
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT PESANTREN

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) conducts extra-curricular activities (ECAs) and how *pesantren* promotes multicultural education for students through ECAs. *Pesantren* is portrayed as an exclusive educational institution that creates a generation of radical and intolerant Muslims. However, this study describes how one *pesantren* in Indonesia has carried out and substantially supported the implementation of multicultural education among students through ECAs. The *pesantren* has made a valuable effort to promote the recognition, understanding, and awareness of Indonesian SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-golongan*/ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-groups) issues. This qualitative study involved in-depth interviews with *Kyai* (top leader/principal), ECA teachers, and students. The study also observed the various ECAs at *Pesantren Assalaam*, and students completed a questionnaire. *Pesantren Assalaam* structures its ECAs to instil knowledge of, provide a supportive environment for, and help students experience the cultural diversity of the country. The school focuses on awareness of the relationship among various ethnicities, religions, and local cultures. Students are inculcated with the fundamental values of multicultural education, such as tolerance, respect, togetherness, and appreciation. This study proposes a model of multicultural education implementation for *pesantren*.

Keywords: multicultural education; *pesantren*; extra-curricular activities; multicultural values; Indonesia

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana *pesantren* melakukan kegiatan ekstra kurikuler (ECA) dan bagaimana *pesantren* mempromosikan pendidikan multikultural untuk siswa melalui ECA. *Pesantren* digambarkan sebagai lembaga pendidikan eksklusif yang menciptakan generasi Muslim radikal dan tidak toleran. Namun, penelitian ini menggambarkan bagaimana satu *pesantren* di Indonesia telah melaksanakan dan secara substansial mendukung implementasi pendidikan multikultural di kalangan siswa melalui ECA. *Pesantren* telah melakukan upaya yang berharga untuk mempromosikan pengakuan, pemahaman, dan kesadaran SARA Indonesia (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-golongan / etnis, agama, ras, dan antar kelompok*). Studi kualitatif ini melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan *Kyai* (pemimpin puncak/kepala sekolah), guru ECA, dan siswa. Studi ini juga mengamati berbagai ECA di *Pesantren Assalaam*, dan siswa menyelesaikan kuesioner. *Pesantren Assalaam* menyusun ECA-nya untuk menanamkan pengetahuan tentang, menyediakan lingkungan yang mendukung, dan membantu siswa mengalami keanekaragaman budaya negara. Sekolah ini berfokus pada kesadaran akan hubungan antara berbagai etnis, agama, dan budaya lokal. Siswa ditanamkan dengan nilai-nilai dasar pendidikan multikultural, seperti toleransi, rasa hormat, kebersamaan, dan penghargaan. Studi ini mengusulkan model implementasi pendidikan multikultural untuk *pesantren*.

Kata kunci: pendidikan multikultural; *pesantren*; kegiatan ekstrakurikuler; nilai-nilai multikultural; Indonesia

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Introduction

Indonesia has hundreds of ethnicities, races, religions, and local cultures. As such, this archipelago is a notably multicultural country. However, this country has recently experienced the challenges of cultural conflicts and violence, especially in relation to ethnicity, religion, and inter-groups (Klinken, 2007). Indeed, the differences between *SARA* (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-golongan*/ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-groups) are sensitive cultural issues in Indonesia (Hoon, 2017). In order to prevent multicultural schisms, the Indonesian government has introduced policies to promote the recognition and understanding of cultural diversity (Rahman and Kusakabe, 2018). One example is the amendment of the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945/*Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*) that mandated that all Indonesian citizens benefit from education, regardless of ethnicities and religious backgrounds. The amendment also asserted that the state must respect and maintain *SARA* to enrich the national cultural identity. This effort is commonly promoted through *pendidikan multikultural* (multicultural education) and learning about cultural diversity in Indonesia.

The introduction of *pendidikan multikultural* in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) is essential to ending the recent and the latent cultural conflicts in Indonesia. Al-Qurtuby (2013) notes the serial religious conflicts in Ambon in 1999 and 2011 with hundreds of casualties and substantial material damage. In addition, a large crowd of Muslims demonstrated in Jakarta to reject a non-Muslim Chinese candidate for the 2018 gubernatorial election, causing his loss (*Kompas*, 2018). Some *pesantren* activists have played a leading role in these tragedies. As a result, the wider community considers *pesantren* to be schools of intolerance and places that spread radicalism among Muslim groups (Wildan, 2008).

However, *pesantren* has long been known as places to educate and nurture pupils with significant multicultural values, such as tolerating other religions, respecting ethnic diversity, upholding equality and justice, and appreciating local cultural differences (Raihani, 2012). *Pesantren* infuses multicultural educational values in the formal and informal curricula. The formal curriculum consists of national and *pesantren* subjects taught in the classroom, whereas the informal curriculum typically manifests in extra-curricular activities (ECAs) after school (Raihani, 2014).

