

Multicultural Education in Traditional Islamic Boarding School: A Transformative Learning Perspective

IstIla Rosmilawati*
Department of Non Formal
Education
Universitas Sultan Ageng
Tirtayasa
Serang, Indonesia
irosmilawati@untirta.ac.id

Abstract—This study aims to explore the learning strategies carried out by traditional Islamic boarding schools in order to maintain the values of multiculturalism by using a transformative education perspective adopted from transformative learning theory as a theoretical framework. By utilizing the exploratory method, this study identified learning practices in traditional Islamic boarding schools that maintain the values of multiculturalism by referring to the transformative education model, as educational model that is inclusive and open to differences in society, so that students can build themselves with cross-cultural competencies. The study was conducted at Tarbiyatul Athfal and Al Hikam traditional Islamic boarding school in Banten Province, involving 15 students and 6 teaching staffs in in-depth interviews. Three steps of qualitative data analysis, namely data reduction, data presentation and data conclusion were carried out for data analysis techniques. The results indicate that traditional Islamic boarding schools as nonformal education institution have used the transformation approach in each of their activities. The goal is to form students who have a pluralist character by prioritizing teaching materials in traditional Islamic boarding school for discussion or dialogue between students, and teachers. The role of the kyai and teachers, in the practice of transformative education based on multiculturalism, is not only required to have extensive religious knowledge, but also to have an inclusive faith. The educational process in traditional Islamic boarding school helps students to build their identity culturally, nationally and globally.

Keywords—traditional Islamic boarding school, multicultural education, transformative learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest pluralist and multicultural potential in the world. Indonesia's territory has 13,000 large and small islands

with a population of more than 271 million people with various ethnicities and different languages. In addition, the era of globalization as it is today is increasingly marked by the many migration processes and cultural exchanges of different Indonesian people that show a multicultural society. With differences like this, a process of social interaction is needed for people to understand, respect, and acknowledge each individual's background to achieve social justice, as multiculturalism wants to achieve [1]. One of the communities that can implement the concept of multiculturalism is traditional Islamic boarding school or *pesantren*. Among Muslims, *pesantren* are believed to be a model of education that promises to achieve the realization of a civilized society.

Pesantren as one of the institutions that provide non-formal education based on religion is a traditional education in which students live together and study under the guidance of teachers who are better known as kyai and have dormitories for students to stay. The students or *santri* are located in a complex that also provides a mosque for worship, space for study, and other religious activities. *Pesantren* are two terms that show one meaning. Based on the definition, *pesantren* is the basic understanding that it is a place of learning for the students or *santri*, while the cottage or *pondok* means a house or a simple residence made of bamboo. In its development, *pesantren* have enormous potential to develop science and have a very large role in all aspects of multicultural society.

In this era of globalization, *pesantren* are required to implement and develop the values that are the demands of society and globally. That is, an attitude who can respect and apply the values of democracy, pluralism and human rights. For this purpose, it is important for *pesantren* leader or we called as *kyai* of

the *pesantren* to show the general public of *pesantren* as a vehicle for educating, empowering the community and forming a multicultural-based of *pesantren*. A future *pesantren* that offers a new concept for students to face the demands of globalization. Actually, values such as democracy, pluralism are very compatible with *pesantren*. Especially if you look at *pesantren* as the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia.

The characteristics that are very prominent in *pesantren* as educational institutions can be said to be multicultural. This is because learning in *pesantren* emphasizes the moral and character indigenous of local *Javanese* culture. Meanwhile, the face of Islam transmitted by *kyai* in *pesantren* is basically an inclusive Islam and spreads peace on earth (*Rahmatan lil alamin*). *Kyai* usually also carry on the teachings of the *Walisongo* who always teach manners, tolerance and respect for local culture. In addition, the establishment of *pesantren* also has a mission to disseminate information on Islamic teachings to all corners of the archipelago with a pluralist character [2]. Multiculturalism is actually a concept where a community in the context of nationality can recognize diversity, difference, cultural pluralism, racial, ethnic, and religious [3].

