
ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL (PONDOK PESANTREN), INDEPENDENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

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Abstrak

Penerapan sistem pembelajaran di Pondok Pesantren biasanya meninggalkan jejak dalam ingatan para santri yang pada gilirannya akan menjadikannya cara pandang yang dapat diterapkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, baik dalam cara berpikirnya. dan ketika mereka melakukan perbuatan baik yang diberkati oleh Tuhan. Selain itu, Pondok Pesantren yang memiliki peran strategis dan telah lama mengakar dalam masyarakat Indonesia memiliki kekuatan tersendiri dalam membangkitkan semangat dan gairah santri untuk maju menuju kehidupan yang lebih sejahtera dan mandiri. Nilai-nilai yang dipelajari di sekolah, khususnya nilai-nilai kemandirian, telah mendorong santri untuk mengamalkan nilai-nilai tersebut di masyarakat. Berangkat dari latar belakang tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran tentang pesantren yang mengajarkan kehidupan mandiri kepada para santrinya yang pada gilirannya kelak ketika mereka lulus dapat memberdayakan masyarakat di mana mereka tinggal.

Kata Kunci : pesantren; transformasi budaya; pemberdayaan masyarakat.

Abstract

Implementation of the learning system at Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pondok Pesantren* – commonly called in Indonesia) usually leaves an imprint in the memory of the students who in turn will make it perspective that can be applied in their everyday lives, both in their ways of thinking and when they make good deeds blessed by the God. In addition, the Islamic Boarding School that plays strategic roles and has long been rooted in the Indonesian society has its own force in arousing the spirit and passion of the students to advance towards more prosperous and independent life. The values learned in the school, in particular its values of self-reliance, have encouraged the *santri* to practice these values in the society. Coming from such background, this research aims to provide an overview of the boarding schools that teach independent life to the students who in turn, when they graduate, they may empower the community in which they live.

Keywords : *islamic boarding school; cultural transformation; community empowerment.*

INTRUDUCTION

Islamic Boarding School, an authentic Indonesian religious education institution has a very long history. Cak Nur, as Mr. Nurchalish Madjid is usually

called, once said that Islamic boarding schools were artifacts of Indonesian civilization processes that had transformed themselves into traditional, unique and indigenous religious education institutions. As a civilization artifact, the Islamic boarding schools certainly have strong connection with the history and culture that developed from the first time of its inception. In addition, Islamic boarding schools have had historical relationship with the other pre-Islamic institutions existed since Hinduism-Buddhism hegemony, so these educational institutions have just been continuing the educational culture through the Islamization process with all of their forms of adjustment and changes. (Nurcholish Majid, 1997).

When Islam began to spread in the archipelago, the preaching that was initially spread face to face in person, as time fled and increasing enthusiasm of the community at that time, had developed in such way that the activities needed more extensive facilities to accommodate more and more members of the community. Islamic teachings are then taught at *langgar*, *surau* or *mushala*. Then followed, people needed more specific facilities to learn and intensify their knowledge on Islam as the *da'i*, the Islamic missionaries, wished when they were trying to propagate the teachings and giving birth to more successors of their struggles in educating the people. That's why they started to build Islamic Boarding Schools. The Islamic Boarding School is an educational institution with its own specific educational curriculum and system. Not only equipped with worldly knowledge, the school also teaches knowledge of *ukhrawi*, the things about the life after death. Students are taught maximally and intensively, the school also teaches the values of discipline and life.

