



THE CONCEPT OF *SINAHU* AS A LIFELONG LEARNING PROCESS (READING SOCIAL CHANGE, HARMONIZING LIFE, AND DEFINING ONE'S STANCE)

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Abstract :

Education is, at its core, a human process of continuous learning, understanding life, and developing the ability to participate in societal change. In Javanese society and the pesantren tradition, this concept can be approached through the term sinahu – a learning process that does not end in the classroom but continues through teachers, texts, experiences, the environment, the community, and daily life. This article aims to develop the concept of sinahu as a framework for lifelong education that encompasses intellectual, social, moral, and transformative dimensions. The discussion employs a conceptual approach by linking the idea of sinahu to theories of lifelong learning, critical education, transformative learning, social change, and pesantren education. This article argues that learning should not be understood merely as the process of acquiring knowledge, but as a process of interpreting reality, understanding change, reflecting on one's own position, determining one's stance, and translating knowledge into action. Within this framework, students, pesantren students, and college students are part of the human journey as learners. The ultimate outcome of sinahu is not merely individual intelligence but the ability to harmonize human relationships with God, nature, and fellow human beings. Thus, sinahu can be developed as an educational concept that connects knowledge with life, tradition with change, and learning with social transformation..

Keywords : *sinahu, lifelong education, Islamic boarding schools, social change, critical education, advocacy, santri, students, and college students.*

INTRODUCTION

People never stop becoming human. From the moment they are born, people learn about themselves, their families, language, culture, environment, values, and the rules of life. This process begins long before a person enters school and continues long after formal education ends. Therefore, learning should not be viewed merely as an activity aimed at earning grades, diplomas, or degrees. Learning is part of the human process of understanding life and determining how one should live within society.

This understanding aligns with the evolution of the concept of lifelong learning. Education can no longer be viewed merely as an activity confined to childhood or school-age years. UNESCO emphasizes that learning must take place throughout one's life and across various social contexts, including work,



family, community life, cultural activities, the digital sphere, and civic engagement (UNESCO, 2021). Education, therefore, cannot be separated from human life. It is a process that takes place continuously and in various settings.

In the Indonesian context, particularly within Javanese traditions and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), the concept of lifelong learning finds expression through the term *sinahu*. This term simply refers to the process of learning. However, *sinahu* can be interpreted more broadly as the human process of continually learning from various sources in life. Teachers, texts, experiences, society, nature, history, and even mistakes can all be part of this learning process.

Thus, *sinahu* is not merely the act of acquiring knowledge. *Sinahu* is the process of interpreting life. A person learns to understand what is happening, why it is happening, what the consequences are, where they stand, and what they should do. In this sense, *sinahu* is related to critical education, which views human beings not as passive recipients of knowledge, but as agents capable of interpreting and transforming reality (Freire, 2000).

This idea is important because society is constantly changing. Changes in technology, the economy, culture, politics, education, religion, the environment, and communication patterns have shaped a social life that differs from that of previous eras. An education that merely imparts outdated knowledge without teaching students how to interpret these changes will produce individuals who may possess a great deal of information but are not necessarily capable of understanding the times in which they live.

Therefore, the central issue in education is not merely how people become intelligent, but how that knowledge is used to interpret life. It is at this point that "*sinahu*" can be developed as an educational concept that connects learning, interpreting change, reflection, taking a stand, and action.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a qualitative approach using library research within the framework of a Critical Literature Review. This approach was chosen because the discussion is not aimed at quantitatively measuring relationships between variables, but rather at understanding, interpreting, comparing, and synthesizing various ideas regarding lifelong learning, critical education, transformative learning, social change, and the educational traditions of *pesantren*. Through this approach, the concept of *sinahu* is positioned not merely as a cultural term but as a framework for thinking that can be used to analyze the processes of consciousness-raising and social action.