The Indonesian government pays serious attention to ECAs, as they are one of the key factors in creating a broad-minded and socially skilled young generation. The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) introduced Decree No. 39 in 2008 and Decree No. 63 in 2014, which require student organizations and student scouting as compulsory ECAs in the country's schools, including *pesantren* (MoEC, 2012).

A plethora of studies have discussed how *pesantren* promotes the empowerment of civil society (Lukens-Bull, 2005), proselytizes moderate Islam (Zuhdi, 2018), carries out multiculturalism (Faoziah *et al.*, 2016), advocate cultural diversity education (Raihani 2014), and promote ECAs to develop students' life skills and leadership (Tan, 2014). However, there is a lack of ECA studies in *pesantren* to support students' recognition and understanding of *SARA* with a focus on relationships among ethnicities, religions, and local cultures. This study will be guided by questions about why ECAs exist in *pesantren*, how ECAs in *pesantren* are conducted, and how ECAs promote multicultural education for students. In doing so, Indonesia's diverse ethnicities, religions, inter-groups and local cultures will be described, and multicultural values will be explored to

identify the implementation of multicultural education through ECAs in *pesantren*.

***Pesantren*, National Education, and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia**

Pesantren is a popular term for *pondok pesantren*, which is an Islamic boarding school that is prevalent in Indonesia. *Pondok* is derived from the Arabic word *funduq* (dormitory) (Izfanna and Hisyam, 2012), and *pesantren* comes from the Sanskrit word *sasthri* (student) (Nor and Malim, 2014). Initially, *pesantren* was intended to teach, convey and transfer Islamic knowledge to Muslims (Azra, 2012). Madjid and Bruinessen assert that *pesantren* are the oldest and most genuine Islamic educational system in Indonesia (Madjid, 1997). *Pesantren* have five essential elements: the *Kyai* (principal), mosque, *kitab kuning*, *santri*, and dormitory. The *Kyai* is a leader in religious, educational, and management activities. The mosque is a central place for learning religion and knowledge, and the *kitab kuning*, or classic Islamic-Arabic books, are the primary Islamic knowledge sources. The *santri* is the person who wants to study, and the dormitory is the place where students live during their study period (Dhofier, 1999).

Pesantren has existed in Indonesia since the 18th century. However, they were not recognized by the national education system until 2003 because *pesantren* were perceived as religious schools that were incompatible with Indonesia's secular education policy. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) Decree No. 20 Article 30 of 2003, *pesantren* are now officially recognized as part of the national education system and are managed under this ministry, while the MoEC controls the public schools. Since then, an increasing number of people have been sending their children to study at, currently, more than 28,000 *pesantren* (MoRA, 2009). In addition, the term *pesantren* has become more widely known throughout the

nation than have other local terms for Islamic boarding schools, such as *dayah* in Aceh, *surau* in West Sumatra, and *pondok* in the Malay Peninsula (Azra, 2012).

In addition to disseminating Islamic knowledge through *pesantren* subjects, current *pesantren* has flourished into modern Islamic schools that also teach secular knowledge in nationally required subjects such as biology, mathematics, and English (Azra, 2012). The Islamic and secular educational systems aim to create good young Muslims, both intellectually and morally (Izfanna and Hisyam, 2012). The intellectual dimension includes cognitive abilities in both Islamic and secular subjects that help students adapt to the changing world. The moral dimension includes social virtues such as tolerance and an attitude of justice that guide students to live in harmony with wider and diverse global communities and cultures (Madjid, 1997). To achieve this goal, *pesantren* provide a conducive environment and allocate ample time for study. The students stay on campus 24 hours a day, in contrast to common public schools that usually run from 7 am to 2 pm. Students study and practise Islamic and secular knowledge through formal classroom curricula and through ECAs after school.

Regarding *pesantren* awareness of Indonesian cultural diversity, at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Muslim clerics meeting in 2016, the Vice President of Indonesia, Jusuf Kalla, said that *pesantren* play an essential role in promoting a moderate Islam that appreciates Indonesia's diverse cultures. For him, Islam is a peaceful and tolerant religion that recognizes cultural diversity. Furthermore, he also advised the *pesantren* network to become involved in preventing the escalation of religious terrorism and radicalism in the region. On the same occasion, the Minister of MoRA appealed to the audience for the empowerment of moderate Islam and its implementation in the

ASEAN to fight religious violence (*Tempo*, 2016). Therefore, the *pesantren* network must take the first step towards achieving this vision. In this light, ECAs in *pesantren* should play a crucial role in implementing multicultural education.

ECAs and Multicultural Education Discourse in *Pesantren*

Bartkus and colleagues (2012) indicate that ECAs comprises both formal and informal voluntary activities in academia. They neither follow formal curricula nor include student grades. ECAs provide some advantages in enhancing student achievement, reducing the number of students dropping out of school (Massoni, 2011), and preventing conflict among students (Bickmore, 1997). Within the context of cultural diversity, ECAs provide students with practical social interaction skills, such as collaboration, togetherness, respect, awareness and teamwork, which typically go unnoticed in classroom teaching (Lunenburg, 2010). ECAs can also build good character, attitudes, and behaviours, such as selflessness, sportsmanship, teamwork, friendship, and mutual respect of others (Bickmore, 2005). These values are crucial as the foundation for developing cultural diversity awareness in a culturally diverse country.

