

Transformation of Islamic Boarding Schools in the Era of Globalization

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ABSTRAK

Perubahan yang berlangsung cepat, menuntut kemampuan pesantren untuk merespon secara cepat, tepat, dan adaptif. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif- fenomenologi, studi ini mencoba melihat dinamika perubahan yang dihadapi oleh Pesantren Nurul Islam. Dari hasil studi yang dilakukan disimpulkan bahwa adaptasi perubahan dengan model pemeliharaan atau pelestarian nilai-nilai lokal (*localities*) yang positif dan bermanfaat bagi pesantren. Sebagai agen perubahan, pesantren (Nurul Islam) berpartisipasi aktif dalam perubahan sosial masyarakat sekitarnya. Selain itu, pembinaan kepribadian bertujuan mempersiapkan para santri untuk memiliki ilmu agama dan non agama agar menjadi manusia yang berkepribadian Islam yang mampu mengamalkan ilmunya. Sistem kepribadian yang dibentuk pesantren Nurul Islam adalah mampu menghadapi dan merespon perubahan tanpa menafikan aspek akhlak. Bahkan, pesantren Nurul Islam mencoba memadukan dan mengintegrasikan sistem sekolah dan pesantren untuk melahirkan generasi-generasi yang benar benar handal dalam bidangnya. Pesantren dengan keunggulan *soft skill*nya dan Lembaga formal dengan keunggulan *life skill*nya akan menjadi solusi pendidikan yang adaptif terhadap perkembangan jaman.

Kata Kunci: *Perubahan sosial, Keberlangsungan Pesantren, dan Adaptasi Perubahan*

ABSTRACT

Rapid change requires the ability of pesantren to respond quickly, appropriately and adaptively. Using a qualitative-phenomenological approach, this study tries to see the dynamics of change faced by the Nurul Islam Islamic Boarding School. From the results of the research conducted, it was concluded that changes in adaptation to the model of maintaining or preserving local values (locality) are positive and beneficial for Islamic boarding schools. As agents of change, Islamic boarding schools (Nurul Islam) actively participate in social change in the surrounding community. In addition, personality training aims to prepare students to have religious and non-religious knowledge to become people with Islamic personalities who are able to practice their knowledge. The personality system formed by the Nurul Islam Islamic boarding school is able to face and respond to changes without denying the moral aspect. In fact, the Nurul Islam Islamic boarding school tries to combine and integrate the school system and the Islamic boarding school to produce a generation that is truly skilled in their fields. Islamic boarding schools with superior soft skills and formal institutions with superior life skills will be educational solutions that are adaptive to current developments.

Keywords: *Social Change, Sustainability of Islamic Boarding Schools, and Adaptation to Change*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools are the oldest Islamic educational institutions that were born and grew from Indonesian culture that is *indigeneous*. Pesantren grew on the initiative and support of the community, and was driven by strong community demand and needs. Although historically it is not known for sure since when pesantren first existed in Indonesia, the opinion of some historians can be known that pesantren in Indonesia have existed since the time of Wali Songo. It is not an exaggeration to say that the education of Islamic boarding schools that has developed to date with its various models, is always in harmony with the soul, spirit, and personality of the Indonesian nation, which is majority Muslim (Sulton and Moh. Khusnuridlo; 2006).

The position of the pesantren that continues to survive to this day can be seen from the study of Horikoshi (1987) in West Java on the role of Kiai in social change called "*true entrepreneur*". Departing from the conception of the mediator, Kiai's success in playing his role depends on his charismatic qualities. Furthermore, Dhofier (1994), through what he called the term "pesantren tradition". Describe and observe how the changes that occurred in the pesantren and traditional Islamic environment in Java which in the modern Indonesian period today still show its vitality as a social, cultural and religious force that contributes to shaping the building of modern Indonesian culture. Furthermore, Steenbrink (1994) said that the modernization carried out by pesantren "refuses while following" where in the implementation of the madrasah education system by adopting the positive aspects of the Dutch colonial educational heritage, especially methodological

aspects and general materials that are integrated with Islamic religious education, as a characteristic of surau and pesantren education. Therefore, Azyumardi Azra (1997) described Islamic boarding schools in his writing: "Pesantren: Continuity and Change" that the sustainability of pesantren lies in the aspect of 'traditionalism' (read: habituation through the basic values of pesantren schools), then make substantial changes in the learning system and institutions to adapt to the needs of the times that continue to develop.

Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is an Islamic boarding school institution that emphasizes the quality aspect of education. The quality of consolidation in the education sector can be seen from the accreditation value of formal educational institutions. In addition, also in the sector of strengthening religious values, the Nurul Islam Ulum Islamic Boarding School, has a vision of building the religious quality of students from an early age. The program offered at the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is located in the pattern of integration between religious education and general education. Who is an expert in religious science and science. The products offered are, of course, with the character of the Islamic boarding school. Recitation of the yellow book with the character of aswajaan *an-nahdliyah*. In addition, it is also to strengthen the capabilities of boarding school students and facilitate formal institutions for students from elementary institutions to universities.

The Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School shows a strong ability to adapt in facing the current of changing times without abandoning its Islamic identity. As a traditional educational institution, Nurul Ulum has integrated classical curriculum (such as the study of the yellow book) with the national curriculum to prepare students to face the challenges of modern times. This merger allows graduates not only to have a deep understanding of religion, but also to be able to compete in the world of formal and professional education. This step reflects the efforts of Islamic boarding schools to remain relevant while maintaining the Islamic scientific heritage.

The Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School shows a strong ability to adapt in facing the current of changing times, without abandoning its Islamic identity. By integrating the traditional curriculum (yellow book) and the national curriculum, as well as utilizing digital technology in the learning and da'wah process, this pesantren has succeeded in bridging the spiritual and intellectual needs of students in the modern era. In addition, the development of Islamic boarding school business units such as cooperatives and organic agriculture shows a real step towards economic independence. The active role in social activities also makes Nurul Ulum not only a center for religious education, but also an agent of social change in society. However, challenges such as limited access to technology for some teachers and resistance to innovation remain homework that must be faced on an ongoing basis.

In the midst of technological developments, Nurul Ulum has also begun to implement digitalization in learning and da'wah activities. The use of social media, online learning platforms, and video documentation of religious studies is a means to expand the reach of education to the wider community. In addition, the communication system between guardians of students and caregivers is also strengthened through digital applications, making the coaching

process more transparent and structured. This transformation marks a paradigm shift in pesantren that was previously closed to becoming more open to innovation and information.

Using a qualitative-phenomenological approach, this study tries to see the dynamics of changes faced by the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in facing the development of the times.

METHOD

This study uses a *qualitative descriptive* method, in the view of Lexy (2004) understanding the phenomenon of the sustainability of pesantren in the face of changes that occur in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods. (Danim:2002) When viewed from the tendency of this study, namely a case study, namely the Nurul Ulum Panti Jember Islamic boarding school which is carried out intensively, in detail and in depth on a certain object by studying it as a case. (Source: 1995) This study takes place at the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, based on a reality that the development of Islamic boarding school educational institutions from year to year is increasing.

The approach used in the research is a qualitative-phenomenological approach. Meanwhile, the object of this research is the transformation of Islamic boarding schools, by taking various informants consisting of kyai, madrasah heads, and the community. The collection of research subjects was carried out by *purposive sampling*. The data collection techniques use interviews, observations, and documentation; and the analysis of the data can be done by following the method proposed by Miles and Huberman, namely; Data reduction, *data display* and take conclusions and verification.

Through this qualitative-phenomenological approach, the researcher seeks to understand the meaning behind the transformation process that occurred at the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in the context of daily life and the socio-cultural dynamics that surround it. The transformation in question is not only limited to physical and institutional aspects, but also touches on the dimensions of values, mindsets, and educational systems run by Islamic boarding schools. This process is intensively observed through direct interaction with key informants in the pesantren environment, so that the data obtained is in-depth and contextual. Triangulation techniques are also used to ensure the validity of the data, by comparing interview results, observation notes, and available documents. Thus, this study not only describes changes descriptively, but also reveals how actors in pesantren give meaning to these changes and what strategies they take to maintain the sustainability of the institution in the midst of the challenges of the times.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School: A Model for Adaptation to Change

Pesantren is very clear when looking at the function of pesantren which positions itself as a religious education institution (Islam) which remains the center *of tafaquh fi al-din* which functions to maintain, develop and utilize Islamic sciences. The adaptation of the Nurul Ulum pesantren to the community environment as an educational institution, its spread has given a lot of shares in the formation of a religious society.

The Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is a clear example of a model of adaptation to change in the midst of the accelerating flow of modernization. This pesantren is able to combine strong traditional values, such as the recitation of the yellow book and adab-based lifestyle, with institutional innovation and information technology. Adaptation is carried out gradually but consistently, starting from the integration of the general curriculum into the early childhood education system, the implementation of digital-based management, to the development of student business units as a form of economic independence. In addition, the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is also active in building institutional networks with government and private agencies, opening wider opportunities in the fields of education and social society. The resilience of this institution in responding to change cannot be separated from visionary leadership, a strong but inclusive role of kiai, and the active involvement of the surrounding community. With this approach, Nurul Ulum not only survived, but also developed as a modern pesantren that remained rooted in classical Islamic values.