The research data sources consist of relevant academic literature, including theoretical books, scientific journal articles, research findings on Islamic boarding schools and social change, as well as documents from international organizations related to lifelong learning. The primary literature was used to establish a theoretical foundation regarding lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2021), critical education (Freire, 2000), transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), and the relationship between agents and structures in social

change (Giddens, 1984). In addition, a number of studies on Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), community empowerment, the moral development of students (santri), and the “learning society” were utilized to reinforce the empirical context that religious educational institutions are not isolated from societal dynamics but rather serve as a crucial space within the process of social change (Abbad, 2021; Azizah & Halimah, 2021; Kango et al., 2021; Mayasari et al., 2021; Widayanti & Muawanah, 2021).

The analytical process was conducted in several stages. First, literature identification, which involved selecting sources directly relevant to the themes of lifelong learning, critical education, social transformation, pesantren, and the formation of human consciousness. Second, classification and critical reading, which involved grouping ideas by theme and examining the similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of each perspective. Third, interpretation—examining the relationship between these concepts and the *sinahu* tradition within the context of Indonesian society, particularly the learning traditions that have developed within the pesantren environment. Fourth, conceptual synthesis—bringing these various perspectives together to construct a framework of thought in which learning does not end with the mastery of knowledge but evolves into the ability to interpret reality, engage in reflection, determine one's stance, and take transformative action.

The analysis in this article employs an interpretive-critical approach. This means that the literature is not merely used to seek support for predetermined ideas but is also critically examined regarding its relevance to the Indonesian social context. Freire's (2000) perspective, for example, is used to understand that education must help people interpret reality while also empowering them to act upon that reality. Meanwhile, Mezirow (1991) provides a foundation for understanding the importance of critical reflection in transforming how a person understands themselves and their environment. Giddens (1984) is used to explain that people are not merely passive recipients of change but possess the capacity to act as agents who can either maintain or transform social structures.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

***Sinahu* and Humans as Lifelong Learners**

The concept of lifelong learning views learning as a process that continues throughout one's life. UNESCO views lifelong learning as a vital component of humanity's ability to adapt to social, economic, technological, and environmental changes (UNESCO, 2021). Education is no longer confined to schools or colleges. Society, the workplace, family, community, and daily life also serve as learning environments.

This idea is closely related to the concept of “*sinahu*.” A person who embodies “*sinahu*” does not stop learning after graduating from school. They continue to learn while working, raising a family, participating in the community, dealing with conflicts, experiencing failure, and facing change. From the perspective of transformative learning, experiences are not merely

something that is lived through, but can serve as material for changing the way a person understands themselves and the world. Mezirow (1991) explains that deep learning occurs when a person engages in critical reflection on their assumptions and perspectives. This means that learning does not always mean acquiring more information. Sometimes, learning actually means changing the way one views something that has long been considered true.

This is where "sinahu" takes on a deeper meaning. A person who practices "sinahu" does not merely ask, "What have I just learned?" but also, "Has my way of thinking all this time been correct?" These questions transform the learning process into a process of reflection.

A lifelong learning process that occurs through knowledge, experience, encounters, reflection, and social engagement to understand oneself, interpret change, and determine responsible actions. This definition broadens the concept of learning. Learning does not only occur from teacher to student, but also from life to people.

Students, Islamic Boarding School Students, and College Students as Participants in the Learning Process

The terms "siswa," "santri," and "mahasiswa" can be understood as part of a person's educational journey. All three have distinct historical and institutional contexts, so it is inaccurate to equate them etymologically. However, conceptually, all three can be viewed as part of a person's journey as a learner.

Students are in the process of receiving, discovering, and building a foundation of knowledge. At this stage, people need guidance to be able to understand the world and develop learning habits. Education at this stage is not merely about filling the mind with information, but about developing the ability to ask questions and understand.

Santri have a more distinctive experience. Education at a pesantren takes place not only through formal learning but also through communal life. The relationships between the kiai, teachers, students, religious texts, peers, rules, customs, and the community are all integral parts of the educational process. Studies on pesantren indicate that they maintain a dynamic relationship with the community and social change (Abbad, 2021). Pesantren are not institutions that are completely isolated from society; rather, they serve as a space where knowledge, values, traditions, and social change converge.

