THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTICULTURALISM IN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A STUDY OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND POVERTY IN POST-SUHARTO AMBON

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this case study is to analyze the significance of multiculturalism within the Indonesian government’s Millennium Development Goals poverty eradication effort. Thus, the outcome is to identify solutions towards poverty caused by the absence of multiculturalism values in Ambon, through resource management. The consideration of choosing Ambon is because it is one of Indonesia’s most underdeveloped regions, though rich in natural resources. Interestingly, the condition was widely linked to ethnic issues occurred in Ambon since Suharto’s downfall in 1998. This research’s main concept is based on Amartya Sen’s notion of social exclusion, namely the capability deprivation. Additionally, the sociological perspective of structural-functionalism is employed as the research perspective. Other literature studies include historical review on the relation between poverty and multiculturalism in developing countries, as well as Iwan Gardono’s paper on primordial conflicts in Ambon. By analyzing the relation between the state’s ignorance of multiculturalism and poverty, we will understand how the ethnicity-based exclusion occurred in post-Suharto Ambon until recently. In turn, this phenomenon has triggered marginalization of the dominant native ethnic groups. Eventually, the structural inequality caused by the marginalization enables the non-native ethnic groups to enjoy the natural resources exclusively. The finding offers an alternative solution of natural resource management in Ambon, as a blueprint of sustainable development. Therefore, results suggest that multiculturalism values should be structurally enforced by the state to ensure inclusivity among various ethnic groups. The importance of bottom-up policy-making to create compatible social policies within different social structures is also suggested.

Field of Research: Social exclusion, poverty eradication, multiculturalism, ethnic relations.

1. Introduction

Current trends of poverty studies considered that the main focus of poverty eradication is not merely just an issue of income (Sen, 1999). Instead, the focus of the effort is widely linked to the notion of social exclusion. This implies that the main obstacle in eradicating poverty is the issue of social deprivation, which is the central concept from Amartya Sen’s view of poverty studies. This view implies that poverty is no longer seen as an income issue.
The latest trend of poverty studies strongly emphasized the importance of life deprivation issues. On the other hand, classical poverty studies see that when an individual income exceeds the minimum level of the designated poverty line, he/she is considered to be free from poverty-related problems. It means that the specific individual’s life can not be considered as deprived. Nowadays, contemporary empirical conditions had shown different realities. When an individual within a certain society had adequate income, they still face life problems on certain aspects which made them as if they were living without any sufficient incomes. This is a result of various societal hindrances, which are relatively ignored by the classical study of poverty.

The United Nations (UN) had emphasized the notion of social exclusion in its poverty eradication programs and policies. The most widely-employed UN program in the effort to eradicate poverty among the developing country is the Millennium Development Goals. UN’s commitment to combat poverty based on the issue of life deprivation could be seen from the eight goals concerning educational, gender equity, health services, environmental, and development partnership improvement. It is scheduled that every developing nation could achieve the eight points of MDGs prior to 2015 for a better life conditions.

Based on several empirical facts in Indonesia, it is assumed that the goals of MDGs are not holistic enough to eradicate life deprivation. Therefore, the effort of poverty eradication in Indonesian social context could not be considered as comprehensive. The fact is more apparent in Ambon, an important town in Eastern Indonesia. Despite Indonesian government’s MDGs-based poverty eradication reforms, the economic growth in Ambon remained stalled.

2. History of Developmental Paradigm

The paradigm of development had shifted across times, due to the change of social context. Development was originally aimed as a mean of economic growth and industrialization. This definition was adopted during the Post-World War 2 period. During this time, development policies such as Marshall Plan and MacArthur Scheme managed to rebuild the economic prosperity of the devastated Europe and Japan. The main focuses of the two programs were the reconstruction of the national infrastructure through monetary aid. This implies that development was primarily enacted by investing large amount of capital to built infrastructures. In other words, development was seen primarily as a quantitative economic issue.

The 1970’s saw a shift of developmental paradigm, giving more attention to human welfare. This shift was affected by the empirical trends of development in the Third World and Post-Colonialized nations. The distinctive economic growth occurred within most developing countries, where industrialization does not bought any prosperity as projected. Distinctive social structure of the developing countries means that different approach of development must be implemented. This shift was also accompanied by the fall of Communism in the 1980’s until 1990’s. In this period, several former Communist countries failed to tackle economic downturns by embracing capitalism and economic growth doctrine. This shift eventually gave an emergence to poverty studies which focus on social aspects, such as life deprivation, rather than solely economic ones.
3. Millennium Development Goals

The United Nations, in response to the shift of the developmental paradigm, had employed a specifically planned poverty eradication program, namely the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were designed to deliberate the citizens of developing countries from life deprivations. The eight goals of the MDGs are specifically designed for the distinctive societal context of the developing countries.

