some particular historical issues or life-centered as its focus of attention.

#### *Movement 1: Naming/Expressing "Present Praxis"*

This movement is easy to apply to Islamic education system because it is just aimed to invite students/participants to express their life experience and involvement. The difficulties appear when the expressing process is carried out in various forms such as: symbolizing, speaking, writing, gesturing, painting, dancing and so forth because in fact, the way students express their opinion –in Islamic educational process– is limited to verbal expression. The other ways are considered not proportional even impolite. Thus, I do agree if various ways of expressing can be applied to Islamic educational class in order that students are free to use their feelings to explain the values, attitude, and belief. Through this way, it is hoped that the students become critical and aware of their own life experience. Besides that, the students can also express their society's experience and other people. The communication of students' factual experience, hopefully, can produce basic themes that will be critically reflected in the next movement. The most important thing



Moslem educators should underline is that the dialogue or sharing experiences among students is aimed to decrease the cultures of silence, paternalistic, and dependence. Students are not passive objects that are waited to be served, to be given or to be spoken.

### *Movement 2: Critical Reflection on Present Action*

In my opinion, the second movement of Groome's shared praxis is the most important point to be applied to Islamic education system, more particularly to Islamic educational institution which still holds traditional system like *pesantren*. Still many *pesantren*, as far as I know, tend to develop uncritical thought tradition that is Islamic thought trend underlines the urgency of preserving Islamic scientific tradition which has been sturdy build up since last hundred years and use it to stem the negative aspect of development and modernization current in every aspect of life. In the teaching-learning process, teachers are considered as the only way to get knowledge. This inclination is influenced by Middle Ages of Islam where Islamic knowledge spreading in the beginning of Islam was centered to the individual persons namely teachers. Therefore the content of Islamic thought is also characterized by individual effort. Parallel to this, Fazlur Rahman (1979:185-185) views that the main characteristic of teaching-learning process of this period –middle ages—is the individual importance of teachers. It is likely that many Islamic educational institutions –such as *pesantren*—still view teacher as the most dominant factor in determining the success of learning process. Consequently, students consider what the teachers say as something “taken for granted,” therefore it should be followed by



students without any exception. As the result, there is no place for criticism. In addition, the ability of learning by hearth and memorizing is still considered as the most dominant way of learning. Consequently, the reasoning dimension becomes decreased, automatically, the critical attitude will considered not proportional. Groome's second movement finds its relevance because it motivates students to be more critical, active, and creative not only in teaching-learning process but also in understanding and managing the life involvement of their own and society. In this critical reflection, the students are invited and encouraged to use critical and social reasoning, analytical and social remembering, creative and social imaging. The purpose is to deepen the reflective movement and bring students to critical awareness of their involvement. Thus I do agree if since the beginning students are accustomed to use their critical awareness and reflection in order to be able to criticize injustice and unfair conditions not only in our country but only also in global context.

### *Movement 3: Making Accessible Islamic Teaching*

To apply Groome's third movement to Islamic educational system, we just need to change the content of educational process –for example from Christian Story and Vision to Islamic tradition and vision. This movement will make accessible Islamic tradition and vision, closer and more relevant to students of nowadays in order they are motivated to internalize its meaning critically and creatively in their life. We know that every religion, including Islam consists of two main aspects, normative-dogmatic and historical (tradition) aspect. Normative aspect of Islam is religious doctrine of Islam. It is something taken for granted because it is believed as



what was revealed by God through His prophet which in Islam, it is called *aqidah* and *syari'ah*; therefore it is permanent (*qath'i*) that does not change in every place and time while tradition is interpretation and application result of such normative aspect. Tradition is historical aspect of religion because it is human's thought product; therefore it can be changed in accordance to time and place. Islamic tradition expresses human's creativity and interpretation toward God's revelation. Actually, this movement 3 is a dialogue between "tradition"—Moslem's belief experience along the history— and "vision"—Islamic doctrine—with tradition and vision belong to students. Here, teachers are demanded to have adequate ability in order to be able to assist students to interpret such normative and historical aspect of Islam; therefore it will be accessible for students. According to Groome, the base of teaching-learning process is sharing/dialogue. Thus the truth is not merely teacher or religious leaders' monopoly, but student must be given chance —as wide as possible—to access such truth based on their own dialogue with Islamic tradition and doctrine. If this can be realized, students will be able to determine their own life based on Islamic values because they feel that they their own selves who find the truth.

