

---

THE MODERNIZATION OF *PESANTREN*  
EDUCATION BASED ON *NURCHOLIS*  
*MADJID'S* PERSPECTIVES

Article History:  
Submitted: 30 March 2021  
Reviewed: 20 April 2021  
Accepted: 24 May 2021

Akhmad Miftakhul Mustofa  
SMP N 7 Batang, Central Java,  
Indonesia  
[qiel.aqilah@gmail.com](mailto:qiel.aqilah@gmail.com)

---

Abstract

This study aims to explore the world of Islamic boarding schools in the perspective of Nurcholish Madjid. Pesantren is not only an institution that only studies religious knowledge, but more than that, pesantren must also be able to answer the challenges of the times, so modernization is needed in it, especially in the digital era. The renewal of the pesantren was heavily influenced by the thoughts of several figures, one of which was Nurcholish Madjid. This research is a type of library research, with a historical-philosophical approach. The results of this study indicate that: 1) The institution of Islamic boarding schools underwent several changes, initially with a single leadership becoming a foundation. 2) The existing curriculum in Islamic boarding schools is undergoing modernization, the learning methods that were previously in the form of sorogan, lalaran, bandongan and halaqoh become a hierarchical method, the pesantren curriculum also includes additional lessons such as vocational (skills). 3) The function of the pesantren has been added, which initially served as the transmission and transfer of Islamic knowledge; maintenance of Islamic traditions; and reproduction of scholars; has now undergone a refunctionalization, namely venturing into social and economic functions so that it is able to keep up with the times.

Keywords: *Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren), modernization, Nur Cholis Madjid*

Introduction

Pesantren is the oldest and original (indigenous) Islamic educational institution in the archipelago that must maintain its existence in responding to the demands of the times. In its journey to date, Islamic boarding schools have organized formal education in the form of public schools and religious schools (madrasas, public schools, and universities). In addition, Islamic boarding schools also provide non-formal education in the form of madrasah diniyah which only teach the fields of religious knowledge. Pesantren has also developed as an institution of social solidarity by accommodating children from all walks of life in Muslim society and providing the same services to them, regardless of socioeconomic level (Mastuki, 2005, p. 90).

Looking at the performance and charisma of the kyai, pesantren is quite effective in playing the role of gluing relations and protecting the community, both at the local, regional and national levels. Various potential roles are owned by

pesantren, it is stated that pesantren has a high level of integrity with the surrounding community, as well as being a moral reference for the life of the general public (Mastuki, 2005, p. 92).

According to Zamakhsari Dhofier, the forms and models of Islamic boarding schools can be grouped into two, namely: First: Salafi Islamic boarding schools, namely Islamic boarding schools whose core education still maintains classical teaching. The madrasa system is implemented to facilitate the sorogan system which is a form of old-fashioned recitation by not introducing general teaching. Second: Khalafi Islamic Boarding Schools, are Islamic boarding schools which in their teaching have included general subjects in the madrasas they have developed or public schools in Islamic boarding schools, such as the Gontor Islamic Boarding School which no longer teaches classical (yellow) books, but students are still required to be able to learn. understand the content of the classical books by using the Arabic language rules that have been studied.

Regardless of the grouping of the types of pesantren, an institution can be called a pesantren if it has at least three main elements, namely: kyai who provide recitations, santri who study and live in huts and mosques as places of worship and places of recitation (Hidayat and Machali, 2005). , p.245). In order to survive, pesantren until now has undergone a transformation of educational institutions. This is not only the influence of the modernization of the general education system launched by the Dutch colonial, but also the modernization of the Islamic education system in the world. In addition to the two effects of modernizing the education system, Islamic boarding schools have also institutionally responded to the Muslim reformist movement in the early 20th century AD, which argued that to answer the challenges of modernization, colonialism, and Christian challenges, it was necessary to reform Islamic education.

In that context, we see that two forms of modern Islamic educational institutions have been accommodated by pesantren, namely public schools with religious content and modern madrasas that adopt the substance and methodology of modern Dutch education. Concretely, the pesantren's response to the modernization of the education system-to borrow Karel Steenbrink's term-"refuses while following the example". This is intended so that the existence of pesantren is not displaced or even destroyed by the expansion of the modern education system, but still without significantly changing the substance of pesantren education.