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1. Eradicate extreme poverty;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability;
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Historical Analysis

This research is a case study research. This means that the researchers examine a specific social issue mainly through literature reviews, which are scientifically accounted. The main literature employed as the basis of this analysis is a research paper concerning the Pseudo-Integration in Ambon entitled "Communal Conflict, State Failure, and Peace-Building: The Case of Ambon, Indonesia" (Sudjatmiko, 2008). This in-depth literature study was conducted in order to understand historical and social context from the rise of Suharto’s regime to its fell. Therefore, researcher could analyze the structural change as the basis of the problem. Beside Sudjatmiko’s research paper, economist Amartya Sen’s notion of social exclusion from his book, Development as Freedom, is also used extensively. Additionally, researcher also conducted literature study based on Dov Ronen’ book Democracy and Pluralism in Africa (1986). Additionally, this case study research employs historical-comparative method, in which the researchers examine aspects of social life in a past historical era (Neuman, 2006). Researchers who use this technique focus on one historical period or more, and try to analyze it. This kind of research primarily uses secondary data as a mean of data collection.

4.2. Literature Study

Ronen (1986) explained that pluralism is the main pillar of democracy in multicultural developing countries. This is notion is used as the basic argument for this research. Therefore, social development in multicultural developing countries must include pluralism values. Additionally, researcher also studied extensively on the history of the Ambonese conflict by Sudjatmiko (2008). This was vital to be included...
as a literature study in order to understand the historical context, as well as the structural actors involved in the case. Based on the literature study, researcher had figured at least five structural actors, which are the Indonesian government, the Indonesian Army, the demography of Indonesia, the Bugis ethnic group, and the Ambon ethnic group.

4.3. Conceptual Framework

This research employed three concepts, which are social exclusion, life deprivation, and structuralism-functionalism. Social exclusion could be defined as a condition or process in which individual’s opportunity to social service institutions are systematically blocked or severed (Sen, 1999). Though social exclusion is the main focus of contemporary poverty studies, the concept is not synonymous with income poverty. Based on the definition employed, the more an individual is excluded from various kinds of social services, he/she will more likely to experience life deprivations. Because poverty is not just about inadequacy of income, poverty is about what can an individual do from his/her income.

Life deprivation is a condition when an individual does not have any sufficient abilities to fulfill his/her life needs through various kinds of social services (Sen, 1999). This condition is caused primarily by social exclusion. This implies that a person with a level of personal income which exceeds the poverty line could still experience life deprivations, depending on the condition of society he/she lived in. As an example, judging by their income level, United States citizen live with very high level of personal income, which is US$ 32,068 as of 2010. From the figure mentioned earlier, it could be assumed that the majority of United States citizen live with adequate income. This would include African Americans, with the average personal income of US$ 32,068, according to The Office of Minority Health as of 2010. Regardless of the number given, most of them live as if without any sufficient personal income. This is because most of them do not have an adequate access toward various social service institutions, such as education and health. The following table shows comparison on mortality rate of African Americans to White Americans, as published by the Journal of the American Medical Association (1990):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White Americans</th>
<th>African Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third concept used in this research is the sociological perspective of structural-functionalism. According to structural-functionalism, the basic reality of society is consisted of many social institution and social structures. This sociological perspective implies that every social institution and structure has its own function within the society. If there is an abnormality or disturbance of the institutional function(s), the society would also face a disturbance (Ritzer, 2008).

4.4. Research Objectives

1. To examine why MDGs-based poverty eradication programs stalled in Ambon, Indonesia;
2. To give alternative solutions toward Indonesian government’s poverty eradication effort;
3. To give a new perspective of seeing life deprivation in the goals of MDGs.

5. Finding & Discussion

5.1. Research Finding

As Indonesia’s economic activity is heavily concentrated in the Western Islands, the need for planned migration to the Eastern Islands was seen as obligatory. Under the Suharto Administration, the Indonesian government supported massive transmigration of residents from the heavily-populated islands to the sparsely-populated islands in the East. One of the destinations for this planned migration was Ambon, a small island of the Moluccas. Most of the newcomers in Ambon were Muslims from the island of Sulawesi (Celebes). Started in the 1960s, this policy was conducted to trigger economic activity in the sparsely-populated Eastern Islands.

The Bugis people of Southern Sulawesi were the main newcomers in Ambon. Most of them settled in the urbanized areas of the island. Eventually, their numbers began to match the locals. This was also accompanied by their dominance of the local economic structure. The difference of beliefs and customs from the locals made the newcomers excluded themselves from the locals, as most of the Ambonese are Christians.