*Movement 4: Dialectical Hermeneutic to Appropriate Islamic Teaching to  
Students' Stories and Visions*

Among all movements of shared praxis, the movement 4 is the most challenging to apply to Islamic educational system because still there are many Moslems who are suspicious of "hermeneutic." They assume that it can break religious doctrine because it is merely human reason whereas in fact religious



doctrine is revealed by God, thus it cannot be rationalized. But I view that hermeneutical approach is very important to apply to Islamic educational system because it can invites students/participants in order to be able to affirm, question, develop, and complete important fundamentals that have been found in the first and second movement and then confronted to the interpretation result of Islamic teaching in the third movement. This Dialectical hermeneutic/interpretation will enable students/participants to internalize and socialize the value of Islamic teaching in order to be appropriate to their own life and context (commitment). Thus, the most important purpose of movement 4 is to arouse internalize commitment into students.' In this movement, students are give "freedom" to internalize Islamic teaching values which are appropriate to their life context. But they must be monitored in order to not fall for objectivism, in the meaning that they accept Islamic doctrine and tradition as something taken for granted or absolute truth which cannot be questioned and for subjectivism, in the meaning that they do not need both doctrine and tradition because the only true is their own experiences.

#### *Movement 5: Decision/Response for Lived Islamic Faith*

After passing the preceding movements step by step, we now arrive to the last movement that is the practical and concrete movement to realize what we formulated and criticized in the previous movements. The purpose to encourage students in order to arrive in their concrete decision/response how to live Islamic faith in the life context that has been analyzed, understood, critically reflected, and creatively evaluated in the previous movements. This is important because Islam --through



Islamic education-- teaches its followers to live in this world based on the religious faith and base their life decisions on God's ways. Theologically, this movement expresses a hope that in the mercy of God and with a new response of Moslem on it, the Moslem's future will be better. In addition, this last movement does not only encourage Moslems to live better but also to help them to take decisions --morally, socially, politically, conceptually, and so forth-- based on Islamic values. The concrete decision of this movement is understood as the most important point/result of this movement. And also, because the nature and stressing of one's decisions vary; they can either stress on personal problem or social responsibilities such as solidarity toward poor people's struggle who become the victims of injustice, discrimination etc. Here, the students/participants are influenced by the basic themes reflected, Islamic values internalized, and the context of religious, social, politic, and economic interests of the students/participants

### **C. The Relevance of Groome's Religious Education Thought to Contemporary Indonesian Context**

Through this sub-chapter, I attempt to apply or at least, to relate Groome's educational thought to some practices happening in our religious education system. I have described such the practices in chapter 3. As I have mentioned before, through this simple work I am going to offer an alternative of religious education concept based on my exploration on Thomas H. Groome's educational thoughts and how is

the possibility to apply it into Indonesian educational system, more particularly to open dialogical deadlock of debatable religious education system.

We know that the case of controversial national education bills (*RUU Sisdiknas*) several times ago is a very crucial problem that needs to solve as soon as possible. Although national education bill was already approved by the parliament, it does not mean that the educational problem is settled. On the contrary, the legalization brings about many problems especially in religious education.

As I have described in chapter 3, we know that there are many sharp criticism have been addressed to religious education practice in Indonesia. Many people assume that religious education failed in playing its role. Consequently, they are pessimistic toward the future of religious education in Indonesia.

Based on my analysis in chapter 3, there are some serious problems in our religious education practice we need to solve soon. *Firstly*, our education system, including religious education system is the inheritance of the new order regime. This regime succeeded in manipulating/politicizing religious education to justify their interests. As the solution, we need to return religious education function as moral and spiritual inspiration/guidance of student. The only way to realize such function is by giving religious education a freedom to express its role and function as well as possible.

*Secondly*, religious education practice stresses more on symbolic-ritualistic aspect of religion. In this sense, religion is threatened as the collection of symbols that must be taught to student repeatedly, without thinking the relevance of such



symbols to reality and activity of life in student's surrounding. As for the social universe the students inherit, it will be better to provide the students with something inclusive and concrete which is able to arouse open-minded and tolerant attitudes of students. For example, they are taught not only the symbols of religion or the nature of God but also taught that the Creator/God –as they learn in religious education subject-- loves all humankind. That is why they have to imitate God's characteristic by loving all His creations as well.

