

**DESIGNING STRATEGY FOR ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL
(PONDOK PESANTREN) IN INDONESIA**

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Abstract

Islamic Education Institutions play a very important role in building good moral, principles and Islamic characteristics toward Indonesian society. One of the distinctive Islamic institutions and considered as the oldest one is Islamic Boarding Schools (pesantren). This paper aims to design a strategy to be implemented in such Islamic Education Institution to enhance the Islamic education for the benefit of the students and whole Muslims in Indonesia. In further discussion, firstly this paper presents an overview of Islamic education in pesantren and secondly, it discusses the strategy of pesantren itself. The strategy in such institution must be set based on Islamic values and seen from Islamic perspectives. Any method or principles adopted from external values also need to be adapted and shaped to be more Islamic. However Islam does not overlook any principles as long as it is not contrary to Islamic principles and laws.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Boarding School.

Introduction

Islamic Education in Indonesia is now being offered through a variety of forms, formal, non-formal, and informal institutions. For the formal institutions, Ministry of Religious Affairs in Indonesia recognizes two main institutions to deliver the Islamic Education to the people. They are Islamic Schools (madrasah) and Islamic Boarding Schools (pesantren). Both of them play a very important role in building good moral, principles and Islamic characteristics toward the Indonesian society. On their way to deliver the Islamic Education, madrasah and pesantren differ extremely in term of management practices and teaching-learning processes. (Decentralized Basic Education 3, 2006) This paper focusses in discussing pesantren as the unique and distinctive institution. It is also claimed as the oldest Islamic Institutions ever existed in Indonesia. This paper aims to look for the proper strategy to be implemented in such Islamic Education Institution in order to maximize the enhancement of Islamic education for the benefit of the students as well as the whole Muslims in Indonesia. In so doing, the discussion of this paper is divided into two main parts. Firstly, as an overview, it discusses a brief description of pesantren and the Islamic Education offered. Secondly, it presents what kind of Islamic Education fit best and how to do more for the better result of Islamic Education, especially in relation to the operation of institutions and their strategy to accomplish institutions aims.

Overview of Pondok Pesantren

History suggests that Islam has come into Indonesia for the very first time during the 7th century and it was incorrect to say that Hindu and Buddhism were the first religion appeared in Nusantara as well as in Indonesia (Suryanegara, 2014). Many people have assumed to link that pesantren is religiously influenced by the community of Hindu and Buddhism kingdoms. However, history suggests that while religious education was available to a select few during these earlier periods, it was not until at least the mid-eighteenth century that the institution of pesantren existed. The founders of pesantren were usually men who had spent years studying in Arabic countries like Mecca or Cairo rather than imitating Hindu and Buddhist precursors. (Noor, et al., 2008). That was the times when Islamic values were being strengthened by ulama after firstly have been introduced since very early in the 7th century.

Unlike other institutions, pesantren offered to students or here they are called by santri an integrated education centered on a much-respected teacher called kyai. The charismatic, deep knowledge and high moral standing of kyai attracted santri from the local area or even from further places to come and learn specific Islamic knowledge or even just to serve him hoping to seek for blessing/barakah given by Allah SWT as the result of respecting ulama. Because of this knowledge, abilities, great moral standing, and other good qualifications, kyai were often highly respected not only within the pesantren but also

within the community more broadly. In many countryside communities, pesantren had been the center of religious life and the kyai had significant authority on religious matters.

The pesantren curriculum was relatively set to an informal way of teaching and learning, with no separated and graded classes and certificates of graduation. The subjects to learn were also determined by the kyai based on the ability and achievement of the students. Beside on studying some religious contexts, santri in pesantren were also taught and trained to have some practical life skills, like farming, gardening, and any other skill to encourage independence and self-sufficiency in graduates.

