

# Writing Drama, Nurturing Tolerance: Indonesian Teachers' Exploration of Creative Teaching Methods

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## ABSTRACT

Living in a country blessed with rich diversity, Indonesia, is both a blessing and a challenge. For one, diversity can enrich our points of view in seeing various social issues. At the same time, social cohesion is always at risk. We have seen some incidents of violence provoked by acts of intolerance taking place in Indonesia. Consequently, tolerance is one crucial soft skill that needs to be strongly instilled in the younger generation to smoothly navigate life in diversity, even tap diversity to be helpful as a social resource. Many experts have claimed that diversity can be valuable in maintaining social resilience under challenging situations. Moreover, the Indonesian national curriculum for all levels of education mandates that strongly instill tolerance in various subjects. Thus, we deem it to be timely to encourage teachers at primary education institutions to explore creative and critical methods in teaching tolerance. Our community service program engaged teachers at Islamic secondary schools in Malang to explore drama writing creatively. Through the writing process, teachers can explore contextual issues pertaining to tolerance. In addition, the method also grows social sensitivity as they pursue their imagination in developing various characters facing and attempting to solve issues of intolerance, be it religion, ability, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. Apart from the time-consuming nature of the drama writing teaching method, the deepening of understanding and growing sensitivity cultivated through the process are certainly worth the efforts. Thus, we expect that teachers will not hesitate in implementing drama writing as a method in teaching life values, including tolerance.

**Keywords:** *Drama, Tolerance, Madrasah, Learning, Indonesia.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article discloses the activity of the community service program done by the authors - Drama Script Writing Assistance with a theme of Tolerance for Islamic Secondary School Teachers in Malang. This assistance program was done in 2021, partnering with Islamic School Work Group (KKM) 2 Malang. Through drama scriptwriting, teachers who are a part of KKM 2 Malang could explore contextual issues regarding tolerance: in addition, the writing process thrives a high social sensitivity, especially when they develop their imagination, character creativity, and storyline. In developing an idea, teachers have to be keen on any intolerance issues around them and be able to come up with a solution to the problem. Apart from the time-consuming nature of the drama writing teaching method, the deepening of understanding and growing sensitivity cultivated through the process are certainly worth the efforts. Thus, we expect that teachers will not hesitate in implementing drama writing as a method in teaching life values, including tolerance and social inclusion.

Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest population diversities in the world. Demographers such

as Hugo, Hull, Hull, and Jones [1] Bутtenheim and Nobles [2] approve this. According to the 2010 Population Census published by The Indonesia Board of Statistics (BPS) [3], specifically registers nationalities, ethnic groups, religions, and everyday languages, other than the believers of the six religions recognized by the government (Islam 87,18%, Christian 6,96%, Catholic 2,91%, Hinduism 1,69%, Buddhism 0,72%, and Confucianism (0,05%), some people believe in other religions or beliefs that are not registered in detail (0,13%), there are also people who do not answer questions regarding religion (0,06%), and there are also certain groups that do not get asked about religion intentionally (0,32%). According to the same census, there are at least 31 ethnic groups dominated by Javanese (40,22%) and Sundanese (15,5%). Each ethnic group has a sub-ethnic group, such as the Papuan Ethnic Group with 466 sub-ethnic groups; this census regarding Papua is then supported by the research done by Ananta, Utami, and Handayani [4].

The population diversity and biodiversity, in general, are both a blessing and a challenge for Indonesia's development. On one side, this diversity

is an essential asset in the development of Indonesia as a nation. For instance, the richness of ethnic groups that impacts cultural assets can be an asset in regional development and cultural and tourism-based economy [5]. At the same time, this is also a challenge, especially in maintaining social cohesion. Religion and ethnicity diversities become a challenge in making a society that can coexist harmoniously and appreciate diversity [6].

The trend of intolerance in Indonesia needs to be addressed by education through teaching and strengthening tolerance values and social inclusions to students. One of the most recent acts of discrimination was the vandalism of a Christian graveyard in Surakarta on June 16th, 2021, driven by a religious difference, involving ten perpetrators in which at that time were students of a Secondary School in that city; these teenagers were studying in an Islamic education institution [7]. Therefore, through the teachers, the school as a formal education institution needs to step in and provide real solutions to prevent such things from happening again. The school response, a learning strategy that nurtures and enhances tolerance on students, can be a long-term investment in maintaining the diversity in Indonesia and make it an asset for the betterment of the nation.

According to Palunga and Marzuki [8], curriculum standards and the commitment from the school community, including teachers, are very important, among other supporting factors of character building. Consequently, committing teachers who attained social awareness and high creativity is needed. Those teachers are the frontiers of learning in schools. They are the first to communicate and nurture noble values of life, including tolerance, to students. They also become a prime example for students to behave. In other words, teachers are a character-building asset for the next generation through formal education that needs to be supported and facilitated to increase their capability.

