THE INTEGRATION OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM INTO PESANTREN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract; the pesantren has been one of the important educational institutions in Indonesia. As an education institution, the curriculum of pesantrens seems to reflect the style and will of the kyai who leads the pesantren, reflect his interpretations of both Islamic traditions, and the changes happening in his society. A pesantren is an indigenous education institution in Indonesia concerned with conducting Islamic education. Kitab kuning teaching is the typical curriculum of pesantren that is applied in the pesantren education system. Some pesantrens still strictly use kitab kuning as their whole curriculum, whereas some others include other curricula into their overall curriculum. Due to globalization and modernity, pesantren - as one of the education system in Indonesia - tries to integrate their curriculum into the national curriculum.

Keywords: national curriculum, pesantren, Islamic tradition, education system, kitab kuning

Introduction

It is commonly believed and accepted until now, that religion and science are two concepts that cannot be integrated. It creates a wide dichotomy between religion and science. Simply understood, religion produces “religious sciences” on the one hand, while science produces “secular sciences” on the other. Hence, religion and science are regarded as independent
– they each have their own sphere in terms of what matters they approach, research methods, and truth criteria.

In terms of education system in Indonesia, this dichotomy appears in two institutions. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for teaching the “secular sciences” such as physics, mathematics, biology, and so forth that produce skilful graduates without including any religious teachings, whereas the Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for teaching the “religious sciences” that produce “religious” graduates.¹

Pesantren, as one of education system in Indonesia, has characteristic which is different with other system of education. One of the characteristic of the pesantren education system is kitab kuning teaching as the typical curriculum of pesantren.

Some pesantren still strictly use kitab kuning (classical Islamic Arabic books) as their whole curriculum, whereas some others include other curricula into their overall curriculum. The need for formal acknowledgment by the government in order pesantrens’ graduates may continue to tertiary education is one of the reasons for the acceptance of curricula other than just kitab kuning. As a consequence, pesantren tries to integrate the national curriculum in their system of education. On the one hand, this integration creates some positive impacts for education system in pesantren, while on the other hand creates also some negative effects.

This essay will discuss the discourse of pesantren in integrating national curriculum into their education system. The first part talks about general background of this essay. In the second part will explore the Islamic education system and overview of pesantren. The next is talking about implications of

the integration the national curriculum into pesantren education system. It will be followed by talking about pesantren; past, now and future. Finally conclusion is drawn in the last part based on previous discussion.

B. Islamic Education System and Pesantren

The Islamic education system in Indonesia consists of madrasah and pesantren. Madrasah is a classical Islamic school educational system that initially adopted certain aspects of Dutch schooling system. It introduced in the early 20th century. The curriculum in madrasah is provided by the government with 30 percent religious subjects and 70 percent general subjects. Madrasah consists of three levels: Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Elementary School), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Junior High School) and Madrasah Aliyah (Senior High School).

Pesantren is usually associated with the traditionalist community in Indonesia, because traditional method of teaching and learning process is implemented by pesantren. Pesantren is a term indicating an Islamic educational institution in Indonesia where santri accept Islamic teaching and live as well.

There has been a controversy among researchers concerning the origin of the pesantren. One view assumes that the pesantren originated from the Hindu tradition that had existed in Indonesia before Islam was disseminated. This point

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2 Azyumardi Azra, Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XI/II dan XVIII (Bandung: Mizan, 1998), h. 57.


of view is supported by some arguments, such as similarities found with *pesantren* and the previous Hindu education. Also, the word ‘*pesantren*’ is derived from the Sanskrit language where Hinduism was sourced.\(^5\)

Another view argues that this Islamic institution came from the Islamic traditions itself. The nature of the dissemination of Islam in Indonesia by the advocators and the similarities found between *pesantrens* and the Islamic education tradition in the Middle East are the reasons for asserting that the *pesantren* came from Islam.\(^6\) One other view is that the *pesantren* originated from the Hindu traditions, and was then Islamised by Muslim *du'at* (preachers) following the victory of Islamic kingdoms over the Hindu kingdoms.\(^7\) Regardless of such a controversy, the pesantren has certainly developed through time from its simplest form, that is surau or langgar (a special place for prayers located in a village) to a new and relatively modern institution that shares some features with schools.

As an educational institution, pesantren has several elements. According to Susanto the basic elements of pesantren are: *pondok*, mosque, *kitab kuning*, santri and kyai.\(^8\)

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1. **Pondok (Dormitory)**

A pondok is a basic characteristic of a pesantren, which means a dormitory where the santris stay. The pondok usually is located beside or surrounding the pesantren.

2. **Mosque**

The basic function of mosque is a place to pray and worship Allah. In pesantren, besides its function as a place to pray, the mosque also been used as another learning place. It means there are two places in terms of learning process in pesantren; classrooms and mosque.

3. **Kitab Kuning (classical Islamic book)**

*Kitab kuning* is another basic element of a pesantren. The term *kitab kuning* indicates traditional or classical Islamic books which have been taught in the pesantren. *Kitab kuning* is a basic universal reference in a sense that the pesantren community always seeks the solution for each socio-religious problem in a *kitab kuning*. It is even considered as an undoubted truth by the community.