In addition to this, religious education stresses more on practical ritual or formal worship but it loses its experience dimension. Yes, it is right to say that no one can force faith or belief as well as no one can read the heart, because one's spirituality is a personal and private thing. But there are occasions when religious rituals are practiced in the collective of a like-minded community. This community has a commonality of understanding, a shared religious literacy in its knowledge of ritual, symbol and story. It is a citizenship in the same communion.

*Thirdly*, our religious education practice denies the basic requirements of education: intellectual (cognitive), emotional (affective), and behavioral. Practically, there is no balance in applying these three components. According to Groome (1980:21), the better religious education should include all aspects mentioned above: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Parallel to this he clearly states: "*...the better educational theorists have all emphasized that good education must be cognitive, affective, and behavioral.*"



*Fourthly*, religious education is actually not more than religious teaching because it stresses mainly on cognitive aspect rather than affective and behavioral aspects. In religious teaching, the teachers do not invite students to decision, they settle for them "knowing about" things in their heads. (Groome 1991:439). To solve this misconception, Groome offer his shared praxis model as the alternative way to make teaching-learning process more dialogical because this approach stresses on mutual partnership, participation, and dialogue with oneself, with others and so forth.

*Fifthly*, religious education is not more than indoctrination process. In this case, teacher is the only who active and student just carefully listen to what the teacher says. Paulo Freire calls this model of education as "Banking" concept of education in which the teacher prefer to explain all materials and the student should only follow what the teacher instructs (Freire, 2000:72). To change this misconception, Groome proposes the notion of religious education for freedom. Related to this, he states: *"if Christian (religious) education is synonymous with indoctrination then it surely cannot promote human freedom* (Groome, 1978:14).

Furthermore, the concept of indoctrination is not appropriate any more to apply because it is a kind of insults to the student; in the practice, indoctrination process has no relation to the reality outside the classroom. Thus, students are free to propose other ideas, contrary views and other critical perspectives.

Of course, certain religious school/institution will operate under the support of its particular faith and its ethos is perpetually determined by the doctrine and practice of that faith. But to say that student at these schools have little choice is not a good



outlook. And the view of us and “them” is antithetical to the classroom situation. Ideally, religious education class should create a climate that opens up and explores difference and similarity and respects alternative views and beliefs.

Consequently, Religious educators/teacher are demanded to have guidelines. The guidelines are simply a guide, a starting point of teachers to know what exciting departure, which becomes fundamental to a particular lesson because it identifies with the needs or interests of the students and resonates with the reality of their life.

*Sixthly*, Groome considers Paulo Freire (1927-97), the renowned Brazilian educator, probably the most analytical voice on pedagogy of the twentieth century, stated that such kind of teaching is the most dominant pattern and practice throughout the world. Freire named this pattern as “banking concept” of education because in this case, teacher “deposit” information to the empty heads of students, then they are demanded to give back such information --deposited by teacher-- in exams. Consequently, this kind of education influences the model of its evaluation system as well.

The evaluation system of religious education that stresses merely on memorization ability --as the result of education process which stresses more on cognitive aspect-- must be changed soon. In fact, ideally, all process of education, not only intellectual, but also emotional and practical behavior or morality should determine religious education grades. Thus, student’s success and failure should not merely be assessed from partial aspect, but it should be viewed through integrated



aspects. If the evaluation is merely determined by one aspect, for example cognitive aspect only, so the teaching dimension is more dominant than education dimension. As the result, what we have been practicing in our schools is not religious education but only religious teaching or religious knowledge. To support student's critical outlooks, the evaluation model should enable student to have a chance to demonstrate his creative ability in answering the creative questions. In other words, it must be there a room for student to develop his critical analysis in responding the evaluative questions. In sum, the evaluation of religious education must include all basic requirements of education: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. These three cannot be separated because each completes one another as what Groome suggests: "*...the better educational theorists have all emphasized that good education must be cognitive, affective, and behavioral*" (Groome, 1980:21).