The Hong Kong government (1993) proposed three main steps to ECA success: identifying students' interests and talents, training and coaching, and practice and implementation. Students' interest and talents are determined by teachers observing and considering students' desire for preferred ECAs. Training and coaching are the simultaneous delivery and exercise of knowledge in a chosen ECA. Practice and implementation come from experiencing the ability of ECAs to increase students' self-confidence and promote an honest, fair, respectful, and democratic spirit.

Originating in the 19th century in the United States of America (USA), ECAs are currently favoured by many schools throughout the world (Massoni, 2011). Among the most popular ECAs are sports clubs, art and music groups, Red Cross Youth, student organizations, Scouts, and myriad cultural activities. Numerous ECAs are also offered in Indonesian schools. Student organizations and scouting are the most popular ECAs in Indonesia since the government considers them mandatory activities in public and private schools. By requiring these two types of ECAs, the Indonesian government intends to build healthy bodies and social life skills for its youth.

ECAs can also be found in *pesantren*. In addition to formally studying national and *pesantren* curricula in the classroom, *pesantren* students are involved in many kinds of ECAs, which include sports clubs, musical bands, art, and journalistic circles. In fact, one of the significant advantages of the *pesantren* educational system is its embrace of ECAs. Through ECAs, various life skill values, such as social interaction, independent attitude, community networking, teamwork, and character building, are inculcated in *pesantren* students (Azra, 2012). This process familiarizes them with the principles of tolerance, respect, togetherness, and social life attitudes. In this regard, ECAs educate students to comprehend, nurture, and engage with multicultural lifestyles.

Begun in the 1960s in the USA, multicultural education promotes the acknowledgement of cultural differences and the respect and equality of all students, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, culture, and language (Banks, 1993). This venture was meant to push student academic achievement to the fullest because in multicultural education, the school stakeholders appreciate, respect, and upholds cultural diversity and tolerance (Banks, 1997). Banks introduces five dimensions for success in

the implementation of multicultural education in a school: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowerment school environment (Banks, 2009). Content integration advises that subjects taught in such schools should contain cultural aspects from students' varying cultural backgrounds. While knowledge construction requires knowledge of the curriculum subjects that considers the pupils' different cultural understandings, equity pedagogy instructs teachers to develop an awareness of students' cultural diversity when delivering subject material. Prejudice reduction requires that the school community avoid undermining other cultures during learning activities. In addition, an empowering school culture stipulates that all school stakeholders must promote multicultural values both within and outside the school environment for multicultural education to flourish. Banks (2010) and Bennett (1990) argue that implementing and developing multicultural education will work effectively through a comprehensive approach during both in-school and after-school learning. Similarly, Raihani recommends a whole-school approach through curricular subject teaching in the classroom and ECAs outside school time (Raihani, 2012).

In the Indonesian context, the role of schools in promoting the recognition and understanding of cultural diversity is defined in the National Constitution of UUD 1945 and the new National Education Act of 2003. Both policies highlight the strong appeal to young generations to become aware of the country's enormous range of cultures. In general, schools must commit to nurturing Indonesian 'unity in diversity'. Hanurawan and Waterworth (1997) and Rachmawati *et al.* (2014) also note how crucial it is to infuse multicultural education values into schools to prevent the potential threat of SARA schisms.

In addition to civil society empowerment and the freedom of expression (Sirry, 2010), the role of *pesantren* in advancing Indonesian cultural diversity includes the recognition and understanding of the country's SARA issues (Faoziah *et al.*, 2016). As these issues play an essential role in determining the harmony of Indonesian lives, MoRA Minister suggested that *pesantren* students could also participate in managing such issues (*the Jakarta Post* 2018). Some recent cultural and religious conflicts and violence in Indonesia were caused by a lack of recognition and understanding of issues related to ethnic, religious/belief-related and local cultural diversity. Ethnicities comprise hundreds of different social groups from various tribal regions. Meanwhile, the government officially acknowledges six religions, Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism; in addition, there are hundreds of local beliefs and faiths. Moreover, local cultures embrace hundreds of different types of folk songs, folklores, and local dances and customs.

Method

To explore the implementation of multicultural education through ECAs, this research uses a qualitative method and employs a case-study approach to investigate the practices of ECAs in *pesantren*. To obtain the information needed, an extensive study focusing on ECAs and their relationship to ethnic, religious, and local cultural diversity was carried out in *Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam* (Pesantren Assalaam hereafter), Solo, Central Java, Indonesia, in April 2017 and June 2018.