Research on community empowerment also shows that Islamic boarding schools can serve as spaces for linking religious values with the analysis of social issues (Widayanti & Muawanah, 2021). Thus, the tradition of Islamic boarding schools has the potential to produce individuals who not only understand religious knowledge but are also capable of participating in community life.

Students then find themselves in an academic environment that demands more critical thinking. Students are not only expected to understand knowledge, but also to examine, question, develop, and apply it to understand societal issues. According to UNESCO (2021), higher education institutions

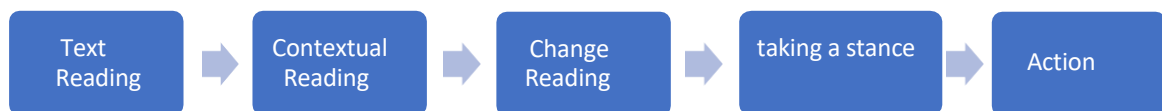
need to strengthen the connections between research, problem-solving, dialogue, fieldwork, and community projects so that higher education remains closely aligned with social needs.

Thus, this journey can be understood as follows: schoolchildren learn to accept and understand; Islamic boarding school students learn to practice and internalize; and college students learn to examine and take responsibility for their actions. However, all three remain part of a larger process—that of becoming human beings who are constantly seeking knowledge.

Sinahu and Critical Education

One theory that can reinforce the concept of sinahu is Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. Freire (2000) criticizes educational models that treat learners merely as recipients of information. In such models, knowledge is treated as if it belongs solely to the teacher and is merely transferred to the learners. Freire proposes a dialogic education that views human beings as subjects capable of interpreting the world and taking action in response to reality.

This idea is very closely aligned with sinahu. Learning must not stop at "knowing." Learners must be able to interpret what is happening around them. Freire (2000) introduced the idea that reading words must go hand in hand with reading the world. This means that the ability to read texts must be linked to the ability to interpret reality. A student may read a book about poverty, but education becomes more meaningful when he or she is able to understand the poverty occurring around them. A college student may study theories of social change, but that learning becomes more meaningful when he or she is able to observe those changes in society. Here, education no longer merely produces people who possess knowledge, but people who possess awareness. The process is as follows:



Figur 1. Proses Learn Concept (Source Researcher, 2026)

Understanding Social Change

Society is constantly changing. Anthony Giddens (1984) explains the relationship between social structure and human action through his theory of structuration. Social structures influence human action, but humans, through their actions, can also maintain or change those structures.

This theory is important for understanding social dynamics. People are not merely victims of social change; they also have the ability to influence change. What an individual does within the family, school, Islamic boarding school, college, organizations, and society can help shape social life.

Therefore, students must be able to understand the relationship between individuals and social structures. For example, when examining issues in education, it is not enough to simply blame the students. We need to consider

the family, the economy, policies, school quality, the culture of learning, the environment, and various other factors. This way of thinking requires the ability to view issues from various perspectives.

In the Sinahu concept, the ability to interpret social change can be explained through three concepts: viewing distance, perspective, and viewing energy. Viewing distance is the ability to view issues from several levels. At close range, a person observes human experiences directly. At medium range, they observe the relationships between individuals, families, and society. At a greater distance, they observe economic, political, and cultural structures, as well as policies and history. Perspective is necessary so that people do not rush to judgment. Social problems almost always have more than one cause.

A person's perspective determines how they understand an issue. A single issue can be viewed from an economic, educational, religious, cultural, political, or environmental perspective. Critical education teaches that people need to realize that knowledge and ways of viewing the world are never entirely separate from one's social position (Freire, 2000). Therefore, educated people must have the courage to examine their own perspectives.

Visual energy is the ability to transform what one sees into awareness and action. This concept is important because education often stops at the ability to see and know. Yet social issues require action. People who see injustice but do not feel a connection to the issue may possess knowledge, but they lack the social energy to act.

From Knowledge to Commitment

One of the issues in education is the assumption that educated people must always remain neutral. In social issues, neutrality is not always possible. When someone witnesses injustice, environmental destruction, poverty, violence, or discrimination, they must take a stand.

