

Transformation of Islamic Boarding Schools as Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia

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Abstract: *Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, known as "pesantren," represent the oldest Islamic educational institutions that continue to evolve to meet the needs of modern society while preserving their unique educational substance. The journey of these institutions to achieve legal recognition from the government has been challenging and has experienced a long and dynamic process. This study employs a literature review approach involving key steps such as identification, selection, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant literature sources on the research topic. The findings reveal that pesantren have a long history and unique characteristics closely related to the development of Islam in Indonesia. The development of pesantren can be categorized into three groups: Salaf (traditional), Khalaf (transitional), and Integrated. The Mu'adalah Educational Unit is an innovation that combines religious and general curricula in a balanced manner, reflecting the need for pesantren to adapt to the changing times. Initiatives such as Pesantren Luhur, Ma'had 'Aly, and Ma'had 'Aly as higher education institutions demonstrate the efforts of Pesantren to develop structured and systematic religious higher education. Overall, this transformation illustrates the endeavours of pesantren to adapt and integrate religious and general education, improve the quality and relevance of education, and contribute to the development of society and the Indonesian nation globally.*

Abstrak: pesantren di Indonesia merupakan lembaga pendidikan Islam tertua yang berkembang sesuai kebutuhan masyarakat modern, namun tanpa menghilangkan keunikannya. Perjalanan yang diraih oleh pesantren hingga mendapatkan payung hukum dari pemerintah sangat tidak mudah dan mengalami dinamika yang panjang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kepustakaan yang melalui beberapa langkah yakni identifikasi, seleksi, evaluasi, dan sintesis sumber-sumber literatur terkait topik penelitian. Hasil penelitian ini yakni Pesantren memiliki sejarah panjang dan karakteristik unik yang erat kaitannya dengan perkembangan Islam di Indonesia. Perkembangan pesantren dibagi menjadi tiga kategori: salaf, khalaf, dan terpadu. Satuan Pendidikan Mu'adalah adalah inovasi yang mengintegrasikan kurikulum agama dan umum secara seimbang, mencerminkan kebutuhan adaptasi pesantren terhadap perkembangan zaman. Rintisan Pesantren Luhur dan Ma'had 'Aly sebagai upaya pesantren dalam mengembangkan pendidikan tinggi keagamaan yang terstruktur dan sistematis. Secara keseluruhan, transformasi ini mencerminkan usaha pesantren untuk mengadaptasi dan mengintegrasikan pendidikan agama dan umum, meningkatkan kualitas dan relevansi pendidikan, serta berkontribusi dalam pembangunan masyarakat dan bangsa Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, or "pondok pesantren," are traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that have existed for centuries. These institutions play a crucial role in building individual character and morality and spreading Islamic values within society. However, in the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, Islamic boarding schools face various challenges in transforming and responding to the needs of the times.

These challenges include: First, social, economic, and political changes occurring in Indonesia and the world affect Islamic boarding schools as they strive to absorb and adapt to the needs of the times¹. Second, Islamic boarding schools are confronted with the need to integrate religious curriculum with the general curriculum and use technology in the learning process^{2,3}. Third, improving the quality of human resources required to face global competition, both in terms of knowledge and the ability to adapt to changing times⁴.⁵ also state that

competition exists in various fields, so Islamic boarding schools must be able to select progress by adopting beneficial aspects.

As centres of Islamic studies, these challenges have prompted Islamic boarding schools to continuously evolve and transform, giving birth to various typologies ranging from traditional to integrated boarding schools. Continuous transformation and change are necessary for Islamic boarding schools to address the educational needs of a modern society that not only requires Islamic studies as a primary need but also seeks to learn and deepen their understanding of science and technology as a manifestation of preaching and knowledge development. Otherwise, boarding schools will become less attractive to the community (Rohmatulloh et al., n.d.). Boarding schools must be preserved and require intensive attention concerning their development (Naldo et al., 2020). Boarding schools in Indonesia function as educational centers and religious institutions with a strong foundation against resistance during the colonial era⁶.

The theoretical framework employed in this research includes the Innovation Theory, which explains how Islamic boarding schools adopt innovations in their transformation processes⁷, and the Organizational Learning Theory, which explains how

¹ Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 2006).

² Abuddin Nata, *Integrasi Kurikulum Keagamaan Dan Kurikulum Umum: Sebuah Tantangan Bagi Pondok Pesantren* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2014).