The success of the adaptation of the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is also evident from its ability to read the needs of the times without sacrificing its identity as an Islamic educational institution. One of the manifestations is the readiness of Islamic boarding schools to face the challenges of digitalization, by providing information technology training for students and educators, as well as utilizing social media as a means of da'wah and publication of activities. In addition, pesantren also provides space for students to develop their potential through extracurricular activities, organizations, and entrepreneurship training. This step not only produces scientifically sound graduates, but also is ready to enter society as independent, adaptive, and competitive individuals. With a combination of traditional values and innovation, the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has transformed into a dynamic model of pesantren in the face of social, cultural, and technological changes.

Habibah, who is a resident of Kemuingsari Lor village and also an ustadah at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, said that the role of the pesantren with its various components is a provision in the process of development and social change that leads to a community order with character and becoming a whole human being (*insân al-kâmil*). Islamic boarding schools have a role in the development of the character of science, both culturally starting from the construction of the kiai tradition, reciting the yellow book to the construction of knowledge and practice.

As a civilizational institution, pesantren is time to pay attention to the demands of the developing era. In addition to carrying out the function of maintaining or preserving good, *positive and beneficial local values (localities)* for pesantren it is also time to adapt it as long as it does not destroy the locality. Therefore, as agents of change, pesantren are educational institutions from and for the community, or community-based institutions, so pesantren are required to actively participate in social change in the surrounding community.

Personality Coaching: Capital Responds to Change

The achievement of *the goal attainment* of the pesantren is very clear, in the historical perspective the purpose of pesantren education at the beginning of its development is to develop

Islam, and better understand the teachings of Islam, especially in the fields of jurisprudence, Arabic language, tafsir, hadith, and Sufism.

Dhofier explained that the technical pesantren is the residence of the students (2011). This definition shows the most important characteristic of pesantren which is a completely total educational environment. This means that all activities in the pesantren environment have educational value. Pesantren is a place to learn more deeply and further about Islamic religious science which is taught systematically, directly from Arabic-language sources and based on classic books written by great scholars who are taught with more time in pesantren.

Pesantren has a strategic function in shaping the personality and character of students holistically, which is an important capital in responding to various social, cultural, and technological changes. As an educational institution based on Islamic values, pesantren not only teaches religious knowledge, but also instills manners, ethics, responsibility, and an attitude of independence and honesty in daily life. These values are formed through simple habits, discipline in worship, and intense interaction between students and kiai, which become direct examples in behavior and morals.

The strong character formed in the pesantren environment makes the students have mental toughness, independence of thinking, and high social sensitivity. In the face of global changes such as modernization and digitalization, Islamic boarding school students are generally not easily carried away by the current, but are able to be critical and selective. They are equipped with strong moral endurance to filter out outside influences and stick to religious principles. This is what makes pesantren a moral fortress in the midst of rapid change of times.

In addition, personality development in Islamic boarding schools is also directed at the development of leadership spirit and social responsibility. Many Islamic boarding schools provide space for students to manage internal organizations such as student councils, student cooperatives, or community service activities. This experience strengthens leadership character, communication skills, and conflict management, which are indispensable in dealing with the outside world. Santri is formed not only as a personal pious individual, but also as an agent of change who brings Islamic values to the community.

Thus, pesantren plays a central role as a center for solid character development. In the midst of a world that continues to change and is full of moral challenges, Islamic boarding school graduates are expected to be able to become tough, moral, and adaptive individuals. This character is the main capital in responding to changes wisely without losing the direction of values and identity.

Pesantren is an educational institution that provides teaching up to all hours (24 hours). In Islamic boarding schools, this has become the agenda of daily activities. For 24 hours every day, from day to day, month to month, year to year, kyai along with all ustadz and ustadzah always guide, teach, and educate their students both by example in the way of life (simple, tawakkal, sincere always, gratitude, generous, and so on), exemplary in the discipline of worship (the discipline of praying five times in congregation, the discipline of fasting), and by teaching the knowledge they have in the spirit of devotion to Allah Almighty Creator.