However, the partisanship in question is not based solely on emotion. Partisanship must be built on knowledge, data, experience, dialogue, and moral considerations. Freire (2000) views education as part of the process of developing critical consciousness. This consciousness enables people to recognize that social life is not something that must simply be accepted as it is. People can play a role in changing it.

Therefore, Sinahu must foster a commitment to truth; humanity; justice; the sustainability of life; and the common good. Thus, the question is not merely "What do you know?" but also: "What will you do with that knowledge?"

Sinahu and the Pesantren Tradition

Pesantren play a vital role in the development of the concept of sinahu because, from the very beginning, pesantren education has not been limited to classroom learning. Community life is an integral part of the educational process. Studies on pesantren education indicate that pesantren values can influence the development of students' social morality and their engagement with society (Azizah & Halimah, 2021). Pesantren education can foster social habits, a sense of responsibility, and the ability to interact with the community.

Research on the development of students' ethics also indicates that pesantren can shape students into agents of social change by reinforcing values and ethical conduct (Kango et al., 2021). Thus, the pesantren tradition can provide a crucial foundation for the concept of sinahu. Knowledge is not merely acquired to be understood, but to be lived out.

Nor does this tradition mean that pesantren must reject change. Research on pesantren and social change shows that pesantren continue to grapple with changes in culture, authority, knowledge transmission, and their relationship with the community (Abbad, 2021). Other studies indicate that pesantren are also adapting to digital changes and technological advancements (Mastuhu et al., 2021). The tradition of pesantren can be interpreted as the ability to preserve values while adapting educational methods to the changing times.

The pinnacle of wisdom is not merely knowledge, but the harmony of life. Human beings have a relationship with God, nature, and their fellow human beings. These three are inseparable.

A relationship with God provides moral direction. Knowledge is not only used to understand how something is done, but also to determine whether it is good and for what purpose it is done. A relationship with nature fosters ecological awareness. Humans do not live apart from nature. Human life depends on water, soil, air, plants, animals, and ecosystems. Therefore, human progress must not result in damage that is passed on to future generations. Relationships with fellow human beings shape the social dimension of education. Science must foster compassion, justice, solidarity, respect, and social responsibility.

This idea aligns with the global direction of education, which emphasizes the relationship between people, the planet, and our shared future. UNESCO (2021) positions education as part of the effort to build a more just and sustainable future. Education must help people address social, economic, and environmental issues collectively. This alignment does not mean eliminating differences. Rather, it means balancing these relationships and fostering a sense of shared responsibility.

Sinahu can also be interpreted as a transformative process. When all these ideas are brought together, sinahu can be understood as a transformative process. Mezirow (1991) demonstrates that transformative learning occurs when individuals reflect on their own frameworks of thought. Freire (2000) emphasizes the importance of critical awareness and action in response to reality. Giddens (1984) argues that people are agents who, through their actions, can influence social structures. UNESCO (2021) positions lifelong learning as part of society's capacity to face a complex future.

These four perspectives converge in the concept of sinahu, which has been developed into a process-based relationship as follows:

