



**DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY-BASED ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM: A MULTICULTURAL APPROACH IN LEARNING TO IMPROVE INTER-CULTURAL TOLERANCE
(A Study at Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School in Bontang City, East Kalimantan)**

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Abstract:

This study is a qualitative research aimed at analyzing the implementation of multicultural values in pesantren education. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation at Pesantren Nurul Ihsan Bontang. The pesantren integrates Islamic teachings with principles of tolerance and diversity in its curriculum. The subjects of this study were the santri (students) and the pesantren caregivers. The findings indicate that the implementation of multicultural values in religious education enhances the santri's understanding of the importance of interfaith and cultural tolerance. Activities such as interfaith group discussions and weekly social programs support the creation of an inclusive environment. Furthermore, interviews with the pesantren caregivers revealed that this approach also strengthens the sense of togetherness and mutual respect among the santri.

Keywords: Community-Based Curriculum, Pesantren Nurul Ihsan, Multicultural Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, faces challenges in maintaining harmony between communities. In Islamic boarding schools, Islamic education does not only focus on religious knowledge, but also on developing values of tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding. Islamic boarding schools have a strategic role in shaping the character of the younger generation who are able to adapt to differences and build harmonious relationships between groups with different cultural backgrounds. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have successfully adapted to environmental changes, supported by the attention of society and government to the development of institutions. (Badrus Sholeh et. al., 2007).

Thus, the concept of community-based Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools needs to adopt a multicultural approach that is inclusive and adaptive to cultural diversity. This approach integrates the values of diversity and mutual respect in the curriculum, enabling students to understand, appreciate differences, and build empathy and tolerance. Thus, Islamic boarding schools not only produce pious individuals, but also agents of peace and tolerance in a pluralistic society.

However, despite its great potential, the implementation of a multicultural approach in the Islamic education curriculum in Islamic boarding schools still faces a

number of obstacles, such as limited resources, limited knowledge about multicultural education, and obstacles in integrating multicultural values into religious learning materials. Therefore, efforts are needed to design a curriculum that is responsive to diversity, with learning methods that promote intercultural dialogue, empathy, and social awareness.

In addition, according to Badrut Taman, curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools can be influenced by the power and authority structures in Islamic boarding schools which, in turn, support a more inclusive learning process and respect cultural diversity (Tamam, Badrut et al., 2021).

As is the case at the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School in Bontang City (Rosadi, Khumaini, 2024), it is one of the Islamic educational institutions that is committed to fostering a young generation with noble morals, a deep understanding of religion, and is ready to play a role in society. As an Islamic boarding school located amidst cultural and ethnic diversity in Bontang, Nurul Ihsan instills Islamic values with an inclusive approach, prioritizing tolerance and harmony between religions.

This Islamic boarding school does not only focus on Islamic religious education, (Mujamil Qomar, 2004), but also pays attention to general education so that students have broad insight and are ready to face global challenges. In addition, Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School integrates practical skills programs that are oriented towards empowering students so that they are able to face the challenges of the times.

According to (Zamroni et al, 2020), Islamic boarding schools have added value because they are able to integrate the advantages of the madrasah education system with the implementation of education in Islamic boarding schools. This Islamic boarding school-based education model is a form of Islamic education that combines two social systems, namely the typical social system of Islamic boarding schools and the social system that applies in schools. Furthermore, based on the results of research conducted by (Zamroni et al, 2022) in this modern era, Islamic boarding schools are considered necessary to empower the economy of Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding community. This also aims to increase awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship as an effort to reduce poverty. Islamic boarding schools can become centers of empowerment that not only teach religious knowledge, but also provide skills and economic opportunities for students and the surrounding community.

Based on the observation results, the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School is also active in various social activities involving the surrounding community, such as religious counseling, routine religious studies, and other social programs. This makes this Islamic boarding school not only a center for religious education, but also a pillar for strengthening solidarity and relations between residents.

