

School Space and Cross Religious Communication in Provoking Sense of Mutual Respect; Case of a Faith-Based School in Jayapura, Indonesia

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Abstract

Upon the limitation of formal spaces for religious interaction, school spaces for religious interaction and socialisation are still available at both secular school and faith-based school. Many parents have sent their children to get education at faith-based schools, which is actually different from their religious background. By employ ethnographical approach and symbolic interaction analysis this study aimed to see the impacts of students at faith-based schools, which is actually different from their religious background, and identify the impacts of school traditions in regard to the process of religious socialization among different faith in provoking sense of mutual respect. At large this study found that a school, which dominated by a certain religious tradition has greater influence in shaping the characters and thoughts of students toward the dominant religious group, they tend to be more acceptable and adaptable and learn from the dominant culture, though could not work well for the dominant religious group in fostering interpersonal relation with other different faith in order to learn about other religious traditions.

Key words: cross religious education, religious spaces, school tradition, symbolic interaction.

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Introduction

Although at some places in Papua religious practice tend to be intolerant toward other religions, some places in south-coastal regions of the Western province of Papua such as Fak-Fak, Kaimana and Raja Ampat, have long been experienced mutual tolerant among different religious faiths that should be learn from and discovered the clues behind it. In those places, due to limited access of education, for many years parents in Papua have sent their children to faith-based schools, which are actually different from their religious backgrounds. Many Muslim students got their education at Christian schools or school managed by Christian institution which strongly applied Christian tradition as the school culture, and the vice versa, many Christian students have been sent to Islamic schools which strongly practicing Islamic traditions. By relegating the fact of limited access to education, I would say that this schooling practice has great potential to build interreligious communication. The hidden curriculum such as school culture and peer interaction could give opportunity for students to learn and to know more about other faiths. This schooling practice could also give impacts to develop culture of trust; mutual tolerant and they could bring it out of school into the society as whole and construct or reconstruct socio-religious culture in society. This study was inspired by aforementioned socio-religious life experiences in some regions in Papua, yet this study was base in Jayapura, which has different school and religious environment, but case is similar. In Jayapura Many Christian students have been studying at Islamic school in Jayapura, and I would like to know what actually they have learned from their school environment and what they have learned about each other (Muslim and Christian students) through symbolic communication. From this idea, this study was specifically focused on the patterns of inter-religious communication and the transmission of religious ideas through school culture and students experiences in developing trust and mutual tolerant among different faiths.

School Space as Hidden Curriculum

I would like to start this part by discussing the term 'social space as a hub in which people could meet, greet and interact each other. Scholars have give various perspectives on the term 'socio-spatial ' which could be found in scholars' works related to sociology, psychology, education and anthropology. Lefebvre (1991) asserted that space is characterised with categories of ideas, as perceived, conceived and lived. Space is related to dynamic changing, change in shifting geometry power (Massey, 1994). Meanwhile Jessop, et, al (2008) view that social space is related to territory, place, scale, network and position. Territory is an arena with boundaries that could constitute social relation in particular aspects among the actors or agents, and it should be managed and governed (Harvey, 1982: 404). It is full of normative contents (Robertson, 2010: 19). In relation to education, school could be a territory that constituted relation between teachers and students in the school boundary with regulations, such as dressing code and other school culture as kinds of power to control the territory, it seem nearly different than the term 'place' which is exist based on certain criteria, it is social construction such as school and home (Robertson, 2010: 19) While 'scale' is strongly related to power stratification in constructing relation from institution at local level, national and global (Herod and Wright, 2002; Robertson, 2010:19). Relationship will be developed based on their 'position' and links developed. Future of the places will be determined by their quality of relationship and their interdependency (Sepherd, 2002). When school space is defined in the spectrum of territory, scale, and place and positional, we could be able to see

wide range and interplay issues at school as social construction. I think I will not go further to discuss school space partially on lexical interpretative, but I, d rather to see school space as whole as a hub in which relation, power and ideology constructed because in my view education at large is a process of interaction between people through communication which could be verbal or non verbal communication through symbols, picture, etc., and within this process at school level, each person at school has opportunity exchange information, lifestyles, attitudes, aptitudes, perceptions and could influence each other (Severin and Tankard, 2005: 219). Thus, it could be said that communication hold important role in the process of interaction in social construction of school space through school culture.