In-depth interviews (pseudonyms are used to protect respondents' identity) were conducted with three teachers who manage and coach ECAs; the *Kyai*, as the top leader; and 19 senior high-school students. Fifty senior-high-school students were also chosen to fill out the

questionnaire. The questions involved the planning, training, and practice of ECAs related to the implementation of cultural diversity values awareness, particularly in relation to ethnicities, religions, and local cultures. In addition, this study enriched the data with an analysis of *pesantren* documents. Interview and questionnaire materials are in Indonesian to ease respondents' understanding. The collected data, then, translated into English.

Results and Discussion

This study discusses how *pesantren* thoroughly implement and manage multicultural education among students through ECAs, specifically in Pesantren Assalaam, Solo, Central Java, Indonesia. Pesantren Assalaam (an Arabic word meaning peace) articulated its vision of proselytizing for peaceful relationships among the three prominent parties in the archipelago: Muslims, the government, and Indonesian citizens/all humankind. The school's motto embraces standing with and for all Muslims, regardless of their Islamic organizational background.

Established in 1982 and one of the current foremost *pesantren* in Indonesia, Pesantren Assalaam has more than 2,200 male and female junior and senior-high-school students aged between 12 and 17 years living in the 10 ha campus area. They come from 34 provinces across Indonesia and are characterized by different ethnicities, cultures, local languages, and Islamic organizational backgrounds. The school reflects in miniature the various groups of Indonesian society. In addition, this boarding school practices numerous ECAs. Given its characteristics, Pesantren Assalaam is a reasonable site at which to research multicultural education implementation through ECAs.

Compared to ECAs in public schools, there are two salient characteristics of ECAs in

Pesantren Assalaam. First, they are allotted more time, and second, they include various types and locations of ECAs. As the students stay on campus 24 hours a day, they can participate in ECAs in the morning before school and in the afternoon and evening after their classroom studies. In contrast, public schools usually have time to practise ECAs only in the afternoon after the school period. A large number of ECAs are offered at the boarding school, ranging from martial arts, multilevel student organizations, various music groups, and several sports clubs to journalistic and publication clubs. Pesantren Assalaam also has various facilities for practising ECAs, including mosques, dormitories, and campus halls. On the contrary, public schools infrequently offer such a wide range of ECAs or own such kinds of facilities. ECAs in Pesantren Assalaam are directed towards building two essential aspects in students: the physical and the social. The physical aspect includes the building of a healthy body and mind, while the social aspect covers the teaching of cultural diversity interactions in the broader community. In this light, Pesantren Assalaam includes pivotal elements in its ECAs intended to nurture harmonious relationships among different ethnicities, religions, and local cultures. This social aspect includes the philosophical background, implementation steps, and essential values of multicultural education.

Philosophical background

Based on school documents, the philosophy behind the ECAs at Pesantren Assalaam is derived from the school's founding motto, which is to spread Islamic and secular knowledge in a peaceful atmosphere within a context of Indonesian cultural diversity. Therefore, Pesantren Assalaam uses integrative teaching in both the classroom and non-classroom curricula to disseminate both types of knowledge. Included in this curriculum are national subjects that cover Indonesia's infusion of cultural

diversity. The teachers revealed that in classroom learning, they are merely following the national curriculum. A few subjects in this curriculum, such as *Kewarganegaraan* (civic education), sociology, and national history, introduce the enormous cultural heritage of Indonesia, such as the various tribes and ethnicities, religious and local belief systems, and local/traditional cultures, including dances and songs. One teacher, Siti aged 43, explained:

‘In national subjects like *PKN* (*Kewarganegaraan*), diverse Indonesian cultures are introduced to the students. The teachers just follow the instructional curriculum from the government’.

In the non-classroom activities, the teachers design the particular implementation of ECAs intended to participate in addressing *SARA* issues. Regarding the ideas behind ECAs and their promotion of *SARA* awareness, the *Kyai* describes how ECAs are essential in creating a young Muslim generation that is able to communicate and interact with diverse global communities:

‘ECAs are a very important element, as they are one of the teaching methods in this boarding school. We can instil “the peaceful spirit of Pesantren Assalaam” in the students through ECAs, as there are many significant values within it, such as tolerance, respect, togetherness, and appreciation, and soon. As a result, hopefully, the students will absorb enough social life skills to live in the broader and many communities when they graduate from Pesantren Assalaam’.

Given this answer, and considering previous descriptions of the Pesantren Assalaam, it seems that the ECAs in Pesantren Assalaam are designed to inculcate multicultural values such as tolerance, respect, togetherness, and appreciation, which are pivotal to culturally diverse relationships.

Implementation steps

In addition to organizing and scouting students in the ECAs mandated by the government, Pesantren Assalaam manages other kinds of ECAs, such as soccer, basketball, badminton, table tennis, futsal, general athletics, swimming, martial arts, art and music groups, journalistic clubs, community service, and youth Red Cross. The student organization manages these ECAs under the supervision of staff advisors.

