

# Transformational Learning in the Diffusion of Gender Mainstreaming Policy

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**Abstract**—Transformational learning is counted as the highest level of cognitive learning process. It leads to the core that is reassessment of a belief system and reflection to assumptions and bias which affect an individual's critical awareness on some evidence detaining the ways of how he or she feels and understands the world. This research aims to make an abstract of transformational learning process done by those who have adopted the gender mainstreaming policy. This study used constructivism paradigm with the qualitative-phenomenology approach. The subjects were the members of 'Fatayat', a female Muslim organization, who were selected by the snowball sampling technique. The object of this research is the learning process going on in the diffusion of gender mainstreaming policy. The data were collected through in-depth interview and were then analysed by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Transformational learning has occurred in the diffusion of gender mainstreaming policy. The belief system of individuals is assessed as they learn gender mainstreaming. What they had believed as the truth about the norms and values of their religion or cultures does not fit to the fact and it needs change. Reassessment of the old belief has affected the attitude and action of individuals in reflecting the reality of their lives or others' lives. There has been critical awareness on how and why the gender relationship had obstructed them, women in general, in their lives. In addition, transformational learning has brought up new awareness on how and why they needed to make a change to create a freer, equal, and just life. In the process of transformational learning, individuals have learned how to negotiate and act aligned with the goals of their lives which are in line with the values, norms, and feelings. Therefore, they still could live their lives by adopting the gender mainstreaming concept under the rules of Islam.

**Keywords**—gender mainstreaming, transformational learning, diffusion, gender policy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'innovation' which is considered as the key to success of a change is often only associated with innovation in the field of technology, such as the innovation of machines, gadgets, or other technological innovations. According to Popa, *et al.* in [1] that innovation is every policy, structure, method and market opportunity that is perceived as new. In The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it is stated that innovation is "a new idea, device, or method, an activity or process of introducing new ideas, new tools or methods. Innovation can also be a new approach to solving problems, changes in behavior, or new ways to use existing resources. In addition, innovation can occur in any sector, including in organizations. Walker in [2] defines policy

innovation as a new program or policy adopted by a government. It is not important whether the policy has been adopted by the governments of other countries for a long time or the policy changes have been seen as reforms in the government that stipulate change, even though these changes have been adopted by or implemented by other governments.

According to Rogers in [3], diffusion is the process by which innovation is communicated through certain channels from time to time, to members of a social system. Diffusion is a special type of message communication related to new ideas [4]. According to Gilardi, *et al.* that diffusion of policies is a process in which a government's policy activities influence other government policies. This process can occur in various forms. In this connection, Damanpour in [5] states that innovation can be studied at the level of firms, industries or individual levels. In general, Yalcinkaya in [6] classifies the diffusion of innovation into two, namely macro-level / aggregate and micro level / individual level.

Gender mainstreaming is a policy innovation at the global level to build an equitable and just society. The result of research on gender mainstreaming at the macro level by Mintrom and True in [7] under the title Transnational Networks and Policy Diffusion, showed that there had been a diffusion of gender mainstreaming. They examined the diffusion of gender mainstreaming in 1975-1998 over a period of 23 years. They divided the diffusion of gender mainstreaming into 5 periods, namely: (1) 1975-1979 period of the UN conference in Mexico City; (2) 1980-1984 period of the UN conference at Copenhagent; (3) 1985-1999 period of the UN conference in Nairobi; (4) 1990-1994 period of the UN conference in Beijing; and (5) 1994-1998 period after the Beijing conference. Their's research showed that Indonesia adopted gender mainstreaming at a high level of adoption in 1990-1994. The gender mainstreaming strategy had been distributed across countries to Indonesia and then adopted by the Indonesian government through the Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 concerning Gender Mainstreaming in National Development on December 19, 2000 [8].

Rogers also explained that the adoption of innovation as a dependent variable from diffusion or as a conclusion of the overall diffusion process [3]. While Moule and Weller in [9] concluded that adoption is not only caused by a small subset of cases of diffusion of policies, but also by communication and learning which are complementary variables in the adoption process. Moule and Weller in [9] state that there are three unique determinants of policy diffusion that occur in several countries, all of which are based on learning

processes, namely: imitation, emulation, and competition. Hay in [10], Dobbin in [11], Betz and Neff [12], mention four main channels of policy diffusion, namely coercion, competition, learning and emulation. In the process of diffusion, there is a learning process, both learning at the country to another country level and learning at individuals to other individuals level.