At large, communication process at conceptual domain could be traced down into two models of communication process, which are communication process at cognitive domain such as using symbols to communicate certain meaning of an object or reality (Cherry, 2005). While communication process related to behavior according to Skinner (1978) is a communication process with verbalic behavior in which the messenger tries to get certain meaning or response from public as it has determined. Nevertheless, the classical theory of communication suggests that the communication would run as long as there is a 'channel' (Shannon and Weaver, 1949; Barlo, 1960) in which through the channel messages such as symbols, written or oral messages could be transmitted and interpreted at certain context by the receiver. I would say that the term 'channel' probably has similar meaning to the 'space' in sociological lens when space here is as network in which peoples build their relation horizontally within an organised place, though 'space' in terms of 'scale' in which relationships are built vertically from local to global also important in education especially when looking at school policy or curriculum. Sometime even network or relationship between actors, let say between students and teacher could be viewed vertically as at school, teachers could have more power than students, they have higher position than students at school social structure. School then became a channel in which messages are being transmitted trough symbols, oral communication directly and indirectly.

In the context of school as a social space, I would like to narrow it down to the notion of symbolic interaction and looking at how school environment being constructed through school tradition, symbols placed at school or used by students and teachers to transmit certain ideas, and how do the social groups at school learn from other learn about other in terms of religion even though the school culture is dominated by a certain religious tradition. Within this context, Michael Grimitt (2000) notion of learning from and learning about will be the fundamental pedagogy approach to see the process of interaction in which student should learn about their religion but they will also have opportunities to learn from other religions. Through the notion of learning from and learning about, student will be able to know other religious traditions through their interactions, learning from their friends and teachers.

When we go through the reasons why they choose this schooling model, we probably find various reasons including accessibility matter. Nevertheless, one thing that must be found is that the practical dimensions of multicultural education such as school culture (see Banks, 1998) has long been developed at schools faith-based schools in Papua, thought mostly through hidden curriculum as unpredicted impacts of education that students learn from school environment though not openly stated such values, norm, beliefs (Giroux and Penna, 1983; Martin, 1983). Further, one could assumed that this school tradition could be conducted as the local tradition in society also

support this schooling model, some time the society consider customary order run parallel with religion, religion could support tradition or custom and vice versa, customary order could support religions, as to what Marry (2005) argued that religion at some aspects always associated with culture or traditions in society. We could hitherto see that culture and ideology are interplay aspects, we will found something lose when discuss about culture without ideology and or discuss ideology without culture (Hall, 1978:23). Thus in the context of education people could not be provoked with such schooling model, and by giving young people more opportunity to explore the traditions of other religions than their faith, they will respects the difference of religious order and tradition, and build mutual relations among them. They will identify similarities and differences among religions, and respect the differences as vital aspects of each religion, which distinguish one with other. Such schooling practice however, could give different impacts to people with different cultural tradition, as students will deal with process of cultural shifting (see Inglehart, 1977:6; 1990:56). Further, it would be more difficult for students when their parents want to cultivate their culture and ideology to the students. They want their child to follow what they belief. It may look different when the parents are coming from different religious background (mother and father), more freedom might be given to the child (Caballero et, al., 2008: 30). Such school practice with the notion of learning from and learning about, resistance behaviour might be occurred when students feel oppressed and their faith is not recognised at school due to their minority. Resistance attitude could be varying models such show doubtful attitude and questioned every statement (Modigliani and Rochat, 1995) or creating social movements toward the dominant group. As the result, school then turns to be an arena of struggle between the dominant ideology or dominant culture and those sub-ordinate ideology or culture to win the hegemony of school ideology and culture (see Gramsci, 1998), and within this context there will be contestation between the dominant Islamic culture and Christina as the sub-ordinate culture at school, though both are actually seeking for compromise way and reach what Gramsci called as 'equilibrium compromise' (Gramsci, 1998: 161).