³ Sukmadinata Nana Syaodih, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017).

⁴ Muhaimin, *Pendidikan Karakter: Konsep Dan Aplikasi Pesantren* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2016).

⁵ Moh In'ami, Lalu Thohir, and Sholehudin Sholehudin, 'Pesantren Vis a Vis Global Challenges, Strengthening Vision of Pesantren', *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 15, no. 2 (2 November 2020): 375, <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v15i2.7062>.

⁶ Siti Nur Hidayah, 'Pesantren for Middle-Class Muslims in Indonesia (Between Religious Commodification and Pious Neoliberalism)', *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 9, no. 1 (30 July 2021): 209, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v9i1.7641>.

⁷ Everett M Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

boarding schools develop learning capacities to face change.⁸

After a long-standing presence in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools have gained recognition from the government and have been granted legal protection. The legal foundation of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia refers to the regulations that govern and acknowledge the existence of these institutions as Islamic educational establishments. Some relevant legal foundations for Islamic boarding schools include the following: Firstly, the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945) Article 31, paragraph (1), which states that every citizen has the right to education, including religious education, as provided by Islamic boarding schools.

Secondly, Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (UUSPN) recognizes Islamic boarding schools as part of the national education system. Article 1, paragraph (5) states that non-formal education is an educational pathway implemented outside the formal education system, such as Islamic boarding schools. Article 15, paragraph (2) specifies that religious education as a mandatory local content must be taught at all levels and types of education. Thirdly, Law Number 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, Article 9, paragraph (1) states that education in Indonesia includes general, religious, and specialized education. Islamic boarding schools, such as institutes, academies, or universities, can provide religious higher education. Fourthly, Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 on Religious Education and Religious Affairs regulates the

implementation of religious education and religious affairs, including Islamic boarding schools. Article 18, paragraph (1) states that Islamic boarding schools are Islamic religious education institutions that provide non-formal and formal education.

Fifthly, the Minister of Religion Regulation Number 28 of 2016 on Islamic Boarding Schools regulates explicitly the implementation of Islamic boarding schools, including the rights and obligations of religious leaders, caretakers, students, and local governments in managing Islamic boarding schools. Article 4 states that Islamic boarding schools have functions and roles in developing religious education, religious affairs, and noble morals.

From these various legal foundations, Islamic boarding schools are recognized as Islamic education institutions that play a crucial role in the Indonesian national education system. Islamic boarding schools are free to develop curricula and learning methods suitable for their needs and traditions while contributing to the development of religious education and religious affairs in Indonesia.

Philosophically, Islamic boarding schools have fundamental principles that underpin the implementation and development of education systems in these institutions. These philosophical foundations originate from Islamic teachings and boarding school traditions emphasizing moral, intellectual, and communal values. The following points are among the philosophical foundations of Islamic boarding schools: Firstly, Tauhid (Oneness of God): Islamic boarding schools have a solid philosophical foundation in the concept of Tawhid, the belief and acknowledgement of the oneness of Allah SWT. Tawhid forms

⁸ Peter M Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1990).

the basis of education in Islamic boarding schools, where all aspects of life, including knowledge, are directed towards knowing and drawing closer to Allah. Secondly, Akhlaqul Karimah (Noble Morals): Islamic boarding schools emphasize the importance of noble morals as the primary goal of education. In addition to seeking knowledge, students are taught to practice noble morals daily, such as upholding honesty, simplicity, tolerance, and concern for others. Thirdly, Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar (Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil): Islamic boarding schools are committed to shaping proactive individuals in enjoining good and forbidding evil. This principle underlies teaching students to actively participate in community life and contribute to the common good. Fourthly, Ijtihad (Maximum Effort): Islamic boarding schools encourage students to always seek knowledge and perform good deeds. This principle emphasizes the importance of maximum effort in pursuing truth and perfection, both in knowledge and daily life practices.

Fifth, Islamic Brotherhood (*Ukhuwah Islamiyah*): Islamic boarding schools strengthen the brotherhood among students and the Islamic community in general. This principle serves as a foundation for building harmonious and tolerant relationships among followers of different religions and maintaining the integrity of the nation and state.