Kholis, one of the ECA teachers aged 50, said that three stages are involved in running ECAs at Pesantren Assalaam: acknowledgement, practice and observation, and evaluation, hereafter APE:

‘To conduct ECAs, after the students have selected their preferred ECA. First the ECA teachers comprehensively acquaint them with the goal of an ECA. Second, the ECA teachers will conduct the ECA exercise and observe all matters related to the exercise, such as the rules, the values inculcated, and students’ talent and skill. Finally, the ECA teacher and the students meet together to evaluate the practised ECA. At this time, overall instruction, feedback, and suggestion are given to the students’.

The further elucidation of the APE process is as follows:

Acknowledgement

In this step, the ECA teachers introduce the primary goal and moral values behind each ECA. The students further explore the philosophy of the ECA they chose and discuss it with colleagues. This approach allows students to understand why and how the ECA in which they are involved is beneficial to them. For instance, Budi, the teacher of the journalistic club ‘Karnisa’, states that the club members learn about the

importance of the principle of ‘covering both sides’ in journalism before presenting opinions, data or information in their articles. Students must consider objectivity and fairness in writing. By covering both sides, Pesantren Assalaam will always take a neutral position and reflect the vision of a moderate Islamic boarding school. In addition, objective writing can, to a certain extent, avoid offending others.

“The principle of “covering both sides” in the journalism club is essential. By mastering this fundamental value, the students will be able to judge an issue fairly’.

A common reason for students to join ECAs, as revealed in the questionnaire, is to become young Muslims who possess healthy bodies and are skilful in social interactions. The students confidently state that by achieving these conditions, they will participate fully in maintaining a peaceful life that embraces the country’s cultural diversity.

As the author directly witnessed, limited dialogue occurred between the students and teachers in the acknowledgement step of some ECA practices. The teacher taught the ECA materials using a monologue style without confirming the students’ understanding, particularly that relating to multicultural matters. This style rose the question of whether the students understand the material their instructors deliver. Given this situation, it seems difficult to measure the extent to which the students become proficient in the multicultural values delivered through such instruction.

Pesantren Assalaam categorizes ECAs in six groups as follows:

- a. Sports clubs, including general athletics, volleyball, basketball, badminton, swimming, futsal, soccer/football, ping pong/table tennis, handball, Indonesian baseball, and wall climbing.
- b. Martial arts clubs, which comprise karate, Tae Kwon Do, the Indonesian martial arts of *pencak silat*, and *aikido*.
- c. Art and music groups, consisting of a traditional Islamic choir called *marawis*, a student choir, band club, marching band, and various traditional and modern dances.
- d. Talents and scouting, which encompasses scouting, *Qur’an* (holy book) memorization club, economic cooperation, journalism, and mountaineering.
- e. Student organizations, including a consulate organization that groups students based on ethnicity and province; classroom organizations; room and dormitory organizations; and so on. These organizations are administered under the overarching student organization called OP3MIA (*Organisasi Santri Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam*, or Student Organization of the Assalaam Islamic Modern Boarding School).
- f. Student exchange programmes, which cover local, regional, and overseas student exchange programmes to enhance students’ insight into the broader cultural diversity around the world. These programmes include Japan Overseas Study (JOS), social

charity, and religious assistance for various Muslim communities.

Practice and Observation

After gaining sufficient philosophical knowledge of the chosen ECAs, the students put this understanding into practice. Each ECA has a specific time slot once a week outside classroom learning activities. Pesantren Assalaam has a modern, large, and well-stocked gym at the centre of the school campus, making it an appropriate venue for ECA practices. In addition, it has a large mosque with stunning architecture where the students participate in religious ECAs such as the *Qur'an* memorization club.

The ECA teachers supervise the students in operating their ECAs. They observe the ECA practices and assist the students with appropriate support where necessary, such as making sure the correct ECA rules are implemented, mediating between students during 'conflicts' that arise during ECA practices, and acting as an example of what is appropriate in certain ECAs. Through this regular practice, the teachers also observe students in specific ECAs who have the potential to be promoted to a higher level of practice. These students will usually represent Pesantren Assalaam in competitions or in performing in wider ECA communities at the local, regional, and national levels. In the most competitive ECAs in Indonesia, such as sports, martial arts, scouting, and cultural performances, the students learn multicultural values such the importance and meaning of tolerance, togetherness, respect, and appreciation. This education occurs because, at this level, the students will meet and interact with many people from different cultural backgrounds.

Evaluation

As part of the observations conducted in this research, the author inspected the ECA teachers and students completed a brief evaluation at the end of the practice session for their respective ECA. The teachers focused primarily on how the students absorbed the moral values from the ECAs in relation to multicultural education values. The teachers emphasized to the students the appreciation and importance of teamwork, fairness, following rules, respect, and selflessness. These values are among the multiple moral values that are essential to developing the recognition and understanding of cultural diversity. For instance, in the OP3MIA, there is a group of students called receptionists, whose duty is to welcome and entertain various school guests, particularly prominent persons. The students are instructed to show full respect, service, and politeness and to welcome all guests regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or cultural background. Each year, Pesantren Assalaam has a wide variety of guests, including the US Ambassador in 2017 (*Antaraneews* 2017) and other important people, such as government and non-Muslim leaders. Kholis said:

'In ECAs, we teach the students and give them experience in how to collaborate as a team, manage good teamwork as well as respect the rules and fairness. These are very important for them as a provision for living in the reality of cultural differences out there. Thus, Pesantren Assalaam alumni will be able to promote and disseminate a harmonious life in Indonesia. It is in line with the name of this boarding school vision, which is to endorse a peaceful Indonesia'.