In contact theory Allport (1954) asserted that there would be reduction effects toward prejudices among social groups when the optimum condition of direct relationship between all groups could be fulfilled. It could be said that this perception was obviously constructed on the assumptions that by strengthening and optimization of contact between a social groups with other will be resulted on growth of similar perception in all social groups in which frequent contact will resulted on influential mutual relationship. By standing on those perceptions, many psychologists and education practitioners have considered the importance of direct contact in various different models as a popular strategy in fixing inter-groups relationship (Bank, 2007; Stephen, 1987). However, in inter-groups relation, relationship must be equal between individuals and between group relationships to avoid prejudice and negative suspicious, which will be contributed to adverse actions of a group. Therefore, in order to develop cross cultural and religious sensitivity and could effectively work, Bhawk and Berslin (1992) suggested that cultural sensitivity could only be develop effectively when someone is like and interested to other culture, wants to anticipated, recognise the differences and willing to modified his/her attitudes as part of respect toward other peoples and their culture (p.416)

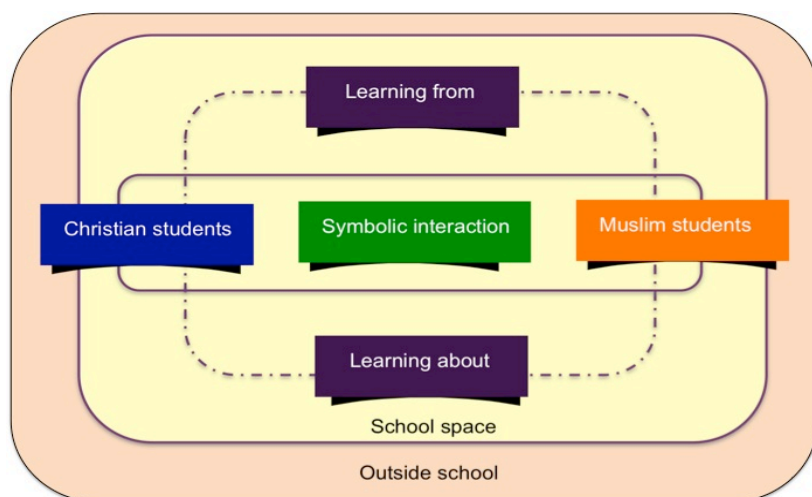


Fig.1. Process of exchanging live experiences at school

Some people are being afraid of send their children to faith-based schools, which is different from their religion possessed. They afraid about losing religious identity or afraid of their children being brain washed with new religious doctrines or other religious ideology and erode what the parents have cultivated. The reason is logically accepted as children at school ages are considered to be prone of identity crisis (see Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966; 1980). Nonetheless, many studies in multicultural area, especially related to religion and identity suggested that the changing of attitudes and perception is really occurred, yet the changing have not significantly or radically change students faith in regard to basic principles of religion, See for examples (Dudireja, 2001; Werfete, 2014).

School Space and Religious Communication

This study was conducted in the mid August 2014 to December 2014 at a faith-based school in Waena, Jayapura, Indonesia, let say SMU Harapan Bangsa¹ (pseudonym). I started this study first by visiting the school daily for nine days to do school observation, followed by interview some students, and I was able to meet fifteen Christian students at the school and had small interviewed and group discussion with them at school. SMU Harapan Bangsa was laid in a quite dense area, near main road that really easy for access. It is an Islamic-based senior high school operated and managed by *Yayasan Pendidikan Islam, Papua* (Islamic Education Foundation, Papua). All school levels are found there (a quite dense area). *Taman Kanank-Kanak* (kindergarten school) outside the school fence, Sekolah Dasar (Elementary School), SMP (Junior secondary school) and SMU (senior high school) are placed in the same area surrounded by a wall fence. The buildings were constructed in random position, some are constructed paralleled, and some are juxtaposed. It is almost form a letter U. SD (elementary school) is placed closed to entrance gate follows by SMP and SMU and each school level has teacher office and administration buildings. Thus, the school mapping indicated school environment need to be analyzed as whole, when analysing Senior High School students.