Mochtar said that *kitab kuning* advocates argued that considering *kitab kuning* as a universal reference does not mean ignoring al-Qur’an and al-Sunnah, but it is even following them. *Kitab kuning*, which comprises various Islamic disciplines such as *fiqh*, *tauhid*, and *tashawwuf*, was based on the two sources, too. It is regarded as a set of comprehensive interpretation of al-Qur’an and al-Sunnah.⁹

4. Santri (students)

Another basic element of pesantren is the santri or the student. A santri is a person who studies in pesantren. A santri is usually identified as a person who studies deeply religion teaching in order to be a pious person in community.

5. Kyai (Islamic clerics)

The kyai is the most essential element of a pesantren, because he, assisted by some ustadz (teachers), leads and teaches Islam to the santri (students). In many cases, kyai is usually the founder of the pesantren or at least he continues his parent leadership in pesantren.

One of the common features in pesantren is that the kyai plays a very important role. Generally, he possesses total control over the pesantren in each decision-making process, especially at the macro level. In some cases, indeed, the kyai is assisted by staff in determining the program policies, but still the final decision is in the hands of the kyai. It is expected that this authority held by the kyai results in less-involvement of other key stakeholders, such as teachers, students and parents.

Pesantren is paralleled by some experts as a kingdom, in which the kyai is the king. This implies that the kyai has total power and authority to control any aspect of pesantren. Pesantren curricula, methods of teaching and assessment methods are designed by kyai

![Pesantren Organisational Structure](image)

The above figure indicates that the highest authority in the kyai’s hands as the leader in the pesantren. All people in the structure under the kyai are responsible to him for the activities they do. Kyai manages all activities in the pesantren in material, economic, physical aspects and the like. However, in the case where the pesantren is owned by a society represented by a board or foundation, the role of the kyai is restricted to some extent. He still has the power to control the pesantren, but he also should consult with the people of the foundation.

C. The Implication of the National Curriculum Integration into Pesantren
Curriculum is a set of experiences that students undertake with the guidance of the school, in order to achieve the goals of their school.\textsuperscript{11} A curriculum is vital as it is the set of guidelines for the school to run its programs in order to reach its goals. Each school has its own curriculum, even though it may be recorded in the simplest form, probably not a formal well-written curriculum.

In responding to the changes, the pesantren has, then, been divided into two major types, namely: salafi (traditional) and khalafi (modern).\textsuperscript{12} While the former still retain kitab kunings as the only curriculum to teach, the latter includes the formal government curriculum into its system. These two major types of pesantren imply that there must be a curriculum change process within these pesantrens.

Before the integration of national curriculum, pesantren teaches students exclusively religious curriculum and kitab kuning teaching is the typical curriculum of pesantren. Starting from 1970s, the national curriculum was integrated to the pesantren education system in the form of madrasah and the pesantren education system is becoming under the Ministry of Religious Affairs.\textsuperscript{13}

The government of Indonesia through the Soeharto’s regime (1966-1998) encouraged madrasah and pesantren to follow the national curriculum standards as a response to globalization. As a result many pesantren nowadays try to keep their identity as

\textsuperscript{11}Armstrong, Developing and Documenting the Curriculum (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993), p. 45.

\textsuperscript{12}Pedoman Pelaksanaan Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Sebagai Pola Wajib Belajar Pendidikan Dasar, (Jakarta: Kantor Menko Kesra dan Taskin, 2000).

\textsuperscript{13}Muhammad Zuhdi, The 1975 Three Minister Decree and the Modernization of Indonesian Islamic School. American Educational History Journal. 32:1, 2005. p. 36-43
part of the Islamic education system while at the same time strive to follow the national education system to face many changes in the global world. In recent times, pesantren have been influenced by the globalization of education. There are many benefits as a consequence of globalization of pesantren and also there are many drawbacks. However, the drawbacks can be minimized well.

The integration of pesantren into the national education system as a response to globalization can be seen in three aspects; competition of pesantren graduates with public school graduates, equality between Arabic and English in pesantren, and growth of Muslim intellectuals of the pesantren’s background.

First is the competition of pesantren graduates with other graduates. In 1960s, some pesantren did not wish to adopt the national education standard. They think, if pesantren applied the national education standard in their system of education, the roles from government should be obeyed. As a result, pesantren lose their autonomy, because of the interference from the government. Furthermore, some pesantren tend to offer a solid religious curriculum to create ulama (Islamic clerics) rather than be globally competitive. In addition, other pesantren did not hope their graduates to become the government employees and only teach them more practical knowledge.