The purpose of pesantren education in general is to solve it with silver, and of course pesantren

will strive to achieve this goal. Likewise, the purpose of the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School education is to produce Muslim people who *are Tafuqquh FiSwansea*, Muslim individuals who are in accordance with the teachings of Allah SWT and practice these teachings in various aspects of their lives. Therefore, the Islamic boarding school will certainly adhere to the concept and teachings of religion. The formation of a cultured society (*civil society*) is when Islamic boarding schools are committed to religious values, because with religion people can step on a clear footing. The vision and mission of the Nurul Ulum Jember Islamic Boarding School formulate its vision, which is to produce intelligent and moral students with the mission: 1) to increase confidence in ahlussunnah wal jama'ah; 2) forming a personality with noble character; 3) increase and foster the spirit of learning; and 4) increase awareness as a social creature who is religious, national and state.

Kyai Hanif Abdur Rozak, who is the caretaker of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, said that the integration of religious and non-religious knowledge, so that the graduates produced have a complete and unanimous personality in him combined elements of faith and knowledge in a balanced manner. It further said:

"The Islamic boarding school that he is managing is an Islamic educational institution that in the implementation of its education carries out the process of fostering knowledge, attitudes and skills related to religious aspects (*tafaqquh fi al-din*). The institution adopted religious and general sciences to balance the intellectual and spiritual or between worldly and ukhrowi life. With the hope of providing a complete education for its students to answer all the challenges of the times without abandoning religious teachings".

When viewed from the context of the above idea, the purpose of pesantren education is twofold. First, the special goal is to prepare students to have religious and non-religious knowledge. Second, the general goal is to guide students to become human beings with Islamic personalities who are able to practice their knowledge. This is what is termed as the character of independent living, which comes from its own value system. The personality system formed by the Islamic boarding school institution is to be a human being who gives birth to students who have an Islamic personality and are able to apply their knowledge and have morals.

Institutional Integration: Efforts to Modernize Islamic Boarding Schools

The essence of education is an effort to bring students to be able to explore their potential into a real reality. Therefore, the activities and teaching and learning process in an education are the growth and development of students in accordance with their potential. In developing the potentials that exist in students, it is understood that a good education must answer three domains of humanity, namely the cognitive (intellectual) domain, the affective (emotional) domain, and the psychomotor domain. No educational process is considered perfect if you leave one of the three realms. Education that tends to the cognitive realm will give birth to a generation that is intellectually genius but emotionally dry and low in quality.

The modernization of pesantren is not only carried out through the renewal of learning methods, but also through institutional integration that includes structural, administrative, and external relationship aspects. Institutional integration means that pesantren begin to open up and

establish synergies with formal institutions, both the government, higher education institutions, and the private sector, without losing their traditional characteristics. This effort allows pesantren to gain legal recognition, access to funding, and professional institutional capacity building.

One of the tangible forms of this integration is the formation of formal educational units such as Madrasah Tsanawiyah, MA, and vocational schools in the pesantren environment. This allows students to obtain a state-recognized diploma while still carrying out early education. This integration also makes it easier for students to continue their studies to a higher level at public or private universities without having to leave the Islamic boarding school. In addition, Islamic boarding schools have also begun to implement information technology-based management, such as digital administration systems, modern financial reporting, and competency-based curriculum.

Not only in the field of education, institutional integration also includes cooperation in the field of economic and social empowerment. Many Islamic boarding schools have established partnerships with agencies such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, SOEs, or donor institutions to develop economic independence programs, student entrepreneurship training, and productive zakat and waqf management. With a strong institutional network, pesantren not only survive modernization, but also participate in being an active part of national development.

This institutional integration effort shows that pesantren are no longer exclusive and closed, but inclusive and adaptive to the times. Institutional modernization does not mean eliminating Islamic identity, but rather strengthening the role of pesantren as superior educational, social, and economic institutions. In this context, institutional integration is an important key to making pesantren a center of progressive and sustainable change

Kyai Hanif Abd. Rozak explained that in transforming the educational institution of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school using the concept of "*Almuhafadzoh Alal Qodimil Sholih Wal Ahdu Fil Jadidil Aslah*" [maintaining a good old culture and taking a new and better culture]. For this reason, integration with formal institutions such as vocational schools will provide a forum for students and the public in general to be able to develop creativity, ideals and religious expertise supported by other skills.

Hasbullah said that the new tendency carried out by Islamic boarding schools in order to renovate this new system can be seen in the Islamic boarding school education system which is starting to be familiar with scientific methods so that it is more open to developments outside itself, diversifying programs and activities and can function as a center for community development.

