

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN PESANTREN INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The transformation of Islamic scholarship in pesantren education is a response to the demands of the times, which require the integration of religious knowledge and general sciences. This study aims to examine curriculum development strategies in pesantren institutions through a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through indepth interviews, observation, and documentation involving caregivers, teachers, and students at selected pesantren. The findings reveal that the integration of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) with modern knowledge is carried out through contextual and thematic approaches. Curriculum adjustments include the digitalization of learning, strengthening of entrepreneurship, and the development of 21st-century competencies. The role of teachers and caregivers is crucial in fostering learning innovations that remain rooted in Islamic spiritual values. This transformation has led to changes in students' mindsets, improvements in academic and social competencies, as well as the increased relevance of pesantren graduates in society. The study recommends strengthening teacher capacity, policy support, and the provision of facilities as strategic steps to reinforce integrative curricula in pesantren. Keywords: writing instructions; agricultural journal; article template

Keywords: Integration of Knowledge, Pesantren Curriculum, Islamic Education, Transformation of Scholarship

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions deeply rooted in the history and culture of Indonesian society. As centers of moral, spiritual, and intellectual development, pesantren play a strategic role in shaping generations of faithful and knowledgeable Muslims (Azra, 2012). However, amid globalization and the rapid growth of modern knowledge, pesantren face major challenges in maintaining their relevance and competitiveness. One crucial aspect requiring attention is curriculum development that integrates Islamic values with contemporary knowledge (Zarkasyi, 2015).

Integrating religious knowledge and general sciences is not a simple task. Differences in epistemological paradigms, learning methods, and educational objectives often hinder the creation of a holistic curriculum. On the one hand, pesantren seek to preserve the authenticity of Islamic scholarship through the study of *kitab kuning* (classical texts) and spiritual training. On the other hand, the demands of the era require students to acquire competencies in science, technology, and life skills so that they can actively contribute to modern society (Hidayat, 2020). This tension between conservatism and modernism calls for wise and contextual strategies in curriculum transformation.

This study aims to examine curriculum development strategies in pesantren institutions in order to transform Islamic scholarship so that it becomes more adaptive to the demands of the times. The urgency of this research lies in the need for a model of Islamic education that not

only preserves the legacy of classical scholarship but also addresses contemporary challenges through integrative and innovative approaches (Ma'arif Institute, 2021).

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What curriculum development strategies are applied by pesantren in transforming Islamic scholarship?
2. What supporting and inhibiting factors exist in the process of integrating religious and general sciences in pesantren?
3. How does curriculum transformation affect the quality of learning and student competencies?

This study focuses on analyzing curriculum strategies, the dynamics of knowledge integration, and the implications of educational transformation in pesantren as an effort to build a relevant and competitive Islamic education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of Islamic Scholarship and Its Transformation in the History of Education

Islamic scholarship has an integrative character that unites spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. In the classical tradition, knowledge was regarded as a means of drawing closer to Allah and cultivating noble character (Al-Attas, 1993). Scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun emphasized the importance of balancing *naqli* (revealed) and *aqli* (rational) sciences as the foundation of Islamic education (Nasution, 2001). Over time, transformations occurred in how knowledge was understood and taught, particularly when Islamic education began to interact with Western educational systems (Azra, 2012). This transformation demanded a reinterpretation of the concept of knowledge to remain relevant in addressing modern challenges.

2. **Theories of Curriculum Development in Islamic Education** Curriculum development in Islamic education is not only oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also the formation of students' character and spirituality. Theories of Islamic curriculum emphasize the principle of *tauhid* as the primary foundation, along with the integration of religious and general sciences (Zarkasyi, 2015). Integrative curriculum models such as those developed by Al-Attas stress the importance of *adab* (proper conduct) in education and the purification of knowledge from secular elements (Al-Attas, 1993). In the context of pesantren, curriculum development must take into account traditional values while simultaneously opening space for innovation and adaptation to contemporary needs (Hidayat, 2020).

3. Models of Traditional vs. Modern Pesantren Education

Traditional pesantren generally focus on the study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), moral training, and the strengthening of spirituality through methods such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *halaqah* (Zamakhshari, 2011). Meanwhile, modern pesantren have begun to adopt classical classroom systems, the national curriculum, and more systematic pedagogical approaches (Suyadi, 2021). These differences reflect the internal dynamics within the pesantren world, where some choose to preserve the authenticity of tradition, while others seek transformation to respond to global challenges. Hybrid models have also begun to develop, combining traditional strengths with modern approaches in educational management (Ma'arif Institute, 2021).