Further, such pattern of putting elementary students at the entrance gate followed by the high schools, will give much opportunities for interaction and socialization between high schools students and elementary students, so do the staffs and teachers.

¹ Considering research ethics due to individual and institution privacy, all subjects associated with individual names and institutions are written in pseudonym, anonymous or by initial.

Although in my observation I did not find more significant model of symbolic interactions in religion through religious symbols in visual, even the dominant religious group at school. The only Islamic symbol found was jilbab, common dress code of all female Moslem students, while those Christian female students did not wear jilbab. Some of my interlocutors said that the school and the teachers as well do not force them to wear Islamic dress (jilbab). I would say that the school looks tolerable to Christian students as wants to accept students from different religious background. The school also looks more emphasized the function of school as education institution, as the provider of education for all people rather than considering Islamic school as the institution for strengthening theological aspects of religion, or as the medium for Islamic prolystisation. In the entrance gate of the school, I could see the local Papuan cultural symbols such tifa and the bird of paradise drawn in the school wall, which is signaling that the school also respects and accommodates local culture. This of course could be influenced by the institution (YAPIS) experiences and interaction with local context for many years in operating Islamic schools in Papua, so they are really understood the sociological context of Papua in term of education and religion.

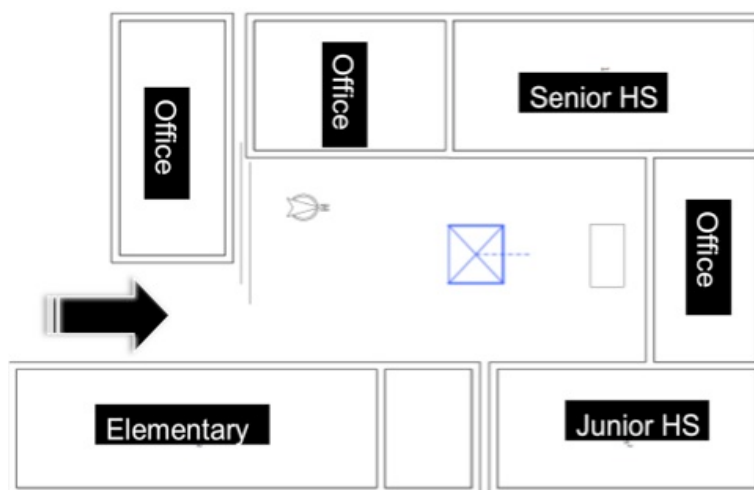


Fig.2. School Layout of SMU Harapan Bangsa

School Traditions

School tradition such as shalat lima waktu (prayer five times a day) at school or daily payer before the class begin, seem different from high schools tradition and the elementary school tradition. At high school level (SMU) when the class begin, all student including other religions than Islam will pray individually by heart, while at elementary level, students pray loudly in Islamic way every morning in class before the lesson start and at nearly midday when the lesson has ended, students will go back home. From my focused group discussion (FGD) with six Christian students, SY narrated that we pray by ourselves in the class before the lesson begin, and SY statement also confirmed by AY that *'yes only students at elementary level who pray together*. AY added that praying together only on Friday, mostly there is *suara mengaji* (sound of qur'an recitation) at mosques, and when I tried to reconfirm to AY that whether the sound he heard from the mosque is sound of qur'an recitation (*suara mengaji*) or adzan (call for praying), he answered *'yes, basically the sound from toa (speaker) on Friday*. From those statements above in terms of religious ritual

tradition at school indicated that at senior high school level (SMU) the religious tradition for students when the lesson will start found quite accommodative for non-Muslim students, though Islam is the major or the dominant tradition at school culture. When I refer to the notion of 'hegemony' (see Gramsci, 1998) with his term '*equilibrium compromise*', it could be said that the accommodative manner of school culture could be seen as the way of compromise between the Islamic tradition as the dominant religious tradition and Christian tradition and other religious tradition at school as the sub-ordinate religious tradition. This compromise of course could be constructed well through long historical experience of both religions and religious cultures, it is also could be the output of interaction process between Islamic education institution known as YAPIS in Papua with local peoples and their culture. On the other hand, the different approach on religious ritual at elementary school (SD), it because at the elementary level, there is no students from other religious background except Moslem students. What have been practicing at elementary school (SD) could be a great way and interesting point to be discussed further in relation to the transmission of Islamic culture.