Islamic boarding schools can be classified into three, namely, *salaf pesantren*, modern *pesantren* and semi-modern *pesantren*. *Salaf pesantren* have characteristics, namely recitation is limited to the book of the *Salaf (kitab kuning)*, intensification of deliberation (*bahtsul masail*), the application of the *diniyah* system (*classical*), clothing, place and environment reflect the past. Modern Islamic boarding schools have several characteristics including mastery of foreign languages (Arabic and English), there is no recitation of classical (*salaf book/kitab Salaf*), the curriculum adopts a modern curriculum. While the characteristics of semi-modern Islamic boarding schools are the existence of classical book recitation (*salaf books*) such as: *taqrib*, *Jurumiyah* and *ta'limul muta'alim*, there is a modern curriculum (such as: English, physics, mathematics, management and so on), has independence into determine the direction and policies, there is a wide open creative space for the students (such as: organizing, making bulletins, magazines, holding seminars, discussions, book reviews and others).

Pesantren are a place for students to actualize their potential. In the context of a multicultural-based of *pesantren*, the goal that must be realized by *pesantren* is to form students with a pluralist character. If studied from a transformation perspective, namely a perspective or view based on transformative learning theory, the direction of multicultural-based of *pesantren* education should focus on a communicative approach (communicative learning) and provide flexibility for students to manage their frame of reference to become more inclusive.

Transformative learning is a learning model developed from a transformative perspective which was initiated and developed by Mezirow [4]. As a learning theory, transformative learning emerged around the 1970s, starting from the results of a study conducted by Mezirow on the learning experiences of women who returned to school after a long-time leaving school. Transformative learning is a learning process that involves the awareness of learning citizens and leads to changes both in thinking changes, the changes in attitudes caused by receiving new information. Mezirow defines transformative learning as a process by which we transform our perspective taken-for-granted. Where in the learning process more emphasis is on reflective thinking and open dialogue [5].

The model of transformative learning need to be applied in *pesantren* for the purpose of changing the mindset, attitudes and behavior of the students. So far, the learning carried out in *pesantren* tends to be one-way, which means that the *kyai* gives and the students receive. This learning model is not suitable for use in the current era of globalization. *Pesantren* need to carry out an awareness movement by placing the *pesantren* in the transformation process in the whole system of social change. Every *pesantren* needs to transform the relationship between *kyai* as facilitator and *santri* or *students*. In addition, the model transformative learning can stimulate the understanding, roles and skills of the *pesantren* community. Effectively, this model will provide guidance in making improvements or changes in *pesantren*, especially related to efforts to inculcate and transfer of knowledge in improving skills and changing the mindset of students as well as providing a number of new experiences that are useful for developing roles and solving problems faced in the current era of globalization.

This study explores the learning strategies carried out by traditional Islamic Boarding Schools or *pesantren* in order to maintain the values of multiculturalism by using a transformative perspective adopted from transformative learning theory as a theoretical framework. The aim is to identify the practices of inculcating the values of multiculturalism in *pesantren* which are viewed from the framework of transformative education, namely a non-formal education process that can prepare an inclusive and accommodating generation of people who have religious, ethnic and cultural differences. So that it can be seen the goals of education in multicultural *pesantren*, namely those who have broad-minded students and are able to cross traditional and religious boundaries and have concern for the role of religion in solving social problems in society.

II. METHODS

This study used an inductive approach with an exploratory method. Exploratory research method is research that aims to map an object in depth. Or in other words, exploratory research is research conducted to find causes or things that affect the occurrence of something specifically regarding the object of our research. Meanwhile, the inductive approach is used as a research approach so that researchers can draw general conclusions from the real facts in the field. In this case, inductive is the researcher's way of thinking, where the researcher can draw general conclusions from various individual cases. Drawing conclusions inductively begins by bringing together general statements. Transformative learning theory as the theoretical framework used in this study will be linked to data or field facts obtained during the research data collection process, resulting in a general conclusion.