In the diffusion of gender mainstreaming, learning subjects are adults who have had prior knowledge and experience. This learning process allows transformational learning. According to Young, *et al.* in [13] transformational learning is seen as learning with high-level cognitive outcomes. In transformational learning, there is a shift in assumptions and thoughts in individuals related to gender issues. As a result, there will be some changes in their behavior that may become more independent. The process that describes transformational learning has been proposed :

Transformational learning focuses on how to negotiate, act and think in making decisions which are in line with the goals, values, feelings, and meanings that we have in order to gain greater control of our lives, so that it can be socially accountable;

- In the context of learning, transformational learning means changing the terms of reference (oneself and others) through critical reflection of assumptions and awareness. The assumption, thinking habits and points related to point of views can be predicted epistemologically, scientifically, ecologically, politically, economically, culturally, socially, ideologically, psychologically, ethically, logically, or spiritually or intersect with other aspects of experience;
- Transformational learning refers to the transformation of the problematic framework that makes a person more dependent on opinions and interactions that are more justified.
- Transformational learning makes a person more critical in reflecting some problematic beliefs. In addition, according to Mezirow, there are two important learning conditions in transformational learning, namely: instrumental learning and communicative learning. Instrumental learning is a prerequisite for communicative learning. Both of these learning conditions occur in the process of learning gender equality and justice.

Gender mainstreaming diffusion research by Mintrom and True in [7] also illustrates that the diffusion of gender mainstreaming in transnational networks can influence women's movements in all parts of the world to Indonesia. Gender mainstreaming policies that had been adopted by the Indonesian government were distributed to all communities by expecting changes in the social system of society through the adoption of innovations by community members. Then, innovation was used so that it brought changes. Gender mainstreaming policies were encouraged by western women with liberal values and norms that were very different from Indonesian values and norms. The diffusion of gender mainstreaming brought gender equality and justice issues into a new mainstream adopted by Indonesian women who held religious eastern values.

The interesting thing is how the learning process took place in the diffusion of gender mainstreaming policies at the individual level.

The rest of this paper is organized as follow: Section II describes proposed research method. Section III presents the obtained results and following by discussion in Section IV. Finally, Section V concludes this work.

## II. PROPOSED METHOD

This study used a constructivism paradigm and a phenomenological qualitative approach. The research subjects were Fatayat NU members who sat on leadership at the branch, regional and central leadership levels which were determined by purposive sampling technique with snowball techniques. The object of research was learning occurring in the diffusion of gender mainstreaming policies. Data collection techniques used in depth interviews.

Data analysis used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis includes the stages: a. Reading and re-reading; 2. Initial noting; 3. Developing Emergent themes; 4. Searching connections across emergent themes; 5. Moving the next cases; 6. Looking for patterns across cases. This phenomenological analysis aims to reveal in detail how subjects interpret their personal and social worlds that are related to gender mainstreaming. With the main objective is the meaning of various experiences, events and status possessed by the subject and explore personal experiences that emphasize their perceptions or opinions regarding gender mainstreaming.

## III. RESULTS

The results of research conducted by Moule and Weller in [9] showed that learning is the core of diffusion. Diffusion focuses on learning, while policy proposals are evidence that policy designers have learned about policy. In the diffusion of gender mainstreaming, there is a transformational learning process at the level of individuals. It is in line with the result of the research of Moule and Weller that the core of diffusion is learning. Transformational learning according to Young, *et al.* in [13], seen from cognitive processes, is learning with high-level cognitive outcomes. In transformational learning at the level of individuals, there is a shift in assumptions, previous thoughts related to gender issues and then there has been a real change in their behavior that becomes more independent . In addition, according to Biase in [14], there are two learning conditions that are important for transformational learning, namely instrumental learning and communicative learning. Instrumental learning is a prerequisite for communicative learning. Both of these learning conditions occur in the process of learning gender equality and justice.