Considering school layout in which SD Harapan Bangsa was laid closed to the entrance gate will have great influxes in regard to the socialization of Islamic culture and values through symbolic interaction as hidden curriculum. Other students then Moslem might be not feel that they are being dictated or oppressed as it runs in respective ways through school tradition (see Gramsci, 1998). This process may reach compromise, adaptation and also potential to provoke resistance (see Profit, 1996; Jasper, 1997). It could create resistance when there is another religious symbols used or exposed by non Muslim students at school. However, during my observation and group discussion, I did not find any kinds of religious symbol appeared, placed at school or wore by those Christian students as well as other religions. It is signaling that there are two aptitude developed at school, namely 'compromise and adaptation.' The compromise way here is between the school institution (SMU Harapan Bangsa) with local Papuan people in which majority are Christian, meanwhile 'adaptation' here could be seen when non Moslem students have adjusted themselves, adapted with school tradition dominated by Islamic culture.

The process of adaptation could be seen when Christian students do not bring their religious symbols into the school, which is actually Islamic school and mostly practicing Islamic culture. The only thing should be taken into consideration is when they lose their religious education as the school does not provide religious education for other students than Moslem students as AY commented on our discussion here '*for religious education, we don't have the lesson, because there is no teacher*'. TS added that '*only those Moslem who get religious education*'. The comments here might be viewed as a part of adaptation to the school policy as adaptation also needs some reduction of personal desires. However, when analyze the comments, the comments tend to negative moods as expressing of disappointed to the school policy as they should lose their right to get religious education. In addition, the reason why school does not provide religious education for non-Moslem students must be questioned. In hegemonic view point, it could be an indication of how school policy being utilized to maintain the domination of certain culture at school

Transmission of Religious Culture

Most of Christian students at SMU Harapan Bangsa were coming from places where Islamic culture or Islamic tradition is hardly ever found. From the discussion with students, no one of them who has Moslem neighbor, meet female who wore jilbab or heard adzan (call for pray) was something strange; they even don't know what actually adzan is. What they understood about adzan after being students at SMU Harapan Bangsa is a sign for Moslem students to pray, it is only on Friday, they do not know yet other adzan for shalat lima waktu (pray five times a day) which is obliged for all Moslem. During my field observation, I did not hear *adzan* in midday (zhu'r pray) at school and did not meet the student shalat berjamaah (pray together). The voice of *qur'an* recitation and adzan they heard is actually from a mosque near the school. Thus, it could be said that from wide range of Islamic tradition, at school those Christian students knew Islamic tradition of jum'at pray (Friday pray). One thing that should be noted here is that they then know that adzan is a sign for Moslem students to pray. Beside it, they also gradually know other Islamic tradition such 'salam' asslamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarokathu (greet people in Islamic tradition). ST who sit at third grade was able to pronounce '*salam*' though not precisely as Islamic students do, they can only say in the shorter version '*assalamu alaikum*', while AY and PS who were at first grade could not pronounce it yet. Nevertheless, they said that they are quite familiar with '*salam*' but quite difficult to pronounce it. AY said '*I know Islamic greeting but it is hard for me to pronounce it" I just say 'salam*'. PS added that '*it is difficult to memorise it*'. I would say, their experience at Islamic school suggest that 'Islamic greeting' is something new for them, something that far from their life experience and hardly found in the place where they're live.