From the steps of accommodation to the modern education system above, until now many Islamic boarding schools have emerged with modern education systems. The steps taken are by establishing public schools in the pesantren environment, incorporating the general curriculum into madrasas, as well as vocational activities (skills training). (Muthohar, 2007, p.113). In the face of all these changes and challenges, the movers of the pesantren appear to be in no hurry to transform the pesantren institution into a fully modern Islamic educational institution, but on the contrary tend to maintain a cautious policy; they accept the renewal (or

modernization) of Islamic education only on a very limited scale; limited to being able to guarantee that pesantren can survive. (Madjid, 1997, p.8).

Pesantrens face experiences and try essentially the same experiments during the New Order era. Starting from economic growth, the New Order government also hoped for pesantren to become one of the agents of change and community development. Thus, it is hoped that pesantren will not only play their traditional functions, namely: first, the transmission and transfer of Islamic knowledge; second, the maintenance of Islamic traditions; and third, the reproduction of scholars.

In accordance with the ideology of developmentalism of the New Order government, the renewal of pesantren during this period led to the development of the world view and substance of pesantren education to be more responsive to the needs of the challenges of the times. In this context, for example, the substance of theology taught in Islamic boarding schools is expected to be no longer Asy'ariyah or Jabariyah theology, but a theology that is conducive to development, namely theology that is more conducive to the growth of initiatives, efforts or work ethic. In addition, the renewal of pesantren is also directed at the functionalization (or, more precisely, the re-functionalization) of pesantren as one of the important centers for the development of society as a whole. With its unique position and position, pesantren is expected to become an alternative to people-centered development and at the same time as a value-oriented development center.

It is in this regard that pesantren are expected to no longer just play the three traditional functions, but also become centers of health education; center for the development of appropriate technology for rural communities; center for efforts to save and preserve the environment; and more importantly become the center of economic empowerment of the surrounding community. For the last context, it is seen that more and more pesantren are involved in vocational and economic activities, such as in agribusiness businesses that include food crop agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and forestry; the development of home industries or small industries such as convection, handicrafts, shops, and cooperatives.

It can be concluded that the pesantren's response to the modernization of Islamic education and the socio-economic changes that have taken place in Indonesian society since the beginning of this century include: first, reforming the substance or content of pesantren education by including general and vocational subjects; second, updating the methodology, such as the classical system, grading; third, institutional reform, such as pesantren leadership, diversification of educational institutions; and fourth, the renewal of functions, from the beginning only educational functions, were developed so that they also included socio-economic functions (Madjid, 1997, p.11).

Some of the reasons for conducting this research include:

1. Pesantren is the oldest and original (indigenous) Islamic educational institution in the archipelago whose existence must be maintained in responding to the demands of the times
2. Intellectually, Nurcholish Madjid collected two types of education at once, namely traditional education and modern education
3. Literally, there are many various books and scientific works of Nurcholish Madjid that discuss his thoughts (including the thought of pesantren education), from here the author assumes that the ideas of Nurcholish Madjid are interesting to study for Muslim scholars who are concerned about the progress of pesantren education.

From the explanation above, the researcher assumes that modernization of pesantren is a necessity that must be addressed properly. For this reason, Nurcholish Madjid's thoughts on the modernization of pesantren are very interesting to study. Both philosophically, theoretically, and practically, so that it is hoped that it can be used as an inspiration for the modernization of pesantren according to the development of the era.

Nurcholish Madjid is a pesantren background, this scholar who is fondly called Cak Nur, is not a person who is blind to the world of pesantren. In his biography it is explained that Cak Nur successfully completed his education at the Darul Ulum Islamic boarding school, Rejoso, Jombang, East Java, in 1955, and continued his education to the modern Islamic boarding school Gontor, Ponorogo, Central Java, in 1960. After that, he continued his studies at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. In addition, Cak Nur also received his doctoral education at the University of Chicago, United States of America.

Judging from the history of his education, it is only natural that Cak Nur would comment on the pesantren. The experience of staying at the two boarding schools which differ in terms of orientation is sufficient to provide him with hypotheses and materials in assessing the pesantren. From this explanation, the writer is interested in studying the Nusantara Muslim scholar, Nurcholish Madjid, especially the idea of modernizing pesantren, and the writer wants to raise it as a thesis with the title "MODERNIZATION OF NURCHOLISH MADJID PERSPECTIVE BOOKINGS".

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Types of research

**Research** This is library research, namely a study by looking for information and data, all of which come from written materials that are relevant to the problems discussed. The description used is descriptive analysis, namely by collecting existing data, interpreting, and conducting interpretive analysis.