In this community service program, we partnered with Islamic School Work Group (KKM) 2 Malang in exploring drama as a creative, critical, and contextual learning media in educating tolerance to students. The decision to partner with KKM 2 Malang is motivated by the intolerance acts that involve children, especially secondary school students, like what happened in Surakarta is a red intolerance flag that needs to be solved to strengthen the value of tolerance in school. As well as the fact that religion is one of the leading causes of various intolerance acts, including things that school children have done, also needs extra attention. In addition, as referred to in Executive Tolerant City Index 2020 [9], Malang is a part of the top 25 cities with the lowest tolerance index among 94 other cities in Indonesia. For that, it is appropriate if we partnered with an Islamic school community-based in Malang.

Drama is the selected media in this community service program; as a form and genre of literature, we have considered its potential to be a creative, critical, and contextual learning media. According to Wulandari [10], literature not only can be used receptively by selecting literary pieces to be used as teaching material. It can also be used expressively by maintaining the students' emotions, feelings, spirit, ideas, thoughts, and views and pouring it into a form of creative writing in student's character building, specifically, various studies regarding drama as a part of literature and its effectiveness in educating life values in student's character building. Masrupi [11], who has done Classroom Action research (CAR) of secondary school students in Pandeglang, states a positive correlation between educating noble values through drama media with the students' character building. Furthermore, according to Muhri [12], students will find the space and time to understand theatre and performing arts. Through drama, students can realize characteristics and find relative views in the face of conflict, so it can become a life lesson when facing a similar dispute in real life. The drama writing assistance for Islamic secondary school teachers is also to encourage teachers so that they can be more independent in preparing a learning material, and also as a way to strengthen their empathy and social sensitivity during the writing process. It is expected that the issues acquired from the teachers' social sensitivity strengthening process encompass various intolerance acts that will become a lesson that provides an authentic experience for students through performing arts or drama.

This community service program is a response from the world of education to give preventive solutions to any kinds of intolerance acts. The goals of this activity are, (1) to broaden the knowledge and sharpen the sensitivity of Islamic Secondary School teachers regarding diversity, tolerance, social inclusion, and (2) to increase the skills and creativity of Islamic Secondary School teachers in integrating tolerance values and social inclusion in learning.

## **2. METHODS**

The goal of this community service program will be achieved through both offline and online tolerance and social inclusion themed scriptwriting training for 20 Indonesian, English, Civics, and Religion teachers that are a part of KKM 2 Islamic Secondary School Malang. In general, these teachers are the first people to nurture the value of tolerance and social inclusion to students. Likewise, we do not deny the fact that character building is also the responsibility of other teachers. However, the teachers above are the people who are directly responsible for nurturing the value of tolerance to students. The 20 teachers are selected based on the pandemic situation, which obliges us to avoid crowds during the offline training outside the city's public

activity restriction (PPKM level 4). The maximum capacity of the school auditorium is thirty people while applying health protocols. In offline activities, 20 people are the ideal amount to maximize interactions through learning instruments. Too many participants will be deemed ineffective since many silent listeners will be. With a moderate number of selected participants, it is hoped to be more confident in interacting between colleagues and supervisors. The selection of the teachers was fully managed by the KKM 2 Malang Board of Management. This is because the KKM's Board of Management understands the needs of its members, and it is also a form of trust between the team and the partner.

Given the current pandemic situation and also judging the team's capacity, assisting is done through various offline and online activities, which are as follows:

a) An offline workshop titled Tolerance Drama Scriptwriting Assistance

In an offline activity held on June 29th, 2021, before PPKM level 4 taking place in Malang, four team members gave briefing materials to the participating teachers. The materials provided are Drama as a Method, by Evi Eliyanah, PhD. and Dr. Azizatz Zahro, dan Drama Scriptwriting Workshop, by Dr. M. Misbahul Amri dan Nabhan F. Choiron. The offline activity took place in the Islamic Secondary School 2 Malang auditorium for 4 hours with strict health measures; social distancing, wearing masks, room sanitizing every two hours, and prohibiting eating and drinking inside the hall. The first activity produced bright and creative ideas from the participants that will be submitted through Google Forms and become the material for the next move.

b) Online writing assistance in Whatsapp Group, Google Forms, and Google Drive

The results from the first activity are followed up through Whatsapp Group and Google Drive. These new methods must be done due to the worsening condition of the pandemic from June to August this year, which makes us unable to hold another offline activity. Whatsapp group (WAG) functions as the communication medium between the supervisors and the participants. After understanding the learning goals and publishing a book containing drama scripts, participants started writing screenplays. The supervisors designed a Google Form to help the participants map out their ideas. After that, the participants were given time to make a character development. The character development process was also done with the learning instruments prepared by the supervisors. Then, comments were given to the filled instruments by the supervisors through Google