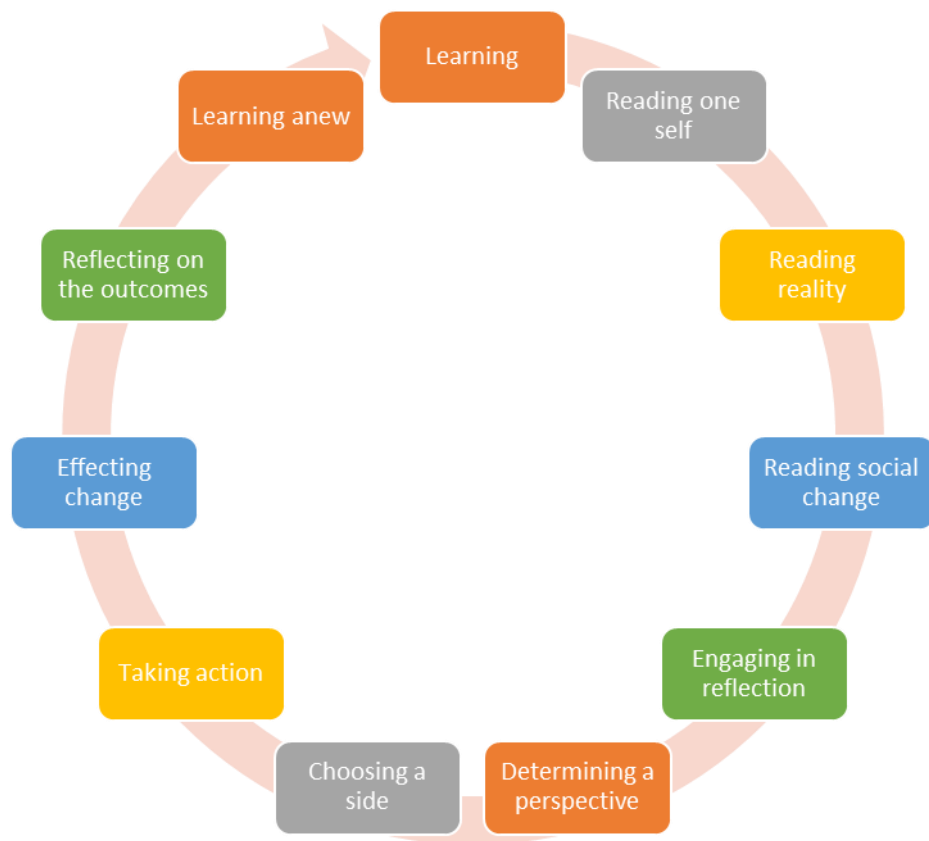


Figure 2 concept of sinahu

This cycle is never-ending. Every action generates new experiences. New experiences generate new knowledge. New knowledge requires new reflection. Therefore, sinahu is essentially a lifelong learning cycle.

Based on this discussion, the concept of sinahu can be defined in several ways: sinahu is a process of lifelong learning that humans engage in through knowledge, experience, reflection, social interactions, and involvement in life – all to gain self-awareness, understand social change, determine one's stance, and align one's actions in relation to God, nature, and fellow human beings.

This framework has five main dimensions. First, the epistemic dimension, which is the ability to acquire and test knowledge. Second, the reflective dimension, which is the ability to reexamine one's own ways of thinking and personal experiences. Third, the social dimension, which is the ability to interpret society and social change. Fourth, the ethical dimension, which is the ability to determine what is true, good, just, and beneficial. Fifth, the transformative dimension, which is the ability to turn knowledge and awareness into social action. With these five dimensions, Sinahu or learning no longer simply means "to learn." It becomes a concept about how humans live as learners.

Sinahu can be developed as an educational concept that views learning as a lifelong process. This idea is related to the theories of lifelong learning,

critical education, transformative learning, and social change. However, Sinahu places an additional and important emphasis on the relationship between knowledge, life, values, commitment, and action.

Schoolchildren, Islamic boarding school students, and college students are all part of the journey of a lifelong learner. The differences between these three groups should not be viewed solely in terms of the educational institutions they attend, but also in terms of the evolving level of responsibility they assume toward knowledge. Schoolchildren learn to recognize and understand. Islamic boarding school students learn to internalize and put knowledge into practice. College students learn to test, develop, and take responsibility for knowledge. After that, people must continue to learn throughout their lives.

In the face of social change, people need the ability to interpret. They need a broader perspective so as not to become trapped in overly narrow issues. They need different viewpoints to understand issues from various angles. They need the energy of perception so that what they see can be transformed into awareness and action. The sinahu process is not aimed solely at producing intelligent people. It is aimed at producing people who are capable of harmonizing knowledge, values, and actions. This harmonization encompasses humanity's relationship with God, nature, and fellow human beings. Therefore, the essence of sinahu can be summed up in two words: harmonize and take a stand.

Harmony means maintaining a balanced relationship between humans and God, nature, and one another. Taking a stand means using knowledge to take a responsible position in support of truth, humanity, justice, sustainability, and the common good.