### Data source

The data sources in this study were intentionally mapped into two, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources, with the following details:

- a. Primary data sources are books by Nurcholish Madjid, including: Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: A Portrait of a Journey, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997), Nurcholis Madjid, Modern Islam and Indonesianness, (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), and Islam: Doctrine and Civilization, (Jakarta: Paramdina, 1998)
- b. Secondary data sources are books containing comments from experts on the thoughts of Nurcholish Madjid and scientific journals related to it.

#### Method of collecting data

The data collection method used in this research is by reading, analyzing and interpreting. That is, the method taken to obtain data is by reading a book by Nurcholish Madjid and combined with collecting data sources from books, articles, journals, research results, and other sources related to the themes discussed in this thesis.

#### Data analysis technique

In this study, the data analysis technique used was qualitative analysis, which was to analyze the reality in the book by Nurcholish Madjid and other books related to the research in this thesis, by reading and then interpreting it with words to describe the answers from problems that have been formulated.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Modernization of Islamic Boarding Schools

The development of the times from time to time occurs so fast, ranging from communication tools to the digitization of tools. This also requires Islamic boarding schools to make changes to survive by being able to keep up with the times that occur. In order to survive, pesantren until now has undergone a transformation of educational institutions. This is not only the influence of the modernization of the general education system launched by the Dutch colonial, but also the modernization of the Islamic education system in the world. In addition to the two effects of modernizing the education system, Islamic boarding schools have also institutionally responded to the Muslim reformist movement in the early 20th century AD which argued that to answer the challenges of modernization, colonialism, and Christian challenges, Islamic education reform was needed.

Two forms of modern Islamic educational institutions have been accommodated by pesantren, namely public schools that are given religious content and modern madrasas that adopt the substance and methodology of modern Dutch education. Concretely, the pesantren's response to the modernization of the education system is to borrow Karel Steenbrink's term - "rejecting while following

an example". This is intended so that the existence of pesantren is not displaced or even destroyed by the expansion of the modern education system, but still without significantly changing the substance of pesantren education.

From the steps of accommodation to the modern education system above, until now many Islamic boarding schools have emerged with modern education systems. The steps taken are by establishing public schools in the pesantren environment, incorporating a general curriculum into madrasas, as well as vocational activities (skills training) (Muthohar, 2007, p.113).

In implementing the education system that is touched by modernization, the pesantren also undergoes institutional changes in its institutions. Pesantren consolidates organizational and institutional management, because in order to be able to run this education system optimally, a single leadership system is not sufficient, including management which must be reformed.

The institutional system that has been done a lot is changing the leadership structure of a single kyai into a form of foundation because this will also make it easier to take attitudes and decisions about new things in the surrounding environment. Matters related to facilities and infrastructure can also be pursued more optimally with the foundation system. Starting with the procurement of better buildings, facilities in the learning room which now use a lot of digital tools, more adequate hygiene and health facilities.

From this we can understand that in accordance with the framework that has been made, Islamic boarding schools undergo changes and renewals from rural based institutions to urban based institutions. In addition, leadership has also experienced a shift from charismatic to rationalistic, diplomatic to participatory, authoritarian to paternalistic and laissez-faire.

## **B. Modernization of Islamic Boarding School Curriculum**

The development process in the era of globalization also demands changes in the world of education, including Islamic boarding schools which also carry out renewals. To carry out renewal or what we know as modernization, careful planning is needed. Modernization planning in the pesantren world is carried out starting with the institutional system. Institutions that were originally traditional pesantren used a single leadership to become an institution in the form of a foundation. This shift was also followed by changes to the curriculum in the pesantren.

Various kinds of learning methods have been used by several pesantren including the sorogan, bandongan, halaqoh and lalaran methods. This method is less effective if it is boxed from a modernization perspective. This is because the students only listen to all the knowledge taught by the kyai who teach the book. This method makes the students less free to discuss with each other to discuss a certain matter so that they seem less active which in the end also affects their intellectual development.

Currently, Islamic boarding schools have experienced a reorientation of learning methods. It is also necessary to further open the intellectual insight of the santri, so that the santri do not only consider that learning in this case the Koran is a worship and sacred. One method that can be applied is the class and level system (hierarchical). The teaching method does not only occur in one direction, but students also have to receive feedback on what has been conveyed by the kyai who have taught the books during the Koran. Santri are given a learning evaluation which is termed the imtihan method (exam) and after that graduation criteria are also given, such as mumtaz, jayyid, etc., which in the end the students also increase in level and even get a diploma when they have completed all their education.