Islamic boarding schools as centres of Islamic study are always worthy of investigation, among other things, the uniqueness of the Indonesian Islamic boarding school institution: first, the challenges in maintaining scholarly traditions and Islamic values in the

midst of dynamic social changes^{9;10}. Second, Islamic boarding schools face the limitations of resources and infrastructure in facing transformation, such as limited access to technology and funding sources^{11;12}. Third, the potential for conflict between the younger generation, who are more open to change and the older generation, who tend to be conservative in managing Islamic boarding schools¹³. Thus, the researcher chose the transformation of Islamic boarding school institutions in Indonesia due to considerations of uniqueness as previously outlined.

METHOD

This article discusses the transformation of Islamic boarding school institutions into Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia through a literature research method. This study explores the historical development, challenges, and opportunities faced by Islamic boarding schools in the context of Indonesian education and socio-cultural aspects. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the changes occurring in Islamic boarding schools and their implications on the Indonesian education system and society.

Islamic boarding schools are traditional Islamic educational

⁹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011).

¹⁰ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Pesantren Dan Tantangan Masa Depan* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013).

¹¹ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren* (Jakarta: INIS, 1994).

¹² M. Zuhdi, *Manajemen Pesantren: Konsep, Strategi, dan Implementasi*. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012).

¹³ H. Nasution, *Generasi Muda Dan Pesantren Di Tengah Arus Perubahan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2009).

institutions that have long existed in Indonesia. The transformation of Islamic boarding schools is inseparable from Indonesia's social, political, and cultural dynamics. Therefore, this research employs a literature review method to comprehend the transformation of Islamic boarding school institutions in Indonesia. This study examines relevant literature, including books, journal articles, research reports, and electronic sources, to unearth information about the history, challenges, and opportunities faced by Islamic boarding schools in the context of Indonesian education and socio-cultural aspects.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

History and Characteristics of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia

Islamic boarding schools are traditional Islamic educational institutions originating from Indonesia. They play a crucial role in developing and disseminating Islam in Indonesia. The following is the history and characteristics of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and some relevant reference books.

First, the history of Islamic boarding schools. The genesis of Islamic boarding schools coincided with the spread of Islam in the archipelago since the 15th century. Initially, Islamic boarding schools served as centres for teaching Islamic religion and Islamic sciences. Historians associate Islamic boarding schools with the concept of "ribath," which originates from Islamic traditions in Persia and the Middle East.

During the Demak Sultanate era (16th century), Islamic boarding schools began to receive support from

the royal government. This enabled Islamic boarding schools to expand extensively and play a vital role in society.

Dutch colonialism: Throughout the Dutch colonial period (17th to 20th centuries), Islamic boarding schools experienced pressure from the colonial government. Nevertheless, these institutions persisted and became a foundation for resistance against the colonizers.

Indonesian independence: Following Indonesia's independence (1945), Islamic boarding schools gained recognition and support from the government. In 1975, the government launched the State Islamic Religious Education (PAIN) program, which allowed Islamic boarding schools to access funding and resources from the government.

Second, the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools teach Islamic sciences such as the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Akhlak, Islamic history, and Arabic language. Over time, some Islamic boarding schools have begun integrating the national curriculum into their educational system.

Learning methods in Islamic boarding schools employ halaqah-based learning (small groups), sorogan (reading texts together), and bandongan (discussion). These methods prioritize interaction between teachers and students. Regarding religiosity, Islamic boarding schools teach Islamic values and implement Islamic ways of life, such as performing congregational prayers, fasting, and regularly reading the Qur'an.

Students or santri in Islamic boarding schools reside in dormitories (pondok) led by a Kyai (senior teacher). This system allows students

to intensively learn and practice Islamic values.¹⁴

Development of Islamic Boarding Schools: Salaf Boarding Schools, Khalaf Boarding Schools, and Integrated Boarding Schools

The development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia can be categorized into three types: Salaf boarding schools, Khalaf boarding schools, and Integrated boarding schools. Salaf boarding schools are more conservative and follow traditional learning methods. These schools emphasize teaching classical Arabic texts (the yellow books), such as Fiqh, Tafsir, Hadith, Nahwu, etc. Salaf boarding schools typically do not incorporate the national education system or modern curriculum, focusing more on religious education.¹⁵ Meanwhile, *Khalaf* boarding schools are more modern and attempt to adapt contemporary learning methods. These schools integrate the national education system with teaching Islamic sciences, allowing students to acquire broader and more relevant knowledge in line with the evolving times. In addition to teaching classical texts, Khalaf boarding schools teach general subjects such as mathematics, natural sciences, languages, and history¹⁶.