Thus, sinahu is not merely a learning method. Sinahu is the way humans live their lives as learners. Humans learn because the world changes. They interpret these changes so as not to lose their way. They broaden their perspectives so as not to become trapped in narrow understandings. They use knowledge to determine their stance. They take action to improve their lives. After that, they return to learning. At that point, education no longer stops at school, Islamic boarding school, or college. Education becomes a part of life itself.

CONCLUSION

Sinahu can be understood as a process of lifelong learning that views human beings as learners who never stop learning. In this sense, learning does not only take place in classrooms, schools, universities, or Islamic boarding schools, but occurs throughout all of life's experiences. People learn by reading texts, interpreting experiences, observing their environment, analyzing societal changes, engaging in dialogue with others, reflecting on their experiences, and evaluating their past actions. Therefore, sinahu has a much broader meaning than simply the acquisition of knowledge, as it encompasses the development of awareness, character,

responsibility, and the ability to make informed decisions.

This study shows that the concept of "sinahu" is strongly linked to the ideas of lifelong learning, critical education, transformative learning, and social change theory. The perspective of lifelong education views learning as a continuous process that takes place across various spheres of life (UNESCO, 2021). Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy expands the meaning of learning from merely understanding the world to the ability to consciously interpret and respond to it. Meanwhile, Mezirow's (1991) concept of transformative learning demonstrates that learning can change the way people understand their experiences, themselves, and social reality. Giddens's (1984) perspective further illustrates that individuals who possess awareness and the capacity to act can serve as agents in both maintaining and transforming social structures.

Within this framework, the primary outcome of learning is not the increasing amount of information a person acquires, but rather the growing maturity of their ability to interpret reality and adopt a responsible stance. Therefore, a person who is learning should not become increasingly detached from social life, but rather should become increasingly capable of understanding the issues facing society. This process requires three essential abilities: perspective, viewpoint, and the energy of perception. Perspective allows a person to view issues up close, structurally, and historically. Point of view helps a person determine how reality is understood and from what value-based position that reality is interpreted. Meanwhile, the energy of perception transforms the process of seeing into awareness, awareness into values, values into choices, and choices into actions.

The most important consequence of sinahu is the emergence of ethical commitment. Knowledge that does not result in a commitment to life risks remaining merely theoretical. Conversely, knowledge gained through the process of sinahu should enable people to take a stance on the issues they face. This stance does not mean blindly justifying one's own group or rejecting others, but rather a stance grounded in knowledge, reflection, values, and responsibility. In this context, the stance is directed toward truth, humanity, justice, environmental sustainability, and the common good.

This study also identifies the pesantren tradition as a key context for understanding the practice of sinahu. Pesantrens serve not only as venues for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as spaces for character building, moral development, the cultivation of social relationships, and community empowerment. A number of studies indicate that pesantren are linked to the formation of social morality, community empowerment, the development of a learning society, and the ability of students to play a role in social change (Abbad, 2021; Azizah & Halimah, 2021; Kango et al., 2021; Mayasari et al., 2021; Widayanti & Muawanah, 2021). Thus, the sinahu tradition can be interpreted as part of a culture of learning that connects knowledge with life and action.

Every action yields a new experience; every experience reveals a need to learn anew; and every new learning experience can lead to greater awareness and better actions. Thus, a truly wise person is not one who feels they have already attained complete knowledge, but rather one who remains open to learning while also having the courage to act upon the knowledge they possess. The ultimate goal of this process is the creation of harmony between humanity and God, nature, and fellow human beings. God serves as the source of values and meaning; nature is the space of life that must be preserved; and fellow human beings constitute the realm of social and humanitarian responsibility. These three elements should not be separated in the educational process. The broader a person's knowledge, the broader their concern should be; the deeper their learning process, the stronger their sense of responsibility should be; and the higher their academic standing, the greater their commitment to life should be.

The main idea of this article can be simply summarized as follows: SINAHU is learning to read, reading to understand, understanding to reflect, reflecting to determine one's stance, and taking a stance to act in favor of a more humane society. From this perspective, education aims not only to produce intelligent people, but also individuals capable of aligning what they know, what they believe, and what they do in their shared lives.

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