This kind of curriculum becomes a learning system that is more organized and well conceptualized. Students also have the responsibility to complete the exam well. Apart from only the curriculum that is focused on teaching the science of Koran which has a religious smell, the pesantren also adds skills education which later can also be used by the students when they return from the Islamic boarding school or what is often termed "boyong". This skill education can be used as a capital to support the world of work, so that in addition to having sufficient religious knowledge, students also have special skills and expertise.

From this, we can see that the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools also prepares resources that are not only faithful and devoted, but also have life skills and are equipped with good enough science and technology that can support them in the world of work. This can also balance the pesantren graduates to keep up with the current developments of the times (globalization) that occurs so that they do not experience being left behind and even have more value, namely the provision of religious knowledge which is not necessarily owned by non-santri. This point will also make parents more trusting of their children to receive education in Islamic boarding schools so that this can advance education in Islamic boarding schools, which substantially does not eliminate the curriculum that used to be the hallmark of Islamic boarding schools but also adds skills education updates. for his students.

### C. Modernization of Islamic Boarding School Education Functions

The development of an increasingly advanced era has also changed some of the orders of people's lives, including the order in the world of education, including the world of education in Islamic boarding schools. The education system in Islamic boarding schools is also undergoing renewal, starting from the institution to the teaching curriculum. This also resulted in changes in the goals, as well as the vision and mission of the Islamic boarding school so that in the end the educational function of the Islamic boarding school underwent a renewal.

In general, Islamic boarding schools have three functions, among others: first, the transmission and transfer of Islamic knowledge; second, the maintenance of Islamic traditions; and third, the reproduction of scholars. In addition to these three functions, now pesantren are experiencing additional functions along with changes in the curriculum in yaki boarding schools which have expanded to social



and economic functions. This is because the pesantren curriculum adds to the vocational curriculum, skills for the students after completing their education at Islamic boarding schools. This was initially based on the idea of santri independence, digging expertise and increasing the provision of skills for students which in the end were also required to be self-supporting and self-financing.

This movement was started by the Ulama Association in West Java with the founder H.Abdul Halim in 1932 by establishing a pesantren-based institution.

n with the name "Santri Dormitory." This movement was then imitated by several Islamic boarding schools when in a condition of economic hardship faced by the Indonesian people in the 1950-1960 decade. One of the pesantren that implements a skills teaching system is the Tebu Ireng pesantren which directs its students to be involved in the world of agriculture to the development of cooperatives.

This update in the pesantren world is relevant to the Indonesian government's ideology of developmentalism which directs the development of a world view.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that: 1) The institution of Islamic boarding schools underwent several changes, initially with a single leadership becoming a foundation. 2) The existing curriculum in Islamic boarding schools is undergoing modernization, the learning methods that were previously in the form of sorogan, lalaran, bandongan and halaqoh become a hierarchical method, the pesantren curriculum also includes additional lessons such as vocational (skills). 3) The function of the pesantren has been added, which initially served as the transmission and transfer of Islamic knowledge; maintenance of Islamic traditions; and reproduction of scholars; has now undergone a refunctionalization, namely venturing into social and economic functions so that it is able to keep up with the times.

### Suggestion

Based on the results of the study that has been obtained, some suggestions that can be considered are as follows: 1). Pesantren must be an educational institution that is able to develop the potential possessed by the students so that they are able to produce Human Resources who are able to answer the challenges of the times. Islamic boarding schools should be open to new knowledge without compromising the characteristics of the boarding school itself. 3) The author suggests for further researchers not only to do a literature study but also to see the realities that occur directly in the field how the actual conditions of Islamic boarding schools, the roles and outputs of Islamic boarding school students.



## Reference

- Hidayat, Ara dan Imam Machali. 2012. *Pengelolaan Pendidikan; Konsep, Prinsip dan Aplikasi Dalam Mengelola Sekolah dan Madrasah*. Yogyakarta: Kaukaba.
- HS, Mastuki. 2005. *Manajemen Pondok Pesantren*, Jakarta: Diva Pustaka.
- Madjid, Nurcholish . 1997. *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan*, Jakarta: Paramdina.
- Muthohar AR, Ahmad. 2007. *Ideologi Pendidikan Pesantren: Pesantren ditengah Arus Ideologi-Ideologi Pendidikan*. Semarang: Pustaka Rizki Putra.