The learning process in the diffusion of gender mainstreaming policies can be seen from the following cases:

### Case 1

The introduction of Susiana with gender equality and justice began during the gender analysis training by the Regional Leader of Fatayat (Muslim women's empowerment organization). She acknowledged that the training had led her to a deeper and more detailed understanding of issues of equality and justice that are still half-understood. The

introduction brought her to the awareness of knowledge that raised doubts, confusion and surprise at the concepts of gender mainstreaming because the concept was completely different from what was she previously understood.

*“Honestly it was surprising at first when I found that the mindset of my family about gender had been wrong. As a wife, my mother was very dedicated to her husband. At some points, what my mother did was just far from the concept of gender equality.”*

What is stated by the subject of this study shows that there is a learning process towards gender mainstreaming in her. When she adopted, the learning process in gender mainstreaming had actually taken place.

### Case 2

Initially Titis was resistant / refused when she heard gender equality and justice issues in training. She considered that so far there were no problems with male and female relations and it was fine for her. Titis was even frightened when he heard one of the names of the facilitator in the training.

*“I once disagreed with the concept of gender equality. There were no problems with that issue so far. I am just not very comfortable with one of the speakers.”*

Materials related to gender and Islam were considered by Titis as sensitive issues. Islamic teachings in the Qur'an and hadith were tried to be reconstructed, understood and reinterpreted using gender perspective analysis. References on gender sensitivity and analysis as stated by the resource person were considered as "resistance" to the established values and norms, especially when there was a discussion about inheritance, female priests/leaders and on other issues that the women were not involved in the realm so far, such as women as guardians and witnesses.

The war of knowledge and thoughts of Titis on gender equality and justice made her resisted. However, as a representative of the organization she would convey the results of the training to other members as organizational responsibilities. Reverse attitude did not mean to reject or oppose gender discourse, but it fostered new ideas to provide gender equality and justice discourse with the organization version instead.

The desire for an inverse attitude is a desire to get confirmation from an overshadowing organization. Confirmation from the organization is important for individuals to accept or reject the idea of gender equality and justice. The organization's decision would strengthen the decisions of individual members of the organization.

### Case 3

Isani began to understand the concept of gender mainstreaming in 1999 through training organized by Fatayat at the central level. She felt that she had gained new knowledge because she did not understand the concept of gender, gender equality and gender justice in advance. Instead of providing awareness of gender knowledge, the training also opened her awareness of the knowledge that violence against women is a form of gender injustice.

*“I got some enlightenment after joining this training. I had no idea what gender was before attending to this event.”*

Issues in gender mainstreaming do not conflict with the Qur'an and are even creating a new way of thinking which aims to be common to all in the relationship between men and women, both in families and public spaces.

*“There is no controversy between this concept and Qur'an. The prophet Muhammad is far different from kyais (Islamic scholars) today. And those kyais certainly can't be like the prophet was.”*

When individuals are able to convince members of their families as well as the people around them and then Fatayat accepts and pours gender equality and justice in the organizational policies and programs, this indicates that there has been learning about equality and justice.

### Case 4

Marhamah got the concept and gender issues from the reality of living in her family and from her hobby in reading. By reading she got answers to the anxiety about what happened to herself and her family. She felt she had found what she had been looking for and she had discovered a place as well as opportunity for herself.

*“I'm just feeling like I've got the answers for what I have been questioning, especially about gender equality.”*

### Case 5

After participating in training on women's rights, Labibah realized that the concept of male and female relations that she obtained from her family education was not completely true, as she said:

*“The training has made up my mindset about the concept of a pious or faithful woman in Islam who must be ready to be mixed (polygamy) as the first wife and to never be a second wife because she hurts the first wife's heart.”*

Her family educated her as a pious woman with the concept that a pious woman is a woman who is ready to be mixed (polygamy) but with her parents' message not to become a second wife because a second wife will hurt another woman. A pious woman is a woman who does not hurt other women but is ready to be hurt, so should be ready to be the first wife. This awareness led her to critical awareness that there was a problem that was quite crucial in her family. In addition, understanding the Quran with a gender perspective also had raised a new awareness that research subjects called as a psychological leap.