Drive. All of the supervisors can access comments on Google Drive. The supervisors made a detailed summary so that the participants could understand the main point quickly.

c) Online writing assistance done by Zoom video conference

The submitted scripts made by the participants in the given drive link prepared by the supervisors were divided into two teams to increase the effectiveness of the assistance. During the online activity via Zoom meeting on August 13th, 2021, at 15.15-17.15 WIB, the supervisors did a general script overview: the comprehensiveness and the suitability to the theme; then, the supervisors divided the Zoom meeting rooms into two and gave intensive individual assistance for the participants. The assistance includes writing consultations, aligning the script, and giving the significance of tolerance values in some of the scripts. The results from the Zoom meeting were noted by the supervisors and reminded to the participants. This activity produced the participants' revised draft of the scripts after getting an input from the supervisors.

d) The reflection of the writing process done online by Zoom video conference

The reflection activity of the writing process was held online via Zoom on September 2021 to get feedback from the participants regarding the process, quality, and results of the assistance program.

e) Publishing a book titled "Bunga Rampai Naskah Drama"

The published book containing various tolerance-themed drama scripts is the culmination of this community service program. The content of the book is the finished drama scripts written by the participants. Admittedly, not all the participants submitted their work due to various reasons: being busy at the workplace and home, not confident enough to write literature for teaching, etc. The supervisors have tried their best to convince everyone that all of their brilliant works are worth publishing. But, still, some people feel not confident enough to fully commit to the program because this program is voluntary, and drama scriptwriting skills cannot be trained with only a relatively short and non-intensive training program. The publication will be focused solely on the participants who are willing to write. The team has done necessary editing to all of the submitted works and contracted a publishing company for publishing.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program in assisting teachers of Islamic schools in Malang to be able to write tolerance-themed drama scripts is done to establish communication over common goals and motivations. Regular assistance and feedback from the supervisors

have resulted in products for the community and a deeper understanding of tolerance and social inclusion from the participants. Here are the results of the drama script writing assistance program with the theme of promoting tolerance done by the team. For the sake of this report, the names of the participants will be replaced by pseudonyms.

**Table 1.** Results of the drama script writing assistance program

Steps	Activity	Goals
Preparation	Framing Assistance Scenario	Assistance Plan, Scenario, Techniques, and Timeline
	Composing Materials for Briefing	a lecture titled Drama as a Teaching Method and Drama Scriptwriting Workshop,
Implementation	Tolerance Themed Drama Scriptwriting Workshop	-Understanding the concept of tolerance -Tolerance story ideas
	Drama Scriptwriting Assistance	-Drama Script frame -Tolerance Drama Script
	Script submission and the publishing of a book containing a compilation of drama scripts	-An ISBN book of Tolerance Drama Scripts
Evaluation	Reflection	-Understanding scriptwriting, tolerance, and social inclusion

During the preparation, scriptwriting assistance scenarios, materials, and divisions of the supervisors were composed. The composed procedure is an offline activity as an introduction before PPKM level 4, and online activities to monitor the participants' development. On the workshop briefing day, there were two sessions explaining the concept of tolerance and social inclusion: Drama as a Teaching Method by Evi Eliyanah, Ph.D. and Dr. Azizatul Zahro, and Drama Scriptwriting Workshop by Dr. M. Misbahul Amri and Nabhan F. Choiron, M.A. There is an increase in the teachers' understanding of the concept of tolerance and drama scriptwriting techniques from those activities.

According to the timetable, the first activity was an offline workshop in Islamic Secondary School 2 Malang. One of the questions directed by the presenter to the participants is what kinds of differences need to be settled with the value of tolerance. Most of the teachers answered the religious difference play a significant role. This is understandable because the concept of tolerance has been closer to religion lately. Intolerance issues that happen in Indonesia are primarily driven by faith, for example: the case of the Church Yasmin building permission in Bogor, a complaint regarding Azan volume followed by bullying and legal proceedings in Medan, and also the case of graveyard vandalizing mentioned at the beginning of this report, not to mention various violence cases motivated by a naive and narrow understanding of religious texts. However, not every tolerance issue is religion-related. Intolerance is caused by an inharmonious relationship between certain groups that possess a different social identity. The differences can be in gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, social class, and others.