Starting from the early of 19th century, Indonesia started to expand the education by establishing more formal education institutions and did so to the Islamic Institutions. Modern schools were first established by former santri named Ki Hajar Dewantara during 1920-1930. Many pesantren nowadays also offer national curriculum means that they also offer subjects to learn in combination between Islamic studies and general subjects like science, social studies, language and etc. While the rest still remain offering only Islamic contexts without teaching any general subjects. According to the decision letter set by Ministry of Religious Affairs in Indonesia in 2014, pesantren now can stand themselves by the name of satuan pendidikan mu'adalah with two levels of education; primary and secondary level. They are not in form of madrasah or Islamic schools but pesantren itself instead, where they offer either full and deep of Islamic context from kutubut turots (old Islamic literature) or the combination between dirasah islamiyah (Islamic Subjects) and general subjects. For the primary level, it is equal to madrasah ibtida'iyah with six years duration of the study and madrasah tsanawiyah with 3 years duration of the study. While at the secondary level, it equals to madrasah aliyah with 3 years duration of the study. Some pesantren now have already combine madrasah tsanawiyah and masrasah aliyah level with 6 years duration of study.

Strategizing Pondok Pesantren

After briefly discussing Pondok Pesantren, the history, nature, and curriculum, now proceed to the next issue that is talking about what and how to enhance Islamic education in it. The 'what' question refers to the operational and managerial matters of pesantren while the 'how' question refers to the strategy, plans and or programs designed to advance the quality of Islamic education as well as to achieve the overall aim of pesantren itself.

The 'what' question, in this paper discusses two elements; firstly, what is the proper management method that should be adopted and implemented in pesantren and secondly, what is the teaching and learning methods that ustadz (male teachers) and ustadzah (female teachers) should conduct with in order to communicate with their santri. The 'how' question deals with how pesantren could enhance the strategy in the operational framework that is considered to be innovative and effective. All the three

elements embedded in both 'what, and 'how' questions however intimately linked to each other, forming the very foundation in designing strategy for enhancing the Islamic education. This paper deals with them one by one as one whole strategy in strategizing the Pondok Pesantren.

Management of Pondok Pesantren

Discussing management of an institution, through the years people have been introduced to the concept of Total Quality Management. It also has taken worldwide attention and has been adopted in so many industries, especially manufacturing industries, government public sectors, education institutions, service, etc. Total Quality Management is also considered as the main factor for the long-term success of an organization. It is defined as a systematic approach to improving the quality of firm-wide management with the purpose of improving performance in terms of quality, organization productivity, customer satisfaction, and profitability. Many researchers have examined the relationship between total quality management and organizational performance. They provided evidence to show that effective Total Quality Management implementations improve long-term profitability. (Garakhani, et al, 2013). It concluded that understanding the concept and well-managing the total quality management of an organization will lead that particular organization to perform well.

In the case of pesantren as an Islamic institution and running Islamic values, every management practices should be seen from the Islamic perspective. How come a western based management method with different philosophical and epistemological underpinnings from those of Islam became the most popular method adopted by these so-called Islamic development institutions? If careful consideration on the usage of such management method seems to be ignored, it is not impossible that so is the educational philosophy and policy. (Salleh, 2013).

In fact, there is nothing wrong with the adoption of external management method as long as it is not contradicting Islamic values. Sharia law also doesn't overlook any of the principals introduced by the West as long as they do not exceed the limits of the principals of Islam. (Yusub, 2015). In the concept of Islamic theology (tauhid), adopting the so-called western method is also not being rejected as long as it does not have any connection and correlation to other religious belief.

Here in this paper, Total Quality Management is going to be adapted and shaped to be more Islamic. Firstly, the process of giving service to the customer, in this case is santri and their parents need to ensure the involvement and cooperation of every party because without it the institution will not successfully achieve its aims to improve the quality. Secondly, all problems and solutions should be solved and decided through a discussion (syura). Thirdly, the overall process must be intended to achieve the customer satisfaction and at the same time to seek for the pleasure of Allah SWT and his Prophet

Muhammad SAW. As it is narrated on the authority of Amir al-Mu'minin (Leader of the Believers), Abu Hafs 'Umar bin al-Khattab, who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), say:

"Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended. Whoever migrates with an intention for Allah and His messenger, the migration will be for the sake of Allah and his Messenger. And whoever migrates for worldly gain or to marry a woman, then his migration will be for the sake of whatever he migrated for." Related by Bukhari & Muslim".