The teacher indicated in the above statement that numerous ECAs in Pesantren Assalaam incorporate the theory and practice of the significant values of teamwork, cooperation, fairness, and respect of others. By implementing this method, the school expects that the students will develop a habit of multicultural awareness in their social lives. For example, through art and music clubs, the students explore not only the motions and rhythms of numerous types of local music and dance but also the richness of such cultural heritage, particularly their philosophies, meanings, and values. Therefore, the students learn to appreciate these traditions.

The essential values of multicultural education

To succeed an implementation of a new program effectively, Kielblock (2015) suggests that the new program needs to be adapted to the existing curriculum and be different from the previous traditional style. Pesantren Assalaam proposed contemporary and creative style ECAs with the essential multicultural values such as tolerance, respect, togetherness, and appreciation that underpin multicultural education, particularly towards ethnic, religious, and local cultural diversity understanding. To highlight its findings, this study examines these values and their implementation in the certain ECAs such as student organization, home stay, JOS, and *Mahakarsa* art performance as follows:

Student Organization and Ethnic Diversity Respect

Student organization is an example of a pivotal ECA in *pesantren* that plays a significant role in disseminating the knowledge and awareness of Indonesian ethnic diversity among students. At Pesantren Assalaam, OP3MIA is responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of

students, including awaking students from their night sleep in the dawn, ordering them to pray to the mosque five times a day, instructing them to go to school, monitoring numerous ECAs, and so forth. Even though all students are Muslims, they originated from the wide range of ethnicities backgrounds, including from such places as Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Papua, and Sulawesi. Thus, numerous assignments OP3MIA possess are sensitive task as involving all ethnicities with different characters. In their duties, the OP3MIA officials have to minimize ethnic conflicts and clashes. For this sake, some rules and regulations are administered to support this organization. The OP3MIA also encourages students to practise great respect for and togetherness with others in their daily lives in classrooms, dormitories, and other school areas. It is in accordance with the *Kyai's* comment:

‘OP3MIA controls the ECAs among the students, including regulating and running the students’ life harmony in the dormitories, mosques, and campus area. Of course this work is under the teachers’ council supervision’.

The OP3MIA officials consist primarily of all highest level of XII grade students. The role of OP3MIA is to manage and control ECAs at the lower grade of students. When the XII grade graduated, the next OP3MIA leadership will be passed on to the XI grade students.

This activity is routinely carried out on the daily basis and, therefore, performs a hidden curriculum. As a result, the OP3MIA officials and student members gradually internalize the values of respect, tolerance, and sympathy for other ethnic groups.

Student Organization, Home Stay, JOS and Various Religions Tolerance

In term of internal faiths, students and teachers of Pesantren Assalaam are affiliated with various Muslims sects, including *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* organizations. The tension normally rises in the different way in which they pray daily; whether practicing *Qunut* (certain prayer) in the dawn prayer, using one or two *adzan* (calling for prayer) on Friday congregation and so on. In this case, a group of students in the section “*Tarbiyah wa ta’lim*” (religious education and learning) of the student organization draw up a prayer leadership schedule to accommodate every students and teachers sect. In addition, the teacher urges students to maintain their brotherhood as Muslims above their sects and organizations. It is true that some Muslims do not even say *Salam* (Islamic greetings) to their fellow Muslims because of their different sects. Thus, to further extent, how can they tolerate non-Muslims in the broader multicultural community of Indonesia? This solution generally overcomes the tension and habituates them to the numerous Muslims opinions. Eventually, the *pesantren* community appreciate, tolerate, and respect their internal differences.

In the case of the non-Muslim relationship, Pesantren Assalaam participated in interfaith dialogue activities. This program is occasionally held both inside and outside *pesantren* and is attended by the students and teachers as a delegation. Although this is an uncommon program for *pesantren*, Pesantren Assalaam prefers to take part in this sensitive event to promote religious tolerance. The selected students are usually involved both as part of the organizing committee and as participants. The aim of this activity is to share knowledge of religion among students.

The most important thing is to recognize the sensitive aspects of each religion that need to be avoided in public interaction.

The interfaith dialogues will enable the students to understand, tolerate, and appreciate other religions, and increase their empathy for minority groups. Abdullah, a student aged 17 who participated in this event, revealed:

‘For the first time I met directly with a Buddhist Monk in the interfaith event at Pesantren Assalaam. It was great’.