For this reason, no one should underestimate this educational institution. In reality the boarding school has become a sub-culture of the people who love peace, adaptive and accommodative to the dynamics of society and at the same time maintain its position in its own corridors restrained by the existing laws and traditions and upholding the mandated care to the community around the school location. One cleric Kyai Sahal Mafudz (2001) views that the essence of a *Pesantren*, as the Islamic Boarding School is usually called, is a *tafaqquh fiddin* institution, i.e. an institution that studies and develops *al-'ulum al-shari'a*, the science or teachings of Islam. However, recently there has been a tendency to expand the function of the Islamic Boarding Schools to be more than just religious (educational) institutions. Now the boarding school serves also as a social organization, its duties are no longer limited only to religious issues, but also responding to the issues of community and lives. Muhtarom said that the education at the Islamic boarding schools has at least five major contributions to community. First, the education of *pesantren* as an institution that preserves the traditions; second, as a means of transferring the knowledge of Islam; and third, as a form of Islamic transmission; fourth, promoting the awareness of cultural identity; and fifth, giving contributions to the politics. Its function of Islam transmission, the figure of a devoted *kyai* (expert) in the science of Islam plays major contribution in the transmission of Islam, especially towards the *santri*, (students) and the surrounding communities. In the beginning, the *santri* who studied at the Islamic boarding school

only came to school at certain times such as when they wanted to perform *shalat* (prayers) and *pengajian* (gathering to recite and - study the Koran).

The students of these type are stereotypically called "*santri kalong*" which means the student who came at night only like a *kalong* (bat). Later, the boarding schools also construct and provide a place to stay or spend the night for the students. The schools then require the students to live in the premises of the boarding school in order to facilitate the school easy control over them and to make the educational process more efficient. The students who lived at the boarding school are called "*santri mukim*", the students residing or having accommodation at the school's boarding house, in order to facilitate their learning process and establish closer relationship between teacher and students. The relationship between *kyai* and *santri* are emotional relationship. According to Cerulo (2019) "we can identify a series of factors that resume some feature of emotions if studied from an interactionist point of view : first the emotions, like other aspects of the human conduct (attitude, ideas, behavior), are subject to the social effect, the second, the emotions are activated directly by social interactions" (Cerulo, 2019). *Kyai* and *Santri* have social trust and its influences on the development of social capital among *kyai* and *santri*. Generally speaking, a social capital perspective and includes all of focus of interpersonal relations, connections, affiliations, cooperation, solidarity, and trust. It can be seen as a string, necessary for development of social networks, organization and association (Kovacevic, Sijokovic and Petrovic, 2019).

The Islamic boarding schools have long been playing strategic roles and been rooted in the society. They are a distinctive force in generating the spirit and passion of the community to achieve the progress towards a more prosperous life. Especially in facing the era of globalization that has an impact on various changes, especially in the fields of economics and socio-culture, and one needs also to pay attention to the movement of the schools in appreciating the currently stronger globalization and modernization process nowadays.

Empowerment can be interpreted as a process to be more powerful, or the process to gain power / force, ability, and or the process of promoting power / energy / ability from the party that has the ability to do so to the lesser ones or to the powerless ones. In other words empowerment can be defined as a process to become more powerful, or the process of gaining power / energy / ability. In connection with the context of the roles of the Islamic boarding schools, empowerment here should be interpreted as a process, method, action to empower and promote the willingness, ability, and trust to the community, so that the community can be actively and dynamically involved in a community movement that is carried out methodically, efficiently and in an organized manner in the programs the schools implement for the community. In terms of development, community empowerment is a development process in which the communities should take the initiative to start the social activities to improve their own condition and status. Community empowerment can only occur if its members actively participate in the process. A business may only be considered successful in "empowering community " if the community or members of the community have become agents of development, also

known as a subject of development. The term subject here is the driving force, and not just the beneficiaries or objects. In the context of this definition, the subject must be independent. The subject must have the liberty in leading the community to change to a better condition. In this paper, the subject is the Islamic boarding school that promotes the changes in the society. Research Question this research that how provide an overview of the boarding schools that teach independent life to the students who in turn, when they graduate, they may empower the community in which they live?.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses literature study related to the topic in question. *Santri*, the students of the Islamic Boarding School as they usually called, should have a view that the community needs to be independent. People need to help themselves. The presence of the boarding school, with the clerics and students as two of its components, should be able to empower the local community with the values that may play as the driving force to make them more independent. The values taught in the boarding school, especially the values of self-reliance, should have encouraged the *santri* to practice these values in the community. The *santri* should have a view that the community needs to be independent. People need to help themselves. The boarding school should be able to empower the local community with the values that may play as the driving force to make them independent.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Learn to be independent