The Indonesian government ignored the possibility of cultural clashes that might happen from the planned migration. Concurrently, Suharto’s paradigm of development sees stability as the most important aspect. The Armed Forces, as the backbone of the national stability, ignored the social aspect of development and keep separating both ethnic groups without making any effort for mutual consent. As the Bugis controlled the local economic structure, they also exclusively enjoyed the local resources. Therefore, even the island was rich in natural resources, most of the local Ambonese were poor and excluded from the mainstream economy. This was unseen by the centralized national government. By then, animosity against the essentially Muslim newcomers eventually grew among the Christian locals. In this era, the relation between the newcomers and the locals in Ambon was best described as Pseudo-Integration.

Suharto’s regime fell in 1998 as a result of the widespread Asian Financial Crisis. This implied that the role of the Armed Forces as a stability “enforcer” in Ambon came to an end. This ends the era of Pseudo-Integration in Ambon, which means that the two ethnic groups could explicitly express their hate toward each others. Not long after the regime change, the Christian locals began their campaign to evict the Muslims of Ambon, whether locally-bred Ambonese or the newly-migrated Bugis. Shortly thereafter, the Muslims retaliated, which caused the conflict to escalate quickly. Infrastructures of Ambon were heavily damaged, and in the national effort to recover from financial crisis, the economic activity of Ambon stalled. Both sides experienced massacres and suffered great casualties from the conflict, resulting diaspora from Ambon. As in 1999, death toll reached 1,132, with 100,000 people internally displaced.
Overall, the conclusion of the findings could be described by the following scheme:

| Transmigration Policy | Structural Inequality | Ethnic Animosity | Horizontal Conflict | Development Stagnation |

Figure I: Finding of the Historical Analysis

There is a linkage between poverty eradication efforts in Indonesia and multiculturalism values. Regions that had suffered from ethnic conflict such as Ambon faced stalled development effort hindered by the conflict. The horizontal conflict in Ambon was caused by the animosity of each ethnic group. This was primarily caused by the government’s transmigration policy during former president Suharto’s regime, or popularly known as the New Order (Orde Baru). The Indonesian government’s development policy during New Order supported massive transmigration of people from the densely populated islands to the less populated islands, such as Ambon. Of many groups of new settlers in Ambon, the Bugis people of Sulawesi were the main newcomers. This policy was enacted without any efforts to predict the social and cultural impact within the new settlements. It was indeed the seeds of the future ethnic conflict in Ambon. Because of that, the horizontal conflict between the Muslim newcomers and the Christian locals were inevitable. The transmigration policy, which originally enacted to trigger economic development in Ambon, would turn into a condition that would hinder future economic developments.

5.2. Research Discussion

After the fall of Suharto, there is an extensive effort from the new Indonesian government to recover the situation in Ambon. This effort is later based on the MDGs proposed by the United Nations, to be implemented in Indonesia. Based on the structural-functionalism perspective, MDGs as a social structure is not internalized within the specific societal context. In this case, it is the Ambonese social context. This condition caused the poverty eradication effort and other MDGs programs in conflict-prone areas such as Ambon stalled. Therefore, the point of multiculturalism has yet to be added within the MDGs.

6. Conclusions and Future Recommendations

There are two solutions that can be recommended. Basically, the solutions will be focused on the structural element of the state. First, the state, as a macro structure which is responsible for the conservation of democracy and social justice, must emphasize multicultural citizenship. Multicultural citizenship means affirmative actions to ensure the rights of minorities (Kymlicka, 1995). In this solution, the state must be able to ensure that every ethnic group in Indonesia has the same opportunity and freedom in retaining or adopting specific cultures, as well as their citizenship rights. Second, enact cultural development as a mean of social capital for Indonesian citizen to ensure the sustainability of poverty eradication effort. In this context, cultural development which is necessary to be done is the education and socialization of pluralism and multiculturalism values to Indonesian citizens. This policy must employ both formal educational institution such as school, and informal educational institutions such as mass media and local communities (Adnan, 2006). The first solution is an example of
multicultural citizenship. Multicultural citizenship means a state, which could be defined as a macro social structure responsible to ensure democracy and social justice, needs to champion equality and justice to minority groups.

To implement the solutions, the state as policy-makers must formulate their social policy with the form of bottom-up policy. On the other hand, this research had shown that the implementation of the MDGs in Indonesia is more of a top-down policy. The formulation of a bottom-up policy follows the condition of a certain society’s social structure. It is conducted so that the policy-makers could formulate appropriate social policy to the local social structure.

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References