Other ECA, for example, those participating in community service, such as the homestay programme in rural and remote areas, offer students a precious opportunity to meet followers of other religions, especially when there is a social charity programme that involves other students outside the *pesantren*. Students communicate and interact intensively each other for a few days. During this kind of event, the students experience the meaning of respect, tolerance, and fairness through direct interactions with people with different beliefs. Wati, a female student aged 16, who was involved in this programme, expressed the following:

‘By participating in the homestay programme, I met people with various characteristics. I even stayed with a colleague who is a Christian. Initially, it was like an awkward situation to communicate each other, but finally everything was fine’.

The paramount ECA designed for the purpose of religious diversity tolerance infusion is the annual student exchange, namely Japan Overseas Study (JOS). It is an exchange program for two weeks in Japan. The students explored four cities: Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, and Kobe. Besides visiting some mosques in these cities, they met their

colleagues at Ibaraki Senior High School in Osaka. The students discussed and shared the learning process of the Japanese students in the classroom and in the ECAs. The students of Pesantren Assalaam also performed traditional Indonesian dances, such as *Saman* from Aceh. Likewise, Japanese students showed their traditional dances.

The students participating in the JOS will observe and rapidly expand their knowledge of Japan's traditional Buddhist and Shinto cultures and modern technology. One female JOS participant, Dewi aged 17, expressed that learning about other religions and traditions in other countries contributed to her awareness of religious tolerance and appreciation of local cultures:

‘To know and meet other people with different religions and cultures is wonderful. My belief in respecting and fostering religious tolerance is increasing. Religious diversity is not only in Indonesia but also in global life. We have to promote coexistence in life without losing our Islamic identity’.

As this statement and others reflect, the exchange programme provides significantly broader insights for the participating students into the crucial role of religious tolerance and respectful of minorities. They also realized that if the Islamic people have the same views of hatred and hostility towards different groups, harmonious life could not be accomplished in Indonesia and elsewhere.

Mahakarsa Art Performance and Local Cultures Appreciation

Included in the primary function of ECAs at Pesantren Assalaam is fostering the students' appreciation of the enormous variety of local/traditional cultures. The ECA in the arts and music groups help with this duty. Fortnightly, the students take part in

this activity coach and practice various local/traditional cultures from all over Indonesia. They usually choose one of the most famous traditional songs or dances. In addition, the students practice Islamic music and dance, such as *marawis* and *qasidah*.

The students put on a spectacular and engaging cultural art and theatrical performance called *Mahakarsa*, an acronym for *Maha Karya Santri Assalaam* (Assalaam Students Masterpiece) (Assalaam, 2018), as a tribute to the Indonesian cultural appreciation every year. Many kinds of local Indonesian dances and songs, such as the *Saman* dance of Aceh, the *Reog* dance of Ponorogo East Java, pantomimes, and modern dances alongside Islamic cultural arts such as *marawis* percussion and beautiful recitation of the *Qur'an*, are performed. This performance is open to the surrounding neighbourhood and the general public. Through this annual event, the students directly experience and immerse themselves in being the guardians of local Indonesian local cultures.

Forty-five students stated in the questionnaires that their experience with the *Mahakarsa* performance helped them understand and provided them with deep insight into how wide-ranging the various local cultures of Indonesia are. In addition, students stated that they were aware that the sustainability of these cultures is dependent on their appreciation of these cultures. Hence, this study concludes that the level of appreciation that these students have for the numerous local cultures of Indonesia is obviously high.

The illustration of the overall framework of multicultural education implementation at Pesantren Assalaam through ECAs is summarized in the table 1.

Table 1. The scheme for implementing multicultural education in Pesantren Assalaam through ECAs to address SARA issues

No.	Essential element	Influential factor	Application and experience	Multicultural values goal
1.	Philosophical foundation	Vision: Disseminating moderate Islam Motto: Stand with and for all Muslims	Promoting peace among three parties: Muslims, the government, and all of humankind Providing an adequate school environment with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-ethnic Muslim students Representative school facilities for ECAs 	Instilling basic the multicultural values of tolerance, respect, togetherness, and appreciation
2.	Implementation steps	APE methods: Acknowledgement Practice and observation Evaluation	Acknowledge the philosophical values of cultural diversity in ECAs Participating in ECAs under the supervision of ECA teachers Delivering feedback and advice on multicultural values in the practice of ECAs	Habituating and internalizing the multicultural values of tolerance, respect, togetherness, and appreciation
3.	SARA issues	Ethnic diversity Various religions Local cultures	Managing multi-ethnic students in student organizations in a peaceful and coexisting way of life Organizing and participating in inter-religious events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-faith dialogue and welcoming non-Muslim guests (in the student organizations) Local and regional competitions (sports clubs and scouting) Community service (youth Red Cross) Student Exchange Programme (JOS, homestay) Art and cultural performances (Mahakarsa Annual Music and Art Performance)	Inculcating respect and togetherness Instilling tolerance and respect Infusing togetherness and appreciation

Source: Compiled by authors

Lessons from the Implementation of Multicultural Education through ECAs at Pesantren Assalaam