Fourthly is setting the principle of continuous improvement. It means that either teachers or kyai (the leader of pesantren) are those who prefer quality learn new things and constantly upgrade themselves with the make changes either. (Yusub, 2015) Lastly is punctual rewards and awards. The concept introduced in the total quality management also in line with the principal of Islam where the employees need to be paid on time and given reward and award based on their achievement. As Allah SWT said in Quran, "Then if they give suck to the children for you, give them their due payment" (AtTalaq 65:6).

It is also written in Ibn Maajah hadiths no 2443, narrated that 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries." Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Ibn Maajah.

Teaching-Learning Method

Another part of the management of pesantren, there must be the process of teaching and learning. Salleh (2013) in his journal said that there are two important tools of teaching-learning, that is the mind (ʿaql) and the heart (qalb). He also said that in between these two methods the emphasis and usage of the mind seem to be dominant even in the Islamic education system, while in many cases, the usage of the heart is ignored. (Salleh, 2013).

It is correct to say that such emphasize is important but denying the usage of heart is not correct as well. Salleh (2013) also added that in between the two teaching-learning methods, the 'heart-to-heart' method (which refers to the method of using heart) is more effective as it is the heart that becomes the platform of one's faith, not the mind. Moreover, 'mind-to-mind' (which refers to the method of learning that uses mind) method may be able to give birth to knowledgeable persons but not necessarily to the ones who practice their knowledge.

Referring to this concept, it is important in the management of pesantren to adopt the approach of heart-to-heart method in the process of teaching and communicating between santri and teachers besides continuing to the use mind-to-mind method. In a further improvement, the connection and

relation could be strengthened by praying for each other, because it is Allah that changes the heart and mind of people.

Strategy for Pondok Pesantren

The third part of strategizing chapter is the strategy itself. First thing first is setting the orientation of education in pesantren. One thing to remember always that the education should aim at building iman (a strong belief in Allah) establishing akhlakul karimah (good moral), and fear in Allah (taqwa). So these things must be considered more important than teaching subjects in class. The programs and extracurricular activity that aims to achieve these things must be more prioritized than only learning specific general and Islamic subjects. Besides that, the education in pesantren must have an orientation toward the development of society and lillahi ta'ala (everything is for Allah SWT). The strategy also must consider the pesantren's surrounding communities, whether they are Muslim majority areas or minority areas.

Secondly, it is good that one pesantren has a core value to develop, whether in a specific Islamic knowledge or skill. The example is that one pesantren focusing more on memorizing qur'an, understanding old Islamic literature, Arabic language, social and leadership skills, etc. Some pesantren for girls also must establish agendas and programs to develop an-nisaiyyat (girls' skill in the society). Considering all of them, therefore the education programs in pesantren must not be influenced by any political parties, political issues, and activities. The kyai and teachers however, must not force their political mindset to be implemented in pesantren as well as the parents. Pesantren also must be very independent in setting goals and is not following any financial supporters even though they have done much help in the development of education in one pesantren

Conclusion

Surely Islamic Education has been recognized as the main factor in establishing good characters in the society. The lack attention in Islamic Education will lead to the degradation of moral. The paper suggests some aspects that should be given into consideration in designing strategy of Pondok Pesantren. The first is adapting and reshaping of management principles into Islamic management principles; the second is emphasizing heart-to-heart method in teaching learning rather than too much emphasizing in the mind-to-mind method. The last is setting best orientation in pesantren to always belief and fear in Allah, and establish good moral. Beside that the pesantren must have core values to be taught to their students so that the education must not be influenced by any political parties, political issues, and activities for any reason.

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