This study aims to develop a community-based Islamic education curriculum with a multicultural approach at the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School. With a curriculum that integrates the principles of tolerance and diversity, it is hoped that this Islamic boarding school can play a more significant role in shaping the character of the young generation who have global insight, an open attitude, and the ability to appreciate differences. The main focus of this study is to examine the concept of curriculum development applied at the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School in Bontang City.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach (John Reswell, 2015), with a case study at the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School. The subjects of the study were students, teachers, and managers of the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School in Bontang City. In addition, the researcher used a phenomenological approach to collect data related to concepts, attitudes, opinions, and meanings given to situations or experiences in life. (Sukamdinata, 2013). Data were collected through interviews, participant observation, and curriculum documentation. Thematic analysis techniques were used to explore understanding of the application of multiculturalism in the curriculum and its

impact on the tolerance attitudes of students.

The case study approach is used to conduct a careful analysis of the object being studied (Suharsimi, 2006). According to Deddy Mulyana, a case study is a method that provides a comprehensive picture of various aspects that exist in a group, organization, or social situation, so that it can understand the context and dynamics that occur in more detail (Mulyana, 2004).

THEORETICAL STUDY

Before the 1960s, Islamic boarding school educational institutions in Indonesia were known as pondok, which refers to a dormitory for students or a simple bamboo residence, possibly derived from the Arabic word funduq which means hotel or dormitory. The term "pesantren" itself comes from the word "santri," which indicates the residence of students. Professor Johns argues that "santri" comes from Tamil which means a teacher of the Koran, while C.C. Berg associates this word with "shastri" in Indian, which means an expert in Hindu scriptures. Many experts argue that Islamic boarding schools have roots in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, which was adapted and Islamized by the kyai. Nevertheless, Islamic boarding schools remain original Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and play an important role in the development of culture and national life in Indonesia (Zamakhsyari Dhofier, 2011). Indonesia is a country with one of the largest populations in the world. As a pluralistic nation, Indonesia has a very rich diversity of ethnicities, tribes, religions, cultures, and customs. This diversity is a characteristic that enriches social and cultural life in Indonesia (Ali Maksum, 2011).

In addition, Islamic boarding schools as Islamic institutions have played an important role in Indonesian history, surviving amidst political and socio-economic changes. During the colonial era, Islamic boarding schools maintained the tradition of Islamic knowledge from the influence of Western colonialism. Islamic education reforms in the Middle East in the late 19th century influenced Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, which began to adopt the madrasah model by including non-Islamic subjects. After independence, Islamic boarding schools were integrated with the national education system, triggering curriculum adjustments. Despite the challenges, Islamic boarding schools continued to develop and contributed greatly to maintaining the tradition of Islamic education and producing scholars and community leaders (Falikul Isbah, 2020).

Islamic education through Islamic boarding schools has existed since before Indonesian independence and has survived to this day, although its structure has not changed much. As a traditional educational institution, Islamic boarding schools play an important role in the dissemination of religious knowledge and character formation. However, to face the challenges of globalization and the development of the times, modernization of Islamic boarding schools has become an urgent need. This process requires thinking that can integrate Islamic values with global progress. Closing oneself off from change can hinder development, while being open without proper selection risks eroding the noble values of Islamic boarding schools (Machali, et al., 2004). Therefore, the modernization of Islamic boarding schools must be carried out with a balanced approach, namely by critically absorbing the progress of civilization while maintaining the uniqueness and identity of Islamic education that it has.

In accordance with the idea above, community-based education, in a historical perspective, developed as an extension of school-based education with an emphasis on active community involvement in the education process (Umaedi, 2001). This model gives autonomy to schools, school residents, and communities to play a direct role in organizing education and improving its quality.

Community-based education is education that is designed, implemented, evaluated, and developed by the community, with the aim of answering challenges and utilizing opportunities in a particular community environment, and is oriented towards the future (Fasli Jalal, 2001).