The school tradition of daily praying together loudly for elementary pupils at SD Harapana Bangsa also has also brought certain meaning for those Christian students even though they do not know what the praying means indeed. For PS '*if the elementary pupils are praying means teacher has already in the class*', while ST added that '*when they are praying, I will walk silently into the class, if the teacher is there, then I will go straightly sit on my chair and I pray in my heart*'. These comments could be understood in different ways. '*I will walk silently into the class*' could mean afraid of disturbing students who're praying as part of respect to other religion for worship, or it could means afraid of being late into the class. ST further comments of '*If the teacher is there, then I will go straightly sit on my chair and pray in my heart*', also indicates feeling afraid of teacher but the last part of the comments gives rough understanding that praying is individual right and she has to pray before start the lesson that probably constructed by school tradition of praying before lesson start as to what elementary student do or it was home tradition that she brought into the class. Therefore, at this part it could not be said that the tradition is school constructed. Yet, for sure they are respect to the school tradition as part of their self-adjustment to adapt with the school culture, which dominated by Islamic tradition. Thus it could be argued that those Christian students as the minority group with sub-subordinate culture have adapted with the dominant culture at school by adjusting and reducing their desires, and religious tradition. They also have learnt some aspect of Islamic culture in many ways at school. The question here is how about Moslem students at school, which supported by the dominant school tradition? Do they also learn about something of those Christian students, do the school culture also recognized especially about their belief?

Mostly the Christian students are indigenous Papuan and racially different from Moslem students who are non-indigenous Papua, and those female Moslem were wore *jilbab* while Christian and other not. I could not catch more closely interpersonal relation at school between Moslem students and Christian students or between Christian students with teachers there, who are Moslem. For nine days on my school observation, I was tried to change my position to several vantage spots to see school tradition and interpersonal relation of students. From the places I sat I could see that those Papuan students which are mostly Christian have their own click, they have their own group and they are easily communicate each other in their group, they could sit together to talk something and play something. I rarely found they're involved in other student groups at school even communicate out of their group. In my discussion with those Christian students that from all my respondents only AY who has one close friend outside of their group who will to share and talk and do other activities outside school, while other do not have any close friend. All of them even have not close relation to one of teachers at the school who can easily talk and share stories with them at school and outside the school.

Under this circumstance, I could say that the process of cultural transmission and information exchange would not effectively work. Certainly, one may say that to build interpersonal or intergroup relation is depending on the ability of students as individual to socialize him/her self to other people and build good relationship with them. However, school culture has greater influence in shaping students aptitudes. Incompatible school culture could bring groups segmentation, unequal treatment for students, racism and prejudice that put students in difficult situation to develop relationship intergroup of students. Thus, in spite of personal skills to build interpersonal and inter-group relation, school setting or school tradition could be the fundamental clue of inter-cultural and inter-religious communication. Incompatible school culture could cause failure in cross culture and religious communication.

Those Christian students who become my interlocutors tent to be less of self-confidence to be students at SMU Harapan Bangsa. I could see it from the ways they talked to me that seem worry and unassertive. But I personally viewed it as a reflection of their position in the school as sub-ordinate group in social space of school, they seem more familiar in their internal group, from the same cultural and religious background. As far as my field observation, I did not found any significant indications of resistance movements at school in terms of against the dominant culture by the sub-ordinate group. But I noted that resistance behavior is not always showing by putting sub-ordinate group as opposition group, yet showing not interested or withdrawal from the school could say culture as resistance attitudes. When those minority students (those Christian students) have built their own group and not so much involved in other groups it could be an indication of resistance. Under this situation, other students groups including those majority Moslem students with dominant culture would not be able to know much about those minority group and vice versa. They would not learn more about the dominant group. Thus, generally speaking this situation will not fully support the process of 'learning from and learning about' (Grimmitt, 1984).