The research stages include three stages. The first stage is the orientation stage, which aims to obtain a complete and clear picture of the problem being studied. Activities carried out in the orientation stage are conducting preliminary field studies, conducting library studies and compiling research designs. The research was conducted at Tarbiyatul Atfal Islamic Boarding School and Al Hikam Islamic Boarding School located in Banten Province, Indonesia. The second stage is the exploration stage, which is exploring the research focus, collecting data through observation, interviews and documentation studies. The interview process was carried out by involving 15 students and 6 *kyai*/teaching staff using an interview guide or semi-structured interviews. The third stage is the stage member check, which is intended to check the truth of the data and informants that have been collected so that the research results are more reliable. All field data results were analyzed using three steps of qualitative data patterns, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Based on the stages of data analysis, then the data and information that have been collected by the researchers are then simplified and discussed with the theoretical framework used, in order to obtain a conclusion that is in accordance with the research focus.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of the research results includes a description of the implementation of multicultural education in *pesantren* from the perspective of transformative learning. That is, the presentation of data and discussion refers to the presence or absence of a process of change or transformation experienced by the students regarding their perspective on the values of multicultural education implemented in activities in *pesantren*. As we all understand, *pesantren* are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

Pesantren community reflects heterogeneity, where the attitude of tolerance and respect among others in the *pesantren* community must be upheld. Multicultural values must be maintained by fellow community members. Likewise, *pesantren* must be able to adapt to the times and the needs of the community, outside the Islamic boarding school community [6].

A. *The Process of Instilling Multicultural Educational Values in Islamic Boarding Schools*

Pesantren gives freedom to its students to study general education, such as the *Tarbiyatul Athfal* Islamic Boarding School where the majority of the students attend Equality Education Program which is equivalent to High School. Some students at Al Hakim Islamic Boarding School also study in higher education by taking various majors/fields in the university. *Pesantren* give permission to male and female students to leave the *pesantren* area and take general education outside. After that, they are obliged to return to the *pesantren* and participate in activities that tend to be crowded. The students showed an attitude of acceptance (*qana'ah*) to these strict rules. *Pesantren* also emphasize the need for flexible relationships, namely relationships that can accept and be open in coexistence with various social stratifications of society [7].

The process of inculcating the values of multicultural education is also carried out in the daily activities of the students. The students started the morning by performing the morning prayer in congregation, then continued with *dhikr* activities and reading the *Qur'an*. For students who take general education in schools or university, they will be active in their respective schools or university. In the afternoon, the students/*santri* will return to the *pesantren* and continue activities related to religious activities. Among them are recitation activities using the *sorogan* method, where students usually study the law of *kalimah* and *nahwu sharaf*. In *sorogan* activities, the *kyai* always gives advice to his students related to the values of life and the attitude of tolerance between individuals and communities of different backgrounds. For example, advice about studying hard, not being extravagant, not smoking and always actively seeking general knowledge for the future provisions of the students. In this case, the *kyai* does not only limit religious studies in every activity in the study, but also studies how to live in society. However, although the practice of multicultural education in the *pesantren* has been implemented, particularly related to social interaction in *pesantren* community, *pesantren* curriculum has not been formally designed to touch multicultural issues as the focus of learning.

The practices of multiculturalism in *pesantren* are built by finding common ground for universal human values. Research conducted by Suheri and

Nurrahmawati [8] stated that religious tolerance and pluralism in traditional Islamic boarding schools are built on clear and firm religious pillars based on *the Qur'an* as the guiding principle. In this case, the implementation of multiculturalism is built because of one religion (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), one state ideology (*ukhuwah wathaniyah*), or one state ideology (*ukhuwah wathaniyah*) (p. 38). However, not all cultural values can be tolerated and appreciated. In this case, the students must be able to distinguish between the natural and the cultural (socially constructed).

B. Transformation Approach in Pesantren Activities

Transformative education is education that does not only emphasize the realm of knowledge transfer, but includes values [9]. This means that the implementation of multicultural education in *pesantren* that uses a transformative approach is education that requires a comprehensive change from students in terms of knowledge and action. According to Rosmilawati [10], a transformative perspective is a learning concept that produces changes in individuals about how the individual understands and interprets the reality and experiences of his life. This includes a person's process of seeing and understanding the learning process and relating to his life circumstances. Transformative learning is a learning model developed from a transformative perspective.