*“I realized that women have a special part in Qur'an, so I have been encouraged to learn it more.”*

Labibah realized that there is something wrong in understanding religious teachings, especially about polygamy. Polygamy should be understood in the context of the history of the prophet Muhammad pubh. This is important to get a complete understanding in a gender perspective. The Prophet was actually not a follower of polygamy because polygamy was carried out by the Prophet after his first wife Khadijah died. The Prophet married a second, third wife and so on with certain contexts and reasons. The context of the Prophet's polygamy is very

different from the context of polygamy in the present. Understanding polygamy at this time must be adjusted to the present context, whether the context is in line with the values taught by the Prophet. For Labibah, gender issues and gender perspective analysis are two new things in understanding and interpreting the Qur'anic verses.

#### Case 6

Amanah got some information about gender from the books she read. She stated that:

*"I began to be familiar with gender equality by reading a novel entitled "Perempuan Berkalung Sorban (A Women in a Turban). I found some problems related to gender equality. So I decided to read more books and join this training to get better understanding about gender."*

Awareness of knowledge as a result of learning raised the courage to fight against injustices that occurred in family. Amanah's resistance was carried out by arguing to defend the old principle and to express scorn to her brother and her father. Arguing in this context is not in a negative way, but rather a way to show courage in expressing her opinions and principles. Dare to argue means to realize and make decisions that she had her own principles and dare to show them to her own brother. She dared to differ in opinions, principles and thoughts with men, as she said:

*"I dared to be critical because I have my own principle. We each has our own way to live this life."*

Amanah has strengthened her agreement on gender equality and justice issues by compromising them with the cultural and religious contexts that were being understood. This was important to affirm that gender equality and justice issues are appropriate for her. From the results of the compromise carried out by Amanah, she gained more powerful evidence that gender equality and justice were delivered in accordance with the values and norms embraced.

*"I am more selective in choosing this gender discourse. I choose what really can be accepted by my heart and mind. In my organization, we prefer the middle way and do not follow the radical feminist thinking."*

When individuals were able to convince their family members and those around them and then the organization accepted and expressed gender equality and justice in the organization's policies and programs, there had been learning process about equality and justice. However, there were severe challenges faced by Fatayat, as Riana said:

*"It was quite hard at that time to socialize gender equality, because we faced a lot of resistance. This discourse was considered new and too westernized. This refusal was brought to the congress and some of the participants refused me to become a general chairman of Fatayat. They said that if I led Fatayat with a vision of gender equality, it would likely undermine NU values. Then, when I was truly elected, the person who rejected the gender discourse chose not to be active during the management of my period."*

On the one hand, holding the national gender mainstreaming workshops done by organizations showed that they had ideas to follow the global women's movement that brought gender mainstreaming issues. On the other hand,

they did not want to take the idea in a raw manner. The context of Indonesianness, Islamic values and norms adopted by the organization sometimes do not make it possible to take that all those western ideas. This shows an awareness that these respondents and other Indonesian women cannot be separated from the influence of global ideas, but they still keep the values and norms of Indonesia, religion, and culture. This had become the background of the national workshops on organizational policies, programs and activities. The Fatayat organization as an empowerment organization for Muslim women tried to follow the global movement, but still in line with Fatayat's identity as a part of Nahdlatul Ulama or NU (Islamic scholars unity organization). There had been a clash between Fatayat and NU. However, after the discussions about the importance of Fatayat's participation in the gender equality and justice movement, a number of Islamic scholars or kyai who initially refused were finally able to accept.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The results of this research on diffusion are in line with Berry, *et al.*, [15] research findings as stated in Moule and Weller in [9] who mentioned three unique determinants of diffusion of policies at country to country level, all of which are based on the learning process. The three determinants are imitation, emulation, and competition. Imitation seems to be a determinant in learning gender equality and justice at the level of individuals. In this study, the process of imitation includes adjusting to the values and norms adopted by individuals. Gender perspective analysis for social problems and study of verses is a way of analysis coming from other countries. Learning from other countries through overseas-funded trainings illustrates that they learned by imitation (not exactly in the same way). Berry and Berry's also stated that imitation and emulation occur when a state fully aims to reflect on the policies of other countries and makes some developments. The competition did not occur in the process of diffusion of gender mainstreaming in Fatayat. The diffusion of gender mainstreaming occurring was a process of learning about policy innovations in other countries.