The reflection after the activity showed that most of the participants agreed that drama could be a suitable learning method to nurture tolerance to students, not only limited to Language subjects but also other subjects. One of the participants, Ms. AI, wrote on a reflection form that students could experience empathy through role-playing - "the students will feel it on a personal level when a similar story happened to them in real life." Teachers also realized that drama could be an alternative method in various subjects, not only Bahasa Indonesia. Here is a testimony made by a participant, Ms. Dian, "During the teaching process, we as teachers can use various methods, one of which is drama. Drama is not only limited to teaching Bahasa Indonesia but it also can be used to teach other subjects. In addition, the workshop also gives the teachers a deeper understanding and training about the elements of drama and drama scriptwriting. Ms. Titi, one of the participants, stated that a new thing that is learned during the workshop is a technique of developing a character and a method of drama scriptwriting.

During the implementation of the online drama scriptwriting assistance program, the supervisors and participants performed an active discussion session via WhatsApp group. There is a change in understanding the value of tolerance. The participants have a broader view of the causes of intolerance. It can be seen from the diversity of the issues used as the central conflict inside the drama script. The main points in the participants' works became wider, for example, tolerance in social class difference on a drama script titled *Balada Bocah Asongan*, race and ethnicity difference in Ambon, and inter and intra religion differences in Kelap-kelip Kampung Sawahan. There are many more drama scripts made by the participants that contain various important tolerance issues to note.

From that, it shows that the participants' understanding of the value of tolerance has become broader and not only based on religion.

According to the reflection, 80% of the participants have never written or published a work of literature before. The most common reason is being not confident and lacking ways to help and facilitate those willing to write. Such as from Mr. John saying that "I feel pessimistic about my work." After going through 3 months' worth of assistance, the participants started to gain confidence to create a piece. This community service program opens up the creativity and enthusiasm of the participants to write their own work.

In the end, drama writing cannot be pushed. From 20 participants during the beginning of the program, only ten participants managed to create a full drama script. Multiple factors hinder their progress. From the reflection it can be concluded that there are two main factors that slows their drama scriptwriting process, which are internal and external factors. One internal factor that hinders their progress is a lack of ideas or writer's block. 8 out of 10 participants that have finished their scripts agreed that looking for ideas and developing them is the hardest and the longest part of drama script writing. Mrs. Lily stated, 'When I tried to write, I don't know where to start and how it should end. It is quite difficult to finish the entire script.' Mrs. Lily represents the other 7 participants who wrote about the same problem, which is finding and developing ideas.

Meanwhile, the external factor that becomes the problem in the writing process is the participants' tight schedule, making it hard for them to find the time to write. Given that the participants are teachers who have families, it is understandable that there are many responsibilities that still need to be handled, therefore hindering the writing process. Just like Mrs. Adil said that one of her difficulties is to manage her time on various activities such as face-to-face Zoom meetings,

Lack of confidence issues have been anticipated beforehand by maintaining communications with the participants via WhatsApp personal chat. Such things are done to gain confidence and make the participants less hesitant to express their tolerance-themed ideas. According to Budiwan [13], this way is suitable because teaching an adult needs openness in every aspect. It will provoke liberty of expression among adults without feeling intimidated. Other than openness, the team also provides emotional support to ensure the participants that there is no such thing as being wrong in making a literature work and there is no need to be afraid to pour their bright ideas into a paper.

There are 80% of the submitted works from the participants out of the targeted 100% during the drama script submission. The participants' scripts then are reviewed from their content, its tolerance theme, and its

writing. Hands that passed through the final review will be sent to a publisher to go through layout and printing processes. Nine drama scripts that are ready to be published are as follows: (1) Balada Bocah Asongan, (2) Kelap-Kelip Kampung Sawahan, (3) Kecilkan Volume Suara, (4) Sahabat Tak Seiman, (5) Imbalan, (6) Kertas Toleransi, (7) Maaf, (8) Ambon, (9) Sahabat Sejati.

The last step of this program is an evaluation session from the participants. In this activity, reflection after the writing process is essential to note the difficulties the participants have experienced and mark various accomplishment indicators that we have achieved during this community service program. Furthermore, from the reflection, we know that the participants really appreciate this community service program and are highly enthusiastic about joining other similar activities. This enthusiasm was expressed in a review by Mr. John by writing, 'It is hoped for a (program) continuation for those (teachers) who wants to write.'

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Teachers play an essential role in the students' character building. One good character that needs to be nurtured in the students' hearts and souls is tolerance. Given that Indonesia is a country with such a high diversity that can bring various advantages and potentials, it is undeniable that there will be significant conflicts caused by it as well. To form a future generation aware of tolerance issues, proficient and creative teachers are needed to nurture the value of tolerance effectively by integrating it with the teaching and learning process. One of the innovative learning activities to teach patience is drama or role playing. Through role playing, the students are able to understand being a particular character on a personal level and finding relative views in facing intolerance issues staged by the writer. Therefore, the moral lessons and understanding can be used and applied when facing a similar situation in real life. The team's tolerance-themed drama script writing assistance aims to sharpen the skills of teachers to create a form of creative learning that teaches tolerance, primarily through drama scripts.

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