In every study activity in *pesantren*, the *Kyai* or teaching staff always try to provide content, themes and perspectives on community diversity or multiculturalism in the curriculum or study materials. This is referred to as the additive approach, which is an approach by prioritizing additional topics and perspectives in the curriculum without changing the basic structure [11]. The phenomenon of *pesantren* which adopts general knowledge for students but still maintains classical Islamic sciences is an effort to continue the main goal of the educational institution while at the same time following the needs and developments of the times.

One of the *pesantren* activities that introduces the values of multiculturalism to its students is the *mudzakarah* activity. Once a month or on the commemoration of Islamic religious holidays, the students will hold or attend lectures or seminars. With *mudzakarah* activities, students benefit from knowing about the sciences of worship, faith and topics or community problems that occur at this time, including discussions about multiculturalism. This activity is a moment for the students to test their perspective or *frame of reference* about a life problem. The students get the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on themselves related to their views on certain problems. The transformational approach in every activity in the *Isla pesantren* provides a forum and opportunity for students to test new perspective paradigms, and this is the goal of the transformative education process.

Transformative education can be understood by exploring the meaning of transform which means the presupposition of change from one existing form to another. Transformation (*al-tahwil*) is the process of changing something for the better, towards something that is closer to the ideal situation [12]. Transformation in the world of education can be understood as a change in terms of institutions, methods and content of education itself. Students can be said to have experienced transformative learning if they can change their perspective on themselves and their world from a deep and very real experience. This is different from informational learning, where the learning process is only an effort to expand the cognitive capacity that has been determined into a new area, or in other words "change what is known". Informational learning adds to what is known, while transformative or transformational learning is "changing how to know" [13].

C. Inclusive-Pluralist Character of the Santri

The value of inclusive-pluralist character (open to accept differences) was developed in the *pesantren* which became the research location. *Pesantren* have implemented inclusive-pluralist character values starting at the time of acceptance of students who will study from diverse backgrounds, temperaments, languages, races, and social statuses. Multicultural Islamic education is education that respects and embraces all forms of diversity. Education process in the *pesantren* that is based on multicultural values provides an opportunity for the growth and development of a *sense of self* in every student. One of the *pesantren* activities that aim to form students who have pluralist character and behaviour is learning activities in the context of forming the students behaviour or what is commonly referred to as *targhib wa tarhib*, which is an effort of habituation to continue to do good and avoid sin or evil. The self-acustoming program in *pesantren* includes activities that are character building for the students. Forms of habituation activities include eating together, using daily clothes such as sarongs and caps or skullcaps and pickets cleaning dorm rooms or *kobong*. The placement of dorm rooms that do not distinguish the background of the students and the use of facilities is one of the implementations of pluralist values that will shape the inclusive-pluralist character of the students. In addition, there is a pluralist character for the students because these activities contain multicultural values, namely: democracy, justice, cooperation, discipline, mutual respect, mutual respect, responsibility, learning to live together or side by side with other different groups, cultural and linguistic diversity, and tolerance between different ethnic groups.

Multiculturalism is a feeling of comfort that is formed by the knowledge and skills of each person from the cultural attitudes encountered involving a group of people with different cultural backgrounds. The inclusive-pluralist character formed in the students is

the result of the transformative learning experience experienced by the students. The purpose of transformative learning is to transform learners into a state, so that learners can achieve learning, develop all the desired potential, and to strengthen and motivate learners in the learning experience effort. The students in the research locations have diverse backgrounds, but have been able to show an attitude of solidarity between others which is built in a symbol of togetherness.