Salahuddin Wahid emphasized that the development of Islamic boarding schools requires awareness of the identity of Islamic boarding schools through noble values, understanding of strengths and weaknesses, strengthening togetherness, and a

structured system to support character education (Salahudin Wahid, 2011). Meanwhile, Abuddin Nata argues that efforts to realize community-based Islamic education must be directed at strengthening social insight in addition to religious knowledge. Although the ideal goal of Islamic education includes community development, many educational institutions focus more on religious aspects without paying enough attention to social involvement. To overcome this, first, there needs to be a balanced understanding between *hablum minallah* (relationship with Allah) and *hablum minannas* (relationship with others) through teaching the Qur'an and hadith. Second, students must be given examples and direct practice in practicing Islamic social teachings, such as helping each other, respecting each other, tolerance, and protecting the environment. Third, social activities based on Islamic values, such as disaster management, cleanliness programs, and poverty eradication, can be integrated into a practical curriculum to form a generation that cares about society (Abuddin Nata, 2014).

Furthermore, according to Abuddin Nata, community-based Islamic education is a need that is recognized and protected by the national education system law. The relationship between society and education is reciprocal, functional, and symbiotic, where society influences education, and vice versa, education also influences society (Abuddin Nata, 2014).

According to Afif, the education system implemented in Islamic boarding schools is considered one of the best concepts. Some of the reasons underlying this statement include: 1) the number of Islamic boarding schools continues to grow and never decreases, 2) no Islamic boarding schools are closed due to students leaving, 3) Islamic boarding schools are able to adapt to changing times, 4) the charisma of their leaders is maintained, and 5) Islamic boarding schools are the main fortress in maintaining the nation's morals (Afif Hasan, 2011).

Furthermore, to support his theory and ideas, Afif Hasan cites the views of several scientists regarding the role of Islamic boarding schools. Horiko Horikoshi considers Islamic boarding schools as agents of social change, while Clifford Geertz views them as cultural brokers. Komaruddin Hidayat sees Islamic boarding schools as mediators between modern and traditional life, and Thoha Hamim considers Islamic boarding schools to function as regulators of unstable social conditions. Munandir Soelaiman and Atho' Mudzhar refer to Islamic boarding schools as stabilizers, with the role of the *kiyai* carried out based on the principle of stability and change (Afif Hasan, 2011).

The opinion above is in line with Amin Haedari's view that currently, the existence of Islamic boarding schools in facing modernization can be grouped into four categories. First, groups that are less responsive to change, because they are less aware of the extent of the quality of education being implemented. This group tends to dominate existing Islamic boarding schools. Second, there is a view that whatever is implemented in Islamic boarding schools is something positive and must be maintained without change. Third, there is a group that feels inferior to change, so they lose the opportunity to pursue progress. Fourth, the group of Islamic boarding schools that are more open and ready to make improvements and accept change. However, this last group is still relatively small in number (Amin Haedari, et al., 2004).

Furthermore, Amin Haedari has the idea that the main agenda that needs to be carried out by Islamic boarding schools is: (1) dismantling critical reasoning within the students, creating an atmosphere that allows them to introspect and criticize the external values that are accepted. (2) Professionalization of Islamic boarding school institutions, which means that the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools does not only depend on the lineage of the *kiai*, but also on his emotional and intellectual abilities. (3) Filtering the modernization agenda, so that Islamic boarding schools can choose wisely between the good and bad things from the development of the times (Amin Haedari, et al., 2004).

Omit Safi expressed a similar view to Amin Haedari, which reflects progressive Muslim thinking, namely by emphasizing the importance of involvement with tradition, the application of diverse criticisms of existing values, and openness to secondary sources of knowledge. This approach is in line with the need for Islamic boarding schools to dismantle critical reasoning, develop the professionalization of institutions, and sort and select elements in modernization that are in accordance with Islamic values (Omid Safi, 2003).

Thus, Islamic boarding schools can maintain their relevance and accountability in facing the challenges of the times.