However globalization is a reality and cannot be avoided. In recent time, many pesantren have applied the national education system as a response to globalization, although they have to accept the government’s interference. Because of this, pesantren graduates are not only able to speak in front of people as da’i (preachers), but also can compete with graduates from public school to continue their study at higher schools or to get jobs and good positions in the government or others organizations. In my point of view the government intervention in pesantren development is important in order to omit a wider gap between public schools and the Islamic schools.
Secondly, globalization brings English as an international language. Nowadays, English is not only a compulsory for students, but also a need to all people in order to interact with modernization. As a matter of fact, in 1960s some _pesantren_ did not wish to teach English to their students. Some _kyais_ believe that English is a language of colonialism and language of _kafir_ (unbelievers). In that time, the main purpose of the teaching process in _pesantren_ was learning Arabic and how to translate the Arabic textbooks into the local dialect. Furthermore, reading and memorizing the Quran are the other main purposes in the system of education in most _pesantren_ in Indonesia. The indicator of successful students can be measured by their ability to recite the Quran, although they do not understand of Arabic.

However, many _pesantren_ nowadays have been combining traditional Islamic values with modern subjects, for example English and computing. It can be predicted that English will be the future language of global education in _pesantren_. In addition, many _pesantren_ students are also interested to learn English. Consequently, students are not only able to master Arabic, but also English. Wahid (2006) states that one of the features in the learning process in _pesantren_ is mastering tools of communication, both Arabic and English. So, English is predicted to have the same position as Arabic in _pesantren_.

Nevertheless, the most important point should be considered is the model of learning English in _pesantren_. The English teachers in _pesantren_ are adopting the traditional systems of teaching, which relies on textbooks and uses Indonesian language. The appearance of competency-based curriculum in 2004 imposes the English teachers in _pesantren_ to improve their abilities and skills to deliver this subject.

The last point of the globalization impact on _pesantren_ is the emergence of Muslims intellectual’s, which have _pesantren_ educational background, such as Gus Dur (the former President of Indonesia), and Hidayat Nurwahid (the chief of the House Representative). It means, after adopting the national
curriculum, the system of education in pesantren have given birth for many experts who are becoming the intellectuals and the Islamic clerics as well. Pesantren have shown their function to follow the changes in the modern world.

People who disagree with the integration of education system in pesantren argue that pesantren is a place to educate students to be pious Muslims with good morals, to teach santris to read kitab kuning, to create cadres of ‘ulama and da’i who have sincerity, patience, and strength in applying Islamic teachings, and to be the ‘light’ in their community.\(^\text{14}\)

There were a number of different reasons to adopt the new system of education in pesantren. According to Lukens-Bull it is one way to negotiate modernity and there was an encouragement from Soeharto regime. While Bruinessen argues that the integration of national curriculum by pesantren is the demands of a changing labour market where every person tries to compete in order to get a better job and position.\(^\text{15}\)

Even though adoption new system is difficult, in reality pesantren has to accept this system. This creates some positive impacts in the one hand and also negative effects in the other hand.

D. Pesantren: Past, Now and Future

The influences of globalization extend to every aspects of life. Globalization is not only exclusively limited to economy, but also culture, information, science, technology and education.

\(^{14}\)Norcholish Madjid, Merumuskan Kembali Tujuan Pesantren, p. 97.

Pesantren, which a part of the education system, is the Islamic boarding schools with a curriculum emphasizing religious teachings. Due to facing globalization, some pesantren have integrated their system of education into the national education system. As a result, pesantren graduates can compete in the public life, English has the same position with Arabic, and the emergence of the Islamic cleric intellectuals.

A possible dilemma of the accommodation of the national curriculum is pesantren aims reduced and become pragmatic. In the past, kyai and teachers in pesantren teach based on sincerity. They did not get any payment. Nowadays, pesantren has to run their education system based on a modern organization as a consequence of accepting the national curriculum.

The critique to pesantren is leadership model in pesantren. Even though pesantren has integrated education system into the national system, most pesantren leaders still apply charismatic leadership. A charismatic leader will show great confidence in their followers. They are very persuasive and make very effective use of body language as well as verbal language. In terms of pesantren context, every teacher and student have to obey what kyai said because the feeling of fear of i‘tiradh (being disobedient to the kyai) which, according to the pesantren’s belief and tradition, might result in unblessed knowledge. As a result, what kyai said should be accepted by all students as something true. This model of leadership should be constructed creatively, but not be diminished. Students should be given an opportunity to express their idea as a concept of the modern education system.

Although there are many critiques, pesantren can compete in a changing world and maintain Islamic values. Lukens-Bull states,

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“If schools make people modern, then pesantren leaders are seeking to make people modern in a distinctly Islamic way. The combination of religious training, character development, and secular education is designed to create people who can live and compete in a changing world and maintain traditional values”.

It means that pesantren is not merely the place to create ulama (Muslims scholars), but pesantren is also the place to teach its students the social life, thereby, their graduates can be open-minded in facing the global problems such as the issue of terrorism and multiculturalism and at the same time they can keep up the Islamic values.

Conclusion

A pesantren is an indigenous education institution in Indonesia concerned with conducting Islamic education. Kitab kuning teaching is the typical curriculum of pesantren that is applied in the pesantren education system. Some pesantrens still strictly use kitab kuning as their whole curriculum, whereas some others include other curricula into their overall curriculum. Due to globalization and modernity, pesantren - as one of the education system in Indonesia- tries to integrate their curriculum into the national curriculum. This integration has a positive impact in one hand; however, it also has some negative impact in the other hand.

References