The diversity that exists in the *pesantren* environment is a multicultural characteristic. The environment formed is completely heterogeneous. The Islamic religious values that are taught still prioritize tolerance, help, mutual respect among others. The existence of the *pesantren* at a macro level is expected to play an active role and contribute to cultural, educational and social transformation [14]. The cultural dimension gives characteristics that the *pesantren* are able to instill in their own character, solidarity and simplicity. The educational dimension, where the *pesantren* are able to give opportunity for *santri* to have a religious skills and religious intellectuals. The social dimension, where the *pesantren* can be developed as a community learning centre that functions to help serve the community in the social and religious fields. Furthermore, Maarif [15] suggests that education of the *pesantren* must develop a logic of plurality, namely a logic that recognizes that human differences are unique things, which are largely influenced by natural and cultural conditions, and partly determined by individual choices. From the theoretical framework of transformative learning, if the students have been able to change their perspective towards the logic of plurality, then the students have experienced a perspective transformation. Perspective transformation is the latest perspective of the students after getting a new thought reference [16]. This process can revise the old justification to be wiser or even tougher which takes place continuously and dynamically.

D. Communicative Learning

Education in Islamic boarding schools with a multicultural perspective carry a dialogical approach to instill awareness of living together in diversity and difference. Multicultural religious education recognizes the pluralism of learning facilities and transforms indoctrination into dialogue [17]. based on the communicative learning framework which is the hallmark of transformative learning.

Learning activities in *pesantren* that use this approach are communicative learning carried out in *mudzakarah* activities. The *mudzakarah* method is a scientific discovery that specifically addresses as *diniyah* problems such as *aqidah*, worship and religious issues in general. In addition to inviting major scholars, activities are *mudzakarah* also carried out independently by the students. This means that the speakers are students who are appointed by the *kyai*. This activity is useful for training students' skills. With

this activity, it can open spaces for dialogue or question and answer for the students, so that two-way communication will be created that can increase the curiosity of the students. The practice of dialogue carried out at the *Tarbiyatul Athfal* Islamic boarding school has changed the habit of learning approaches that occur in the *pesantren* which are usually centred on *kyai* and tend to be monologues (one way). On the other hand, the Islamic boarding schools have implemented a communicative learning approach. If we relate it to multicultural education in *pesantren*, in *mudzakarah* activities, the Islamic boarding schools should make discussion materials such as differences in schools and schools to be discussed and dialogue together between *kyai* and students. Thus, the momentum of multicultural education is created with approach transformative learning in *pesantren* [15].

E. The Role of Kyai and Senior Student/Santri

The role of *kyai* and senior student/*santri* in multicultural education in the *pesantren* is very important and significant. *Kyai* as the leader of the *pesantren* regulates and organizes the contents, processes, situations and activities of the *pesantren* in a multicultural manner. *Kyai* emphasizes diversity in learning, among others, by discussing various cultures, people and beliefs held by others in living together as a nation. In addition to the *kyai*, there are senior students who are role models for other students. What the students imitate from their seniors is because they are people who are diligent in worshipping and memorizing the *Qur'an* and this is what other students try to apply in their daily activities.

Kyai play a role in teaching the book with the *sorogan* method, which is a method where students come to the teacher or *kyai* one by one by bringing the book they are going to study. *Kyai* reads and translates it sentence by sentence, then explains the meaning. The students listen to the *kyai's* reading and repeat it until they understand it. The term *sorogan* comes from the word *sorogan* (Javanese) which means thrusting the book in front of the *kyai* or his assistant [18]. This method includes a meaningful learning method. Because, students will feel a special relationship. Especially when reading the book in front of the *kyai*. In addition to receiving direct guidance and direction, they can also be evaluated and their ability development known.

Kyai also acts as an advisor to his students. The word *maui'zhah* according to the language means advice. The Method is *mau'izhah* often called the "advice" method, which is a method of education and teaching by means of educators giving motivation. The advice method is an educational method that is quite effective in influencing the students in forming faith, preparing their morals, soul and social sense. Giving advice can have a big impact on opening the hearts of students to the nature of things, encouraging them to do good and positive things. In giving advice, the thing that

is really needed is the transfer of value. The transfer of good values will be entered into their souls. In this study it can be seen that the students are very obedient to their *kyai*. In addition to providing advice, strategies and roles of *kyai* and senior students in forming the character of students who have a pluralist/multicultural spirit are also carried out through exemplary examples (*uswah*), especially those that include examples that include cognitive and affective aspects. The cognitive aspect is the example of the *kyai* in the form of thoughts, ideas of mindset, and understanding of the values of multicultural education, for example how to respond to differences that exist in society. Meanwhile, exemplary attitudes that reflect multicultural values include respect for non-Muslim guests who come to the *pesantren*. In this case, many students see and learn directly and imitate the mindset, attitudes, behaviour of the *kyai* and then adapt and integrate themselves.