*Seventhly*, as the solution for designing a more dialogical curriculum, Groome offers a model of curriculum he called "humanizing curriculum." The core curriculum of this context is to invite the teacher to look at his own spiritual foundations for educating, to reflect on them contemplatively and critically, to renew old or make new commitments around issues crucial to education and from his own faith convictions.

For Groome, there are, at least, four aspects to an educational curriculum: (1) the explicit content that is taught (2) the pedagogy or teaching-learning process that teacher employs (3) the environment in which the education process takes places and (4) the purpose that permeates the whole education effort.



According to Groome, the best religious education is "education at home" because in the house, parents have uncountable opportunity to educate their children every day, not only in explicit conversations but also in the curriculum implicit throughout the shared life of the home. Here, parents as well as teachers should make curriculum choice about their educational approach. A parent's approach to socialization can be more consistent because practically, they are able to control their children all times.

Religious education should also be committed to promoting human rights for students. In this sense, teacher together with his students should reflect commitment to their human rights as persons. The entire curriculum (content, pedagogical process, environment and purpose) should develop student's quality of life and be free of all forms of discrimination. It should also reflect a deep respect for all students to represent the human search for truth without looking at their religions. In addition to this, teacher may not violate student's ultimate right to choose religious identity or vocation in life. Moreover, all teachers should help to prepare their students for achieving their ambition, to participate fully in their local communities, and to contribute to the common good.

*Eighthly*, pedagogy that still views teaching-learning process as merely transfer activity of knowledge from the expert to the student through teacher as mediator should also be reformed soon. In this sense, Thomas Groome (1998:103) views that many education practice, including religious education treats students as a passive recipients of knowledge, as if the whole education activity is no more than a transfer of information from the knowledgeable heads of teachers to the empty heads



of students. Here, teachers are like the donor whereas the students are like the recipient, and the teacher is the agent who transfers something from the donor to the recipient.

Through "Shared Praxis," Groome proposes a *humanitas* pedagogy as the antithesis of Paulo Freire's "banking education." It demands a pedagogy that involves students as active participants in the teaching-learning dynamics, that prompt and empowers them become agents of their own learning rather than treating them as dependants and telling them what to know.

In humanizing pedagogy, teachers are demanded to involve not only students' reason --intuitive, logical, and critical-- but also their memory and imagination. Memory is needed to know oneself, to locate in time and place, to find out the influences of past experience, to remember what should not be forgotten; identity requires memory. Imagination is necessary to recognize the consequences of choice, to imagine what should be or could be and to help create it; responsibility demands imagination. These three are essential to a humanizing pedagogy. All three are needed for processing information, for approaching beyond to understanding, and then forwarded to making up to date conclusion and responsible decision.

Through "Shared Faith Praxis" model, religious education is aimed to achieve freedom. The commitment to freedom is demanded of the soul of every teacher and parent to guarantee that students/children can live with freedom in free societies. According to Groome, human freedom means becoming free like God; this is far from license or rugged individualism to do as one pleases, but freedom from inner



compulsion and external oppression, and freedom for becoming fully “alive persons” who fulfill their responsibilities for the well-being of self and others, for the personal and common good.

In addition, students are free to propose other ideas, contrary views, ethical dilemmas and know that they can do this in a safe and supportive learning environment. This is positive curriculum; enhancing the students' capacity to ask the hard questions. It is learning to distinguish fact from fantasy, to apply reason, but also to look beyond the merely reasonable and to see that the palette of belief and imagination can open up new horizons. We can open up our hearts or shut them down. That is not indoctrination. It is hope.

The better pedagogical approach is the pedagogy that makes it possible for students to think imaginatively about problems that refer to them, responsibilities that give them the opportunity to attach their life, chances to explore ideas and questions that have no correct answers, and tasks in which they can reason and express their own ideas.

In religious freedom context, students are free to find their personal God, a God with whom they are comfortable. Maybe it is simply a God space, or a good space, or something inside, an internal compass. And some will reject the idea of God, and that is their journey. Whatever, time spent in reflection or meditation or just thinking outside themselves has opened up a new dimension, a new capacity for thinking beyond the concrete and touchable.



Groome (1994:41) also views that religious education should be able to respond the challenge to educate people for both identity and openness in faith in order to avoid the dangers of authoritarianism and sectarianism.