As described throughout this article, Pesantren Assalaam has developed a model to implement multicultural education through ECAs. To improve this practice, there are both positive and negative sides to be considered. Positively, this *pesantren* has clearly and consistently promoted the teaching of Indonesian cultural diversity understanding in its learning curriculum, including ECAs. In line with this finding, Ricklefs (2012) claims that Pesantren Assalaam was established to combat extremism among Islamic organizations in Solo

and that it emphasizes moderate Islam in its learning activities. However, negatively, the inculcation of multicultural values has, to some extent, not avoided grief. In addition to the portrayal of *pesantren* as radical educational institutions (Wildan, 2008), it is reported, and confirmed by Pesantren Assalaam teachers, that a few alumni of this boarding school are indicated to have an affiliation with trans-national radical Islamic groups such as the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) movement in Syria (*Tempo*, 2016). It means that multicultural education through the ECAs practice is ineffective to some degree in this boarding school. Even though this radical attitude is possibly caused by several factors that affect alumni after graduating from

Pesantren Assalaam, this situation can be utilized by this Islamic boarding school to improve the quality of its multicultural teachings in entire dimensions as suggested by Banks (2009).

In fact, Islamic teachings and values are the main guidance for the teachers and students to conduct ECAs in *pesantren*. This is what distinguishes between the ECAs inside and outside of *pesantren*. Students in *pesantren* will conform to the Islamic principles taught by their teachers and *Kyai*. For instances, male and female students do not conduct ECAs together because of religious restrictions. They also will not undertake ECAs that trigger violence and crime, such as drinking alcohol, fighting, superstition, and heretics.

In this regards, Pesantren Assalaam, to some extent, has a similar typology in inculcating ECAs with the *Sekolah Islam Terpadu (SIT* or Integrated Islamic School), a new emerging model of full-day school in Indonesia. With estimated some 2,400 schools throughout the country, *SIT* network emphasizes Islamic values to ECAs in their institutions. In general, the students have an extensive teaching of Islam in various forms of ECAs, such as *Latihan Dasar Kepemimpinan* (LDK or Basic Leadership Training), *Peringatan Hari Besar Islam* (PHBI or Islamic Day Commemoration), and *Wisata Rohani* (spiritual journey) through *mabit* (spending a night at school or other places) and visit religious sites (Hambali and Yulianti, 2018). The aim of these ECAs is to develop the students' character building, including tolerance, togetherness, and empathy as the basis for life skills in the plural and multicultural society.

In addition to these positive and negative aspects, this *pesantren* also faces internal and external challenges to succeeding in its implementation of multicultural education. First, internally, despite student enthusiasm for ECAs, teachers should pay more attention to the infusion of multicultural values throughout the

APE process. Dialogue between students and teachers should be encouraged, and student achievement measurement tools should be well managed so that comprehensive student achievement data can be provided. Second, globalization poses a further external challenge for *pesantren* to compatibly design and smoothly implement multicultural education. For instance, by conducting overseas student exchanges and welcoming foreigners to the *pesantren*, this boarding school is required to provide a strong multicultural teaching model that is able to maintain students' Islamic identity while upholding cultural diversity. The current model practised by Pesantren Assalaam in ECAs functions well in the local, regional, and national scope, but it needs further assessment to carry it out at the global level.

Adding to the above aspects and challenges, the practice of ECAs in *pesantren* provides a precious insight for the government to expand the kind of ECAs taught in the public schools to promote multicultural education, not only through student organization and scouting as the compulsory ECAs, but also by means of various ECAs inspired from the *pesantren's* ECAs implementation model.

Conclusion

This study shows that through the ECAs, Pesantren Assalaam instructs the students a multicultural education involving Indonesia's various ethnicities, religions, and local cultures. In doing so, the *pesantren* has become involved in preventing schisms between the country's multiple cultures due to SARA conflicts. The school's implementation focuses particularly on infusing the values of respect, tolerance, togetherness, and appreciation.

Pesantren Assalaam uses multiple ECAs as an approach to implementing multicultural education. This approach is aligned with the

spirit of Pesantren Assalaam and its goal of creating a Muslim youth population that understands and is aware of the cultural richness of Indonesia and of establishing a harmonious life within the country. Pesantren Assalaam implements its multicultural education through ECAs using three steps, collectively called APE, which stands for acknowledgement, practice and observation, and evaluation. Acknowledgement involves introducing the philosophical meaning of an ECA, practice and observation imbue students with multicultural values through direct experience in the ECA, and evaluation ensures that the multicultural values embedded in the ECAs are firmly internalized by the students.

As such, the model of multicultural education implementation through ECAs at Pesantren Assalaam could be utilized as an essential alternative model for developing and implementing multicultural education in Islamic schools or the wider public school community in Indonesia. However, there is a crucial need for further research on the model's effectiveness, scope and dimension and its impact on both *pesantren* nationwide and other schools since Pesantren Assalaam alone cannot represent the thousands of *pesantren* in Indonesia.

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