The figure of the *kyai* is the central point of autonomy in *pesantren* that determines the system and rules of the *pesantren*. *Kyai* is not only a transmitter of traditional religious sciences, but also a spiritual guide [19]. However, even so, the *pesantren* needs to transform the relationship between *kyai* as mentors or facilitators with santri as students.

F. Identity and Attitude Form

The formation of the identity and behaviour of the students is a representation of the value system adopted and practiced by the *pesantren* community, including the value system of multicultural education. In the *pesantren* that were the subject of research, traditional cultural values rooted in local wisdom were still practiced, such as the rules for wearing clothes, curfews, and interactions between *santri* and *kyai*. However, *pesantren* also provide space for their students to be able to adapt to the social environment, including the general education environment, such as students who study in high schools or study at universities. Attitudes and views of life and behaviour to realistically view life are the needs of every human being as a social being.

The formation of student identity and behaviour that refers to multicultural values is carried out through various ways and activities. For example, specifically for female students, they must still dress according to religious norms even though they are not restricted in adopting contemporary clothing. While the formation of student behaviour is done by practicing education through independence.

Behavioural independence is the ability of a student to take and implement every decision freely. The habit of students who are routine in nature shows the tendency of students to be more capable and braver in taking and implementing decisions independently, for example financial management, spending planning, planning routine activities, and so on. This cannot be separated from the lives of those who do not live with their parents and the demands of the *pesantren* who

want the students to be able to live independently. In addition, behaviour transformation is a form of actualization of knowledge and experience that students have gained through the education process in the *pesantren*. In this case, the behaviour of students has reflected all components of learning, both cognitive, affective and psychomotor components. That is the identity and behaviour of students have been conceptualized through these three aspects.

Furthermore, in everyday life, the students always cultivate themselves to do good and stay away from evil. These efforts and activities are called *targhib wa tarhib*, which is an effort to continue to do good and avoid sin or evil. The students revealed that when doing good it must be sincere by not expecting anything. In an effort to improve the students' personal self, including behaviour improvement, the students also take time to be alone to reflect. This contemplation activity is called the *ibrah* method, usually the students reflect to think about their parents and the life they are living. In addition, the method is *ibrah* used by students to evaluate and reflect on themselves so that they will be better in the future.

The transformation of students' behaviour also occurs through a process of self-reflection that results in action. This behaviour change is an application of multicultural values from what has been learned in the *pesantren*. Thus, the *pesantren* are required to have a set of contents or materials that will be transformed to students so that they become their personalities in accordance with future identities. This is in accordance with Banks [20] who said that the *pesantren* education process must always help students to build their identity culturally, nationally and globally.

IV. CONCLUSION

Multicultural education is a process of respecting, a sincere, tolerant way of life towards cultural diversity that lives in the midst of a plural society. The implementation of multicultural values in Indonesia is considered strategic to be able to creatively manage pluralism, including in the context of the traditional Islamic boarding school or *pesantren*. Multicultural education in the *pesantren* must be approached holistically and interactively through daily habits and programmed activities. This study explores the implementation of the values of multiculturalism which are articulated in the learning practices and life of the students as seen from the framework of transformative learning theory. Transformative learning models need to be applied in the Islamic boarding school for the purpose of making changes towards the attitude of students to be able to accept the fact that differences are *sunatullah* – a feature of multiculturalism – and can respect each other and work together for eternal peace in the world.

The use of a transformative approach in implementing multicultural education in *pesantren* should place students as historical beings, namely practical beings who live authentically only when involved in the transformation process. *Santri* as an agent is someone who is aware (conscious being), not just someone who has awareness. In addition, multicultural education that is practiced in *pesantren* within the framework of transformative learning is also carried out using analogy, contextualization, analysis of social problems and conducting social criticism of multiculturalism issues that exist in society. So, the students will get used to doing critical reflection on the issues of multiculturalism or differences.

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