The Muslem students at SMU Harapan Bangsa obviously know that there are Christian students at the school but they do not know who they are and where they come feom. It could be said that they knew that there are Christian students at the school, yet they seem not really close to them. Therefore, I would say that this

situation would not support them to learn from each other about different culture and religious traditions. Further, the school where they're studying more inclined to the dominant culture (Islamic tradition) and does not support students in an equal position of cultural communication between Moslem and Christian students that could reduce negative sentiments or prejudices among social groups at school, especially between Moslem and Christian students. School culture is not only about classroom tradition, any particular aspects of school tradition. School culture is about whole aspects of school tradition (Banks, 1993). Within this context, school culture should be able to give opportunities or fairness treatment to all social groups at school. Often we found a school dominated only by a certain group of ethnic, religion, race, the majority group will be given more opportunity than those minority, or even they might be ignored.

School Constructs of Inter-Religious Relation

Analysing whether the school tradition has greater influence in the formation of good inter-religious relation, I should return to see the background of those Christian students at SMU Harapan Bangsa. Where they came from, their cultural background, including their tradition at home. Certainly, we will find differences among them as they brought their cultures and religious tradition at school, meet their new communities, new school culture, they will interact and influence each other, and of course adaptation is needed. They should be able to learn, internalize the reality and adjust their attitudes individually as a person not born and become a member of society (Berger and Lukmaan, 1991). Thus, they could take part in a society, build communication and relationship and became a member of society. By intense communication they could know and signify each other, as Allport (1993) admitted that more often a social group builds direct contact to another social groups, it will gradually reduce negative feelings and prejudices, and even all groups are eager to show similarities among social groups that will recognize each other and raise commonalities of the groups. So, when they could recognise and signify each other groups and individual, in terms of their differences, they could respect each other (Bhawk and Berselin, 1992:416). Nevertheless, according to Bhawk and Berslin (1992) someone could recognize and respect to other culture when she/he likes, interests and attracts to other culture

If I use this viewpoint to describe the case of SMU Harapan Bangsa, it looks hard as I'm pretty sure that those Christian students who determined to study at such Islamic school is not caused by their interested or likeness to the Islamic culture or Islamic faith, Their need is only to get education. They may interest and like each other at school, but it seems difficult because between Christian and Moslem students and teacher found have not quite good relation even with teachers. Moreover, the school also accepted the Christian students to study there is not because the school was attracted or interested to the student's culture or religions. The school in this case also has no objectives to introduce Islamic culture or Introduce Islam to the Christian students, yet it does not mean that the process of learning from and learning about is totally fail or unsuccessful. The process has been transmitted through hidden curriculum in unconsciousness ways

Concluding Remark

Normally, schools with strong domination of a certain religious tradition must have greater influences in shaping and reshaping student's characters and mindsets of those sub-ordinates culture at school. Yet if the schools able to manage the school traditions by creating more opportunities for all social groups at school to communicate and develop trust and mutual relation among them, this school practice has potential to develop cross culture and religious relation for students to live and participate in to date multicultural society. The case of SMU Harapan Bangsa shows that the patterns of interaction and personal contact between Muslim and Christian students through verbal and symbolic communication seem insufficient to support the process of 'learning from and learning about. It could be seen through the relations developed among Moslem and Christian students even with teacher at school. Most Christian students have no close relation either to Moslem students or the Moslem teachers at school.

Although at symbolic interaction, the school does not put show strong symbolic communication at school, except *jilbab* wore by Moslem girl at school. The school wall even decorated with local cultural symbols of Papua, which means the school is recognising the local culture and also claimed that school is a part of the local society. Yet the school tradition at elementary school of routine praying louder together every morning before lesson start could has impact on Christian students to learn from the school culture setting such knowing Moslem prayer times though they only knew '*shalat jum'at*' ('jum'at pray). Thus, it could be said that the case of SMU Harapan Bangsa, the Christian students as a minor group with sub-ordinate culture could be adapted with the school setting and indirectly have learnt from Islamic religious culture in common. Yet for the Moslem students as the major group with dominant cultural tradition at school could not learn much about Christian religious tradition. Cross religious cultural communication developed is not effectively support the pedagogy of ' learning from and learning about' when the school culture is unrecognized even hardly initiates opportunities for inter-groups, inter-religious and inter-cultural socialization to develop mutual relation among school groups at school.

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