Integrated boarding schools combine formal, non-formal, and informal education within a single educational system. In addition to teaching Islamic sciences and general subjects, Integrated boarding schools

also provide skills training, character development, and extracurricular activities. The goal is to produce graduates with skills, knowledge, and competent Islamic values¹⁷.

The development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia reflects society's social, cultural, and political changes. Salaf, Khalaf, and Integrated boarding schools offer various approaches to imparting Islamic education to the younger generation. Each type of boarding school has its strengths and weaknesses and different focuses on producing graduates ready to face the challenges of the times¹⁸.

Salaf boarding schools offer in-depth education on Islamic teachings and traditional values, strengthening their graduates' religious understanding and life. However, these schools may need to adequately prepare their graduates to face the dynamics of the times and global challenges.

In contrast, Khalaf and Integrated boarding schools accommodate the needs of the times by integrating national curricula and Islamic material and involving more holistic skills and character development. This approach assists the graduates of these boarding schools in navigating the workforce and broader social life without abandoning Islamic values.

The development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia also reflects the diversity and tolerance of the Indonesian nation. These various types of boarding schools can coexist and complement each other, contributing to the formation of a

¹⁴ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai*.

¹⁵ Karel A Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kurun Modern* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2015).

¹⁶ M. Dawam Raharjo, *Pesantren Dan Pembaharuan* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017).

¹⁷ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*.

¹⁸ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren*.

generation with noble character, competence, and self-reliance. Additionally, boarding schools serve as centres for cultural development and local wisdom, preserving traditions and high values originating from the surrounding communities.

In the political context, Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) also play a crucial role as the foundation for social movements and resistance against oppression, both during the colonial period and the era of independence. These boarding schools serve as a place for character development and fostering leadership spirit in the students, who later actively participate in advancing the nation and the state. Consequently, the development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia reflects social, cultural, and political changes and contributes significantly to building a religious, tolerant, and progressive society.

The Mu'adalah Educational Unit in Islamic Boarding Schools

The Mu'adalah Educational Unit is an education system implemented in some Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. This system combines the general education curriculum (as applied in schools) with the pesantren curriculum, which emphasizes Islamic studies. The education system is designed to produce graduates with balanced knowledge and skills between worldly and spiritual knowledge. The Mu'adalah Educational Unit has several characteristics:¹⁹

First, **Integrated Curriculum:** Combining the general (national)

education curriculum with the pesantren curriculum, which includes religious subjects, Arabic language, and classical texts (yellow books).²⁰

Second, **Learning Methods:** Using various learning methods, such as sorogan, bandongan, and halaqah, as well as lecture, discussion, and assignment methods commonly applied in schools.²¹

Third, **Assessment System:** Using an assessment system that combines academic grades (exams, assignments, and classroom participation) and non-academic grades (participation in religious and pesantren activities).²²

Fourth, **Dormitory Environment:** Providing dormitory facilities for students, allowing them to intensively study religious knowledge and practice Islamic values daily.²³

The Mu'adalah Educational Unit in Islamic boarding schools is an innovative pesantren education system that seeks to address contemporary challenges and societal needs. This system offers holistic and integrated education, resulting in graduates with balanced competencies between religious and general knowledge.

Mu'adalah education has yet to be explicitly regulated in the Law (UU) or Minister of Religion Regulations (PMA). However, the concept of education that combines the general education curriculum with the pesantren curriculum, as found in the Mu'adalah education system, can be

¹⁹ N. Fathurrohman, *Satuan Pendidikan Mu'adalah: Konsep Dan Implementasi Di Pondok Pesantren* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2017).

²⁰ S.B. Djamarah, *Strategi Belajar Mengajar* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2016).

²¹ B. Musthafa, *Metode Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab*. (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2011).

²² Fathurrohman, *Satuan Pendidikan Mu'adalah: Konsep Dan Implementasi Di Pondok Pesantren*.

²³ M. Asy'ari, *Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2015).

found in several legislative regulations in Indonesia, especially those related to Islamic religious education and pesantren. The following are some relevant references:

First, Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas): This law regulates the implementation of education in Indonesia, including Islamic religious education. Article 12, paragraph (2) states that religious education can be organized through public educational units, madrasahs, and Islamic boarding schools.