Article 3 of the Law No. 20 of 2003 of the Republic of Indonesia regarding the National Education System provides for "the national education has a function to develop the capabilities and to build the dignity characteristics of the civil society within the scope of educating the nation by promoting the potential development of the students to become men of faiths and fear to the almighty Allah swt, to become noble, sound, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent members of community and to become democratic and responsible citizens. "By observing the provisions above the Islamic Board School in its function as a sub-culture in the national education system fits the mandate of the laws. The statement is based on the academic reasons that the boarding school is able to graduate independent students. Students' independence is one of the goals of the education process of the Islamic boarding school. The school should be able to develop the students potential to become man of faith and fear Allah swt., to become noble, sound, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent members of community and to become democratic and responsible citizens. It also has a duty of graduating independent students, which is relevant with one of the ideals of the Islamic boarding school education system, graduating the self-reliant students and able to promote themselves to become members of community who are not dependant to the other. As an educational institution, the boarding school has proved themselves as being able to

graduate independent students, who at the minimum would not depend themselves to the others. This is largely because during the study period, the students live in the boarding house, separated from their parents. They are required to solve their own problems. The independence during their study and work has been based on their own self-discipline. Students are required to be more active, creative, and innovative.

What makes this traditional educational institution exist for centuries is not because of their financial power, but the nature of independence integrated to their lives. This independence is as a form of the personality of the *santri*, free from dependency, at the same time not anti-social, an oriented independence through the positive influence of the boarding school environment. (Yuyun Nurfalalah 2010: 13). According to Yuyun - an education expert - there are several forms of children's independency, i.e:

- a. Physical independence, the ability to take care of themselves.
- b. Psychological independence, the ability to make decisions and solve encountered problems. For example, students get admitted into the boarding school with a sense of comfort because they are able to control themselves, students are able to build relationship with the others independently as individuals and not always only interact with their caregivers.

In general, those graduated from the Islamic boarding schools develop more extensive social networks and at any time they may use the network to mobilize and exert social forces. They have high solidarity and integrity towards the community they build. That's why, it is not surprising that through the organization, *santri* and those graduated from the Islamic boarding schools often take part in many social and religious areas, while at the micro level *santri* have the potential to maintain the survival of Islamic boarding schools. Without *santri* there will be no *pesantren*. From the *santri* also the source of funding moves the activities of the school.

The institutional boarding school has long been established in this archipelago. When the government, both the present and the past government, have not been able to provide education to remote rural areas, the Islamic boarding school has long been engaged in teaching and learning process in order to educate the public. When the state is neglecting, due to restricted fund and limited intention, the cognitive, affective and psychomotor education of students, the boarding schools step forward.

Until now the Islamic boarding schools still exist, and their number is increasing. This assumption is true as the indicators show the students or *santri* who have graduated from a boarding school usually set up a new *pesantren*. Now the Islamic boarding school has undergone modernization processes. Modernization, is a manifestation of the adaptation of the institution to the demands of the community development requirements. Previously Islamic Boarding Schools were known traditional, conventional and "retarded" schools when viewed from their curriculum aspects. But since 1975 due to the Joint Decree of 3 Ministers, the Islamic education system has been integrated into the Indonesian national education system.

The Islamic boarding schools have demonstrated their devoted services to the community. Since the independence war period the boarding schools have played active roles in defending the Republic of Indonesia. Many play important roles in the economic areas. If we glance at Lance Castle's dissertation on Cigarette Factory in Kudus, it is clear that *Kyai* and *santri* play significant roles in building economic life through the cigarette factories in Kudus. Even Castle concluded that there is a significance between the Islamic religious values and economic behavior in Kudus. Abdul Munir Mulkan added that the pesantren has done a lot of community activities. Starting from politics against the colonizers to the social religious activities that bring benefits to rural communities. The boarding schools usually pay more attention to rural development.