One of the research results conducted by Sa'dullah which has been published in an international journal, states that Islamic boarding schools, beyond their traditional role in the context of religion, social, and morals, function as agents of social change that can improve the social status of students, especially for those who come from poor and disadvantaged families. Through education in Islamic boarding schools, students acquire social, intellectual, and spiritual competencies that enable them to return to society with a higher social status, such as becoming kiyayi, religious leaders, lecturers, or government officials (Sa'dullah Assa'idi, 2021).

In addition, Nilan has concluded the results of his research published in an article, that education in Islamic boarding schools can integrate religious learning with general knowledge, in order to produce Muslim individuals who are not only educated, but also pious and modern. As an educational institution that adapts to modernity, Islamic boarding schools do not solely rely on formal learning processes, but also play an important role in daily life through the practice of bio-power and pastoral power (See Pam Nilan, 2009).

Therefore, one of the institutional modernization efforts, the application of the multicultural concept (See Mundzier Suparta, 2008), in Islamic boarding schools is very important to create an inclusive and harmonious educational environment. By integrating multicultural values into the curriculum, Islamic boarding schools can instill an attitude of tolerance, mutual respect, and appreciation of differences, as well as form the character of students who are open and able to adapt in a pluralistic society. This approach also strengthens the role of Islamic boarding schools as agents of peace in social diversity..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Multicultural Curriculum at Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School

How do Islamic boarding schools implement the values of tolerance and diversity in their curriculum and learning activities?

Tolerance-Based Learning Materials

In this Islamic boarding school, the curriculum includes subjects such as Fiqhi, Tilawah kitab kuning, Public speaking, and Lectures, as well as Barzanji lessons that are taught with an inclusive approach, introducing students to Islamic teachings that prioritize the principle of rahmatan lil alamin (Islam as a blessing for all nature).

Social Activities that Increase Understanding of Diversity

Social programs, such as community involvement around the Islamic boarding school, serve as a forum for students to interact with individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. With students from various regions and levels of education (Kindergarten, Elementary School, to College), the learning environment at the Islamic boarding school will become more multicultural.

2. Democratic Multicultural Approach in Curriculum

What are the programs or activities in Islamic boarding schools that aim to teach students about the importance of respecting differences?

Based on information from the Supervisor and Caretaker of the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School, implementing a democratic approach is what differentiates it from learning conditions in Islamic boarding schools in general. There are at least two implementation concepts that have been carried out:

a. Digital Approach and Weekly Programs

Internet facilities and weekly “ngopi” or discussion programs at the pesantren cafe create a democratic environment that encourages students to speak freely

and share their perspectives. This approach strengthens respect for different opinions.

b. Watching Together and Scouting Activities as Social Learning
Through activities such as watching together and scouting, students learn to work together and understand the values held by other groups.

3. Impact of Multicultural Curriculum on the Tolerance Attitudes of Students

How do Islamic boarding schools view the impact of this multicultural approach on the attitudes and behavior of students in interacting with others from different backgrounds?

According to Abdullah (Student), a student at the Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School, in an interview conducted on November 12, 2024, education in Islamic boarding schools does not only cover religious knowledge, but also builds discipline and good character. The impacts felt by students include:

- a. Increasing open and tolerant attitudes
The implementation of a multiculturalism-based curriculum has been proven to be able to increase open attitudes among students. They become more aware of diversity and have a more tolerant attitude.
- b. Preventing ethnic and cultural conflicts.
The existence of a multicultural program integrated into the curriculum helps reduce friction that may arise due to differences in ethnicity or background.

CONCLUSION

Nurul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School has implemented the principles of multiculturalism in its curriculum. With a digital approach and interactive programs, this Islamic boarding school creates a conducive environment to foster tolerance among students. The development of a curriculum that introduces students to various perspectives and cultures allows them to better appreciate diversity, especially in the community environment in the Islamic boarding school in the city of Bontang.

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