In their research on the Trans-National Network and Policy Diffusion, Mintrom and True [7] found that Indonesia had adopted gender mainstreaming in 1990-1994 at a high level of adoption mechanism. Each member of Fatayat began learning about gender around 1993 through trainings. The autonomous foundation founded by the organization carried out gender equality and justice movements in 1995-1996 by providing trainings to all elements of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), including members of Fatayat in Yogyakarta. There was a wider learning process at that time. The pros and cons of gender equality and justice occurred in the early stages of the learning process. Then there was a deepening of understanding in various ways so that they were able to find new concepts considered relevant and in accordance with Islamic values and norms.

Young, *et al.* in [13] who examined the dissemination of gender issues and differences in leadership education programs using the transformational learning approach found that there was resistance from the participants to these issues. At the stage of the adoption process, there had been a transformational learning process carried out by each

individual. Transformational learning occurred when they learnt about issues in gender mainstreaming. The essence of transformational learning is to reexamine a belief system and reflect on the impact of assumptions and biases that arise. Transformational learning enables a process to have a critical awareness of how and why individual assumptions have hampered the way a person understands and feels the world.

The important processes in transformational learning occurred within individuals. Their belief system was tested when they learned gender equality and justice. Their beliefs in religious and cultural matters were considered incorrect and need to be changed. The gender issues learned as the new concepts were: (a) the division of inheritance between men and women is declared gender unfair, because men got a share of the inheritance twice that of women; (b) women can be prayer priests or imam for men; and (c) women have the right to be leaders, even become a president. In addition, there are issues related to the understanding and interpretation of Islam which seem distortive and gender biased. These interpretations are easily found in classic and contemporary interpretation books or tafsir. For this reason, it is necessary to reinterpret the teachings of Islam so as not to be gender biased. There was only one of the research subjects who had felt a problem with gender relations, but did not get the support to express the problem.

Retesting what had been believed to be right to cause the attitudes and actions of individuals to reflect on the reality going on in their life. Through this reflection, they seemed to get justification about gender equality and justice information, such as: it was true that they had experienced injustice in the family; it was true that so far they had been treated unfairly by parents; it was true that there are still many women who were treated unequally and fairly; it was true that there were several religious teachings containing injustice between men and women. These reflection points made changes in their cognition which can drive some changes in themselves and the society. In addition, they stated that they needed "resistance" to the concepts and practices of injustice that had occurred so far. This showed the process of transformation of belief in themselves. As stated by Foote in [16] that transformational learning can involve the transformation of simple beliefs or radical transformations that affect a person's total perspective which may occur suddenly or gradually.

In other words, there was a process in individuals that made them have critical awareness about how and why the existing gender relations had hampered them, especially women. It also raised new awareness about how and why they must change to create a life that is more free, equal and fair. In addition, transformational learning had encouraged them to negotiate and act in accordance with the goals of life according to Islamic values and norms in adopting new concepts.

In addition, two learning conditions that are important for transformational learning are instrumental learning and communicative learning. In instrumental learning, there is the development of foundational knowledge based on personal and institutional boundaries. In other words, individuals learn gender equality and justice based on their life experiences. This is a prerequisite for the learning process towards

communicative learning. From life experience, they find awareness that previous lives can be changed to be more just and equal by implementing gender equality and justice in daily life.

The process of communicative learning is supported by the availability of opportunities for critical reflection and constructive dialogue related to challenging issues, namely gender equality and justice. Critical reflection and constructive dialogue are based on gender equality and justice theory and are based on personal perspectives that have contextual differences and settings. This happened to participants when they participated in training with methods that were considered good and memorable, such as involving male and female participants equally in the dialogue during training. Communicative learning guided participants towards transformational learning by providing opportunities to internalize the concepts of gender equality and justice within themselves. After that, they reflected it in the reality of everyday life and applied it to their own setting of life.

## V. CONCLUSION

Learning occurring in the diffusion of gender mainstreaming policies in Fatayat included adult learning types, namely learning through transformation of meaning schemes and learning through perspective transformation. The subjects reflected on the newly accepted assumptions of equality and justice so that they had a dysfunctional view of their beliefs. What they had believed as a truth previously was wrong after they accepted new assumptions from the interpretation of the Qur'an through a gender perspective. Reality had reversed their feelings, knowledge, and understanding on the equality of male and female relation which is the core of gender mainstreaming.

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