The location of boarding schools usually close to and even integrated with the locals, in particular in rural areas, has also brought influences to the dynamic lives of the people. The aspects of life that related closely to the spiritual values found in rural communities have been able to maintain the village communities, and even have become the engine of movement in community development.

It looks like that the boarding schools have succeeded in shaping the independent character of their students. As with the theory of *behavior setting* from Schoggen (1989) which emphasizes that humans behave in accordance with their environmental settings and as also confirmed by Roger's theory in his book *On thinking about a person* Islamic boarding schools have also shaped the independent value of their students during their study in the boarding school. The boarding school with its noble goals of building and developing faithful and honored Moslem personality for the interests of the community has made their students public servants, who must provide extra services to the community. The boarding school seemed to have become a kind of social religious institution engaged in the field of Islamic education and propagation. The boarding schools have been active in socializing the Islamic values to the *santri*, who in turn will have the virtue, independence and ethics that rely on their faith to the God and His messenger.

As a real example, one may see the independence nature of the students of Pondok Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Awipati, Tasikmalaya, under the management of KH Busthomi's that teaches many students. The *santri* here, in addition to cooking, they wash their own clothes on the river or in the pond around the boarding school. In the learning process, which is in technical term of the Islamic boarding schools is called *pengajian*, senior students can educate their juniors, especially for *santri* who have just been admitted to the school for their first several weeks. This phenomenon and empirical reality have significant effects in the development of the independence of the students, when viewed deeper external factors can affect certain individuals or communities to be more independent. In the relation with the Islamic boarding school, the social environment of the schools, the role and concept of the clerics about life, and the facilities of the schools may encourage the students to behave independently.

One may make a hypothesis that there is significant relations between the boarding school and the independence of the student and also the development of

the community. The boarding school graduates students who are able to compete and fill the employment opportunities in the community. Which means, the students with their skills, thanks to their *training* during the study period at the boarding school, have been able to be independent.

From Cultural Transformation towards Community Empowerment

Pesantren is a unique non-formal religious organization or institution. Around the school there are usually the house of the *kyai*, mosque and *madrasah* and the boarding house where the *santri* live. In a boarding school, students are struggling with the tight schedule starting from waking up to sleep again, most of their times are filled with books, *pengajian* and general teachings. *Kyai* often visit their students in an open lecture. Both compulsory and *sunnah* ritual worships are performed in the school premises as an instrument of planting Islamic values and general knowledge from the *kyai* and the *ustadz* (teachers) to the students. Islamic boarding schools are surely able to make social changes. The school teaches not only the issues of worship in *surau*, but it has been able to become a community institution that plays dominant roles in shaping values prevailing in society. Besides being able to transform the values of the students, the school can totally transform the behavior of the surrounding community, without necessarily sacrificing its identity. Starting from its core as a *surau*, a place for worshiping and teaching, the boarding school then develops into a community institution that plays dominant roles in shaping the values that apply to both parties, enabling it to change the pattern of life around the community (Abdurahman Wahid, 2007. 95).

The Islamic boarding school is the driving force of both the education and *da'wah* internally and externally, to the students and the surrounding community. The schools disseminate Islamic values to the students and the surrounding communities to shape the behaviors of students and community to be more dignified and humanist. The boarding school has a moral obligation to change the lives of the *santri* and the community around the boarding school towards a better life (Dwi Purwoko, 2007). The value of asceticism which overwhelms the boarding school combined with the obedience of the *santri* in carrying out all the orders of the *kyai* in order to obtain his blessing, of course, will leave an imprint to the students' hearts. These values will surely shape his life which in turn will then spread out of their lives to the community (Abdurahman Wahid, 2007). Hence the values taught by the Islamic boarding schools or what Gus Dur said as unique values of the Islamic teaching system play important roles in shaping the community's mindset as expected by the school. Gus Dur gave an example, piety, one of the values used by the clerics in building solidarity among various components of the society and in transforming the *abangan* values (Moslems who have less focus on the Islamic values) into a more Islamic way of life. The clerics usually ask these *abangan* who have been educated and have had values of piety to perfect their Islam by performing the Hajj and position in the management of the mosque finance. This socialism piety has also changed the value system in the society that previously has

been far from Islamic values towards the values blessed by Allah SWT (Abdurahman Wahid, 2007).