Second, Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education regulates higher education in Indonesia, including Islamic higher education. Article 47, paragraph (2) states that religious higher education institutions, including Islamic higher education institutions, can organize study programs that combine religious knowledge with general knowledge or specific expertise.

Third, Minister of Religion Regulation No. 28 of 2012 on Madrasah Education: This PMA regulates the implementation of madrasah education in Indonesia, including the madrasah curriculum that combines religious knowledge with general knowledge. Article 6, paragraph (1) states that the madrasah curriculum consists of local, national, and specific religious content.

Fourth, Minister of Religion Regulation No. 5 of 2020 on the National Standards of Pesantren Education: This PMA regulates the national standards of pesantren education, including the pesantren curriculum that combines religious knowledge with general knowledge. Article 12, paragraph (1) states that the pesantren curriculum consists of

local content, national content, and specific pesantren content.

Although Mu'adalah education is not explicitly regulated in the law or minister of religion regulations, some of the aforementioned legislative regulations indicate that the concept of education that combines religious knowledge with general knowledge has been accommodated within the national education system and pesantren.

The Pioneering of Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools, Ma'had 'Aly, and Ma'had 'Aly as Higher Education Institutions

The pioneering of Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools, Ma'had 'Aly, and Ma'had 'Aly as higher education institutions represent several innovations in the Islamic education system in Indonesia, aimed at improving the quality of religious education and producing graduates with balanced academic competencies and skills between religious and general knowledge.

Pioneering Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools: Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools are an innovative form of pesantren development in Indonesia, emphasising higher religious education.²⁴ Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools offer study programs combining religious knowledge with general or specific expertise, such as economics, law, and education. Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools have an integrated curriculum between formal and religious education and more flexible and inclusive learning methods. The aim is to produce graduates with expertise in religious

²⁴ M. Arif, *Transformasi Pesantren Di Indonesia: Sejarah Dan Perkembangan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2019).

and general knowledge, an Islamic character and noble morals.

Ma'had 'Aly is a higher religious education institution that teaches Islamic studies, such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and kalam. Ma'had 'Aly is usually affiliated with Islamic boarding schools and provides study programs equivalent to undergraduate (S1) or master's (S2) programs in public higher education institutions. In addition to teaching religious knowledge, Ma'had 'Aly also offers general subjects, such as language, mathematics, and social sciences, as well as skills training and character development. Graduates of Ma'had 'Aly are expected to have extensive and in-depth knowledge of Islam and be able to face contemporary challenges and contribute to national and state development.

It should be noted that the findings of this research on the pioneering of Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools, Ma'had 'Aly, and Ma'had 'Aly as higher education institutions still need to be more widely studied. However, the results of this research can provide a general overview of the innovations and development of the Islamic education system in Indonesia, including higher religious education

CONCLUSION

This study explores the transformation of Islamic boarding school institutions in Indonesia, focusing on their history and characteristics, development, Mu'adalah Education Units, and the pioneering of Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools, Ma'had 'Aly, and Ma'had 'Aly as higher education institutions. The following are the conclusions that can be drawn from the research:

Islamic boarding schools have a long history and unique characteristics

in Indonesia, closely related to the development of Islam in the country. These schools serve as educational institutions that teach religious knowledge and local wisdom and play a vital role in shaping the character and personality of their students.

The development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia can be categorized into three types: salaf, Khalaf, and integrated boarding schools. Salaf boarding schools are traditional institutions that emphasize teaching classical Islamic texts, while khalaf boarding schools combine general and religious education within their systems. Integrated boarding schools represent a modern form of Islamic boarding schools encompassing various aspects of education, including academic, religious, and practical skills.

Mu'adalah Education Units represent an innovation in the Islamic boarding school education system, aiming to integrate religious and general curricula in a balanced manner. This reflects the need for Islamic boarding schools to adapt to the changing times and improve the quality of education provided to their students.

The pioneering of Luhur Islamic Boarding Schools, Ma'had 'Aly, and Ma'had 'Aly as higher education institutions represent Islamic boarding schools' efforts to develop more structured and systematic religious higher education. This demonstrates the transformation of Islamic boarding schools in response to the societal need for high-quality education relevant to the times' challenges.

Overall, the transformation of Islamic boarding school institutions in Indonesia reflects a continuous effort to adapt and integrate religious and general education and enhance the

quality and relevance of education provided to students. In a broader context, this transformation signifies the commitment of Islamic boarding schools to contribute to the development of Indonesian society and the nation.

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