For Groome, religious education for identity means that students should have personal autonomy and for openness means that it should originates from the existential subjects. Here, students need to be actively involved in the teaching-learning dynamics of religious education. Rather than being treated as passive recipients of what Freire calls “banking education,” they must become active participants whose full abilities for knowing are personally employed. These abilities especially include their reason, memory, and imagination. It is required that the process will encourage students to think for themselves, to be and become free “subject” of their faith rather than dependent “object.”

In “Shared Praxis,” all students are be brought to express and identify their own lives –what John Dewey calls “experience” or Paulo Freire calls “praxis”—and to reflect critically on what is “going on” for them personally and in their social context. Such self-expression is necessary to the kind of autonomy and encourages both authentic identity and openness to change. By critical reflection Groome (1991:100-106) means encouraging students to question their lives and faith, to remember their biographical and social influences, and to image new possibilities for themselves and their community. Such critical reflection is a solution for student’s passive perception, and thus to avoid cynical authoritarianism and narrow sectarianism.



## CHAPTER V

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

### A. Conclusion

Based on the preceding study and exploration on Thomas H Groome's religious education thoughts, it can be formulated some conclusions as follows:

1. The starting point of Groome's religious education concept by "shared praxis" was mainly inspired by Paulo Freire. In the established form, the five movements of shared Christian praxis are formulated as follows: (1) naming/expressing present action/praxis; (2) critical reflection on present action; (3) making accessible Christian story and vision; (4) dialectical hermeneutic to appropriate Christian story/vision to participants' stories and visions; and (5) decision/response for lived Christian faith.
2. The practice of religious education in Indonesia needs to be reformed because in fact, religious education provided formally in schools and informally in religious institutions is considered/evaluated "has not succeeded yet" because it has not achieved its goal yet.
3. To make Groome's proposal more applicable to Indonesian context, the paradigm of "shared Christian praxis" should be situated to a "local" interpretation specific to Indonesian characteristic as one of the most religiously and culturally pluralistic societies. As the result, the paradigm "shared Christian praxis" is changed to be "shared faith praxis," so that it seems to be more inclusive and open for all



religious traditions. In the context of religious pluralism in Indonesia, especially to fulfill the requirement of inter-religious dialogue agenda, Groome's model can be applied to create inter-religious dialogue more humane and dialogical. Related to this need, it will be more appropriate if the term of "shared Christian praxis" is changed to be "shared inter-faith praxis."

## **B. Recommendation**

Based on the preceding discussion, some recommendations are proposed to support the reformation of religious education system in contemporary Indonesia:

1. Government-state should give a freedom for religious education system in order to be free in running its function as moral and spiritual inspiration/guidance of student;
2. We should provide a balanced religious education for students in which includes:  
(a) the balance between symbolic-ritualistic aspect and contextualization aspect of religion and; (b) the balance between the basic requirements of education: intellectual (cognitive), emotional (affective), and behavioral aspects;
3. A certain religious school/institution has the right to operate under the support of its particular faith and its ethos determined by the doctrine and practice of that faith. But it should give its students a choice to determine their own way of lives;
4. Religious education class should be an effective medium to avoid authoritarianism and sectarianism. The view of "us" and "them" is antithetical to



the classroom situation. Thus, religious education class should create a climate that opens up and explores difference and similarity and respects alternative views and beliefs;

5. Religious education should apply a humanizing curriculum rather than an absolute curriculum;
6. Still the best religious education is what provided at home because in the house, parents have hundreds even thousands opportunities to control their children all times, not only in explicit conversations but also in the curriculum implicit throughout the shared life of the home;
7. Religious education should also be committed to promoting human rights for students. It should also reflect a deep respect for all students to represent the human search for truth without looking at their religions.
8. The environment, condition, and system in the family and society should be in harmony with religious values taught in the schools;
9. A *humanitas* pedagogy model should be applied rather than "banking education." It is demands a pedagogy that involves students as active participants in the teaching-learning dynamics, that prompt and empowers them become agents of their own learning rather than treating them as dependants and telling them what to know;
10. Religious education should be aimed to achieve freedom. The commitment to freedom is demanded of the soul of every teacher and parent to guarantee that students/children can live with freedom in free societies.



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