Another example is the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, in Jombang, East Java. This boarding school is located in the area of Rejoso Village. Before this boarding school was built, the community fell deeply in immorality, crimes and poverty. After its construction, Darul Ulum slowly and surely changed the values of the community that was previously immoral into peaceful and civilized one. The teaching method of this boarding school uses *wetonan* and *bandongan* techniques. The Arabic language has become familiar in the daily life around the boarding school. The boarding school also houses a tomb of the great cleric, Kyai Hasyim Asyari, who is also the founder of this boarding school. Pilgrims are usually sighted around the tomb of the great cleric as a symbol of respect to the founder of the boarding school. Darul Alam boarding school is located close to the Hasanudin Airport in Makassar, about 5 km to the East. This boarding school gets its funds from the performance of its activities, the Tuition Fee from parents of students. However, this boarding school also opens other donors, such as from the regional government and from private sectors. Rabithah Alam Al Islami also provides assistance to this the boarding school. Although the boarding school is receiving assistance from outsiders, this boarding school would not let itself intervened. Hence the assistances must not be binding, which means that the boarding school maintains its independence in carrying out its vision and mission. In other words, donations from outsiders are welcome but do not try to intervene its vision and mission that are organized in an independent manner. This is an affirmation of the identity of the school that is trying to reaffirm the distinctive characteristics of Islamic education emphasizing not only on deep understanding of the contents of the Qur'an, Hadiths and essays by classical scholars (*kitab kuning*, yellow books literally), but also on modern sciences and skills that fit the era. One may classify the Darul Aman boarding school as a transparent organization as it accepts technological developments.

All administrative affairs of the boarding school are handled by a computerized system. With this system, the administration has become better and more organized. For the boarding school management, technology, in this case the computers, is considered only as a means or tool that facilitates the process of storing and processing data. Computer-based information systems will be able to produce information services that are very useful for users and fit the user needs of information related to the education such as information of students, teaching staffs, teaching materials, boarding school education systems and procedures and finance. Similarly, another example is presented by Gus Dur, the Tebu Ireng Islamic Boarding School founded by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in 1899. In addition to the subject on religious knowledge of sciences of Islam, Shari'ah, and Arabic language, general subjects are also included in the structure of the curriculum. Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School has contributed a lot and to the wider community, especially in the world of Islamic education in Indonesia. When this boarding school was first established, the surrounding community lived in a more worldly manner as this area

housed a sugar factory which at that time had the good price which in turn had created hedonistic atmosphere in the community. The Tebu Ireng boarding school then slowly but sure transformed the place towards a new life where religious atmosphere prevails on the community.

The curricula applied at the Islamic Board School enable students not only to be proficient in the sciences of religion but also to master the worldly skills to support their lives in the future among the community members. One statement of the management of the boarding house that needs to be addressed is that the boarding school has declared itself as an boarding school open for adoption of technology. This is consistent with the boarding school's vision that emphasizes its revival towards enlightenment, so that the boarding school must also be able to respond the dynamics of community development that has emphasized more on technology as a means to facilitate easy life. For the students, computers and the internet ease them in collecting data and information useful for their study. Pondok Darul Aman which was founded on a keen desire to bring social transformation to the community in the area has been attempting to transform itself into an institution for spreading the preaching, developing the community in accordance with Islamic religious values, and at other times the community has been supporting the works of the school. Hence it seems impossible to separate the boarding school from the community. The boarding school's activities have always been gaining good responses from the public. The school provides students with a philosophy of life as well as the skills in agriculture including fisheries, husbandry, rice fields and plantations. The school also teaches them to operate a workshop, to weld, to make bricks etc.