So the effort to integrate the education of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school with formal education (SMK) is one of the modernization concepts carried out by the Islamic boarding school to meet the demands of the future in the global era because actually only superior humans will be able to survive (*the survival of the fittest*), so it may be that the efforts made by this Islamic boarding school are a description of provisions for life competition in the future.

Mahrus Sadikin as the principal of SMK Nurul Ulum said that cognitive knowledge followed by emotional awareness alone cannot explore the potential of reality optimally, but must be followed by the cultivation of the psychomotor realm. With knowledge and awareness created due to the possession of intellectual knowledge and having the desire to act by emotional impulses, but it is

not possible to really realize a real action due to the uncultivated psychomotor realm. The cultivation of the psychomotor realm is related to the development of the ethos of honesty, hard work, professionalism, politeness, and social in the form of discipline and real exercises.

Thus, Islamic education, in the process, includes an intensive program of intellectual improvement and reviving spiritual aspects that can eventually become capital for living in the nation's culture that is always developing along with the achievement of the progress of human civilization.

The existence of pesantren has been tested in every dynamic of the changing times. However, it does not mean that pesantren can remain silent or be indifferent and indifferent to globalization. On the contrary, pesantren must respond by reevaluating and reorienting according to the needs of the community and the development of the times.

Nurul Ulum Vocational School education is more geared towards the world of work and is required to be directly involved in contact with the outside world. Of course, in addition to the knowledge needed to explore further about the business world or the world of technology, they are also required to have the provision of character in order to be able to filter the influence of negative influences from the outside world itself. Especially seeing the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency which is increasing in its graph every year. Therefore, it is a must for Islamic boarding schools or people who care about education to realize vocational and technology-based high schools that produce graduates who have IMTAQ and science and technology.

As a formal educational institution, pesantren-based vocational schools have advantages in terms of human resource development compared to vocational schools outside pesantren which tend to emphasize less moral education. The advantages of pesantren-based vocational schools are because pesantren-based vocational schools develop three values at once, namely character (moral), spiritual, and knowledge and skills. Pesantren-based vocational schools are schools that combine the formal education system in schools and the pesantren education system. The students not only study but also live and live together in the institution for 24 hours.

A person who has *life skills* or skills without a mature mental attitude, may not be enthusiastic in working and working just because of his mental unpreparedness in facing challenges and obstacles. However, for people who have been equipped with adequate *soft skills* education, they will face these challenges and obstacles with various creative alternative solutions.

For the development of *soft skills*, the coaching & education model that is applied should use *authentic learning*, where students are faced with real problems so that they are used to various problems in life. When they are used to being faced with various problems in life, it finally makes them creative people in finding solutions to problems. Judging from the reality, Islamic boarding schools are one of the educational institutions whose educational pattern is very identical to *authentic learning*.

The phenomenon of the increasing number of Islamic boarding schools that establish vocational schools is a positive thing, because pesantren is a subculture of society that inevitably has to respond to the needs of the community in general, of course all of that is accompanied by good management, so that the quality of vocational schools in Islamic boarding schools is not

inferior to vocational schools outside the Islamic boarding school. The combination of vocational schools and Islamic boarding schools, each of which has its own specialties, will give birth to generations that are truly reliable in their fields. Pesantren with the advantages of *soft skills and vocational schools with the advantages of life skills* will be educational solutions that are adaptive to the development of the times.

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of national education in Indonesia, pesantren can be said to be a sub-system of national education. As one of the providers of (traditional) Islamic education in Indonesia on the one hand, and in its capacity as a sub-system of national education on the other, Islamic boarding schools have carried out one of the functions and goals of National Education, which is to educate the life of the nation through various activities that it carries out. Elan Vital, the academic tradition of pesantren refers to a complete learning process, which features a figure of pesantren graduates who have broad insights, mature personality, and high ability to carry out social engineering, making pesantren still exist following the development of the times.

From the explanation above, it is concluded as follows. *First*, adapting changes to a model of maintaining or preserving local values (*localities*) that are positive and beneficial to the pesantren. As an agent of change, the pesantren (Nurul Ulum) actively participates in the social change of the surrounding community. *Second*, personality development aims to prepare students to have religious and non-religious knowledge in order to become human beings with Islamic personalities who are able to practice their knowledge. The personality system formed by the Nurul Ulum pesantren is to be able to face and respond to changes without denying the moral aspect. *Third*, combining and integrating the school system and Islamic boarding schools to produce generations who are truly reliable in their fields. Pesantren with the advantages of *soft skills and vocational schools with the advantages of life skills* will be educational solutions that are adaptive to the development of the times.

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