The boarding school with its graduates have managed to create informal synergy with the people. The boarding schools always bring changes to the society. During the past when there had been no such boarding school, the area was very quiet, immoralities prevailed in this area, with disordered community and inadequate production units or services for the community. However, following the establishment of the Islamic Boarding School, and the school started to play its noble roles, the business units started to develop in the community. The students with their daily needs have also been responded well by the locals by building food stalls and other business units in order to fulfill the needs of the school. Likewise the business units operated by the boarding school have their own implications to the society.

One should not doubt what the boarding schools have done to the community. In the past, these educational institutions have made active contributions in the form of defense against colonialism. From the independence era until now these educational institutions have been providing teaching - learning interactions between the *kyai-santri* in looking for better community lives both materially and spiritually. The education process of the students has imprinted the values of independency and helping each other to the students' hearts. These values may have come from religious teachings and brought implication to the students' behavior. Consequently one may conclude that there has been significant relations of

the religion and the behavior of the students. This fact fits the Weber thesis known as *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit Capitalism*. The boarding school has been able to sow the religion-based values of self-reliance used as the basic capital in building communities, in particular the rural communities.

Kurt Lewis has a theory that the environment in this context is the boarding school that influences human behavior in the context of *santri* and also the communities. The more often the *santri* and the community interact one to another within the boarding school environment, the more their behavior will be affected by the boarding school around which they live.

In addition, *pesantren* apply also the functional theory; which theory provides for that an organization can function well if it operates the 4 dimensions of adaptation, integration, literacy and Goal or purpose. The development of the boarding school seems to continue to develop in a line with the development of the age. But it should also maintain the conservative values that have made it great. When there is a change to the society as the illegal drugs powerfully hits the community, Islamic boarding schools react to it by empowering the community. Empowerment relates closely to the exploration and development of the public potential. Kartasasmita (1996) says that: "every man and society have their own developable potential, so empowerment is an effort to build that power by encouraging, motivating and raising awareness of the potential and to develop it." In empowering the community, the ultimate approach is that the society should not be used as an object but as the subject of various development efforts, therefore Kartasasmita (1997: 29) says empowerment must follow the following approaches:

1. empowerment efforts must have targets
2. Empowerment programs must include or even be implemented by the targeted community.
3. using group approach

This could be seen by the construction of a junior high school in a large boarding school in East Java to eliminate the threat of drug abuse (See also Abdurahman Wahid, 2007). Here, one can see that the boarding schools play a role between conservatism on the one hand and the modernity on the other in the development of society. In addition, the boarding school also integrate the existing components of the school, the *ustadz* (teachers), the *kyai* (clerics) and the *santri* (students) and unite them as a whole. The stable learning program that fits for maintaining the long-standing pattern has also strengthened the existence of the boarding school, so that the boarding school can achieve its goals as may be expected by the boarding school itself and the community.

CONCLUSION

The values taught in the boarding school, especially the value of self-reliance, have encouraged the students to practice these values in the society. Further, as stated by KH Ali Yafie by referring to the views of *Imam Syafie* as adopted by many Islamic boarding schools, helping the others and helping ourselves are a form of virtue that a Muslim should do (Alie Yafie, 2007). According to the

view of the *santri* the community needs also to be self-reliance. People need to help themselves. The presence of the boarding school with its components of clerics and *santri* have been able to empower the surrounding community with values that drive the community to be more independent. The boarding school has also embraced the community to jointly develop the school's businesses both in the fields of husbandry, fisheries, workshops etc. creating intensive interaction between the boarding school and the community, which in turn will empower the surrounding community and eventually results in social changes to the community as a positive impact of the boarding school.

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