4. Previous Studies on Knowledge Integration in Pesantren

Various studies have examined efforts to integrate knowledge in pesantren. Research by Zarkasyi (2015) shows that pesantren hold significant potential in developing integrative education based on Islamic values. Another study by Mujib (2018) highlights the challenges of implementing an integrative curriculum, such as limited human resources and resistance to change. Meanwhile, a report by the Ma'arif Institute (2021) identifies the success of several pesantren in developing competency-based curricula that proportionally integrate religious and general sciences. These findings provide an important foundation for formulating contextual and sustainable curriculum development strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of curriculum development strategies in pesantren institutions in transforming Islamic scholarship. This approach was chosen because it enables the exploration of meanings, values, and social dynamics that cannot be explained quantitatively (Creswell, 2014).

1. Data Collection Techniques

To obtain comprehensive and contextual data, several techniques were applied:

- **In-depth Interviews**

Conducted in a semi-structured manner with pesantren caregivers, teachers, and students. These interviews aimed to explore perceptions, experiences, and strategies applied in curriculum development. This technique allowed the researcher to capture nuances and meanings not recorded in formal documents (Sugiyono, 2017).

- **Observation of Teaching and Learning Activities**

The researcher directly observed classroom activities, *halaqah* sessions, and extracurricular programs. This observation was intended to understand the actual implementation of the curriculum, including teaching methods, teacher-student interactions, and the use of learning materials.

- **Curriculum and Syllabus Documentation**

The researcher collected official documents such as curricula, syllabi, lesson schedules, and teaching materials. Document analysis was used to assess curriculum structure, the integration of religious and general sciences, and the direction of educational development in pesantren.

2. Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three main stages:

- **Data Reduction**

The process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying data relevant to the research objectives. Irrelevant data were eliminated to maintain consistency in analysis.

- **Data Display**

The reduced data were organized into narratives, matrices, and thematic categories to facilitate interpretation and conclusion drawing.

- **Conclusion Drawing and Verification**

The researcher formulated the main findings based on patterns, relationships, and

meanings that emerged from the data. Conclusions were verified through source and technique triangulation to ensure the validity and credibility of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Integration of *Kitab Kuning* and Modern Sciences

One of the main strategies in pesantren curriculum development is the integration of classical studies, particularly the *kitab kuning* (traditional Islamic texts), with modern sciences. While *kitab kuning* remains the foundational source for shaping deep Islamic understanding, it is increasingly contextualized with contemporary issues such as technology ethics, environmental sustainability, and human rights.

Several pesantren have adopted thematic approaches, where subjects like *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and *akhlaq* are linked to modern social phenomena. For instance, the study of *maqasid alshariah* is connected to principles of sustainability and social justice within the digital economy (Zarkasyi, 2015). This strategy aims not only to enhance students' textual comprehension but also to ensure their ability to apply Islamic teachings in real-life contexts.

2. Curriculum Adjustment to Contemporary Demands

Curriculum transformation has also been carried out through adjustments to meet the needs of the modern era. Several pesantren have adopted competency-based curricula that incorporate 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and global communication (Suyadi, 2021).

Digital learning is increasingly implemented through the use of learning applications, online platforms, and interactive media. In addition, Islamic-based entrepreneurship training has been introduced into extracurricular activities, including online business training, organic farming, and pesantren cooperative management. These efforts demonstrate that pesantren are not only religious learning centers but also social laboratories preparing students to become leaders and change agents in society.

3. The Role of Teachers and Caregivers in Learning Innovation

Teachers and caregivers play a central role in driving curriculum innovation. They are not only knowledge transmitters but also facilitators, motivators, and agents of change.

Several pesantren have conducted capacity-building programs for teachers, focusing on modern pedagogy, technology integration, and active learning methods (Ma'arif Institute, 2021). Meanwhile, caregivers ensure that spiritual and moral values remain intact so that innovations do not erode the Islamic identity of pesantren. Collaboration among teachers, caregivers, and students in designing contextual and participatory learning activities has become the key to successful curriculum transformation.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

a. Policy Support

Curriculum transformation in pesantren has been positively reinforced by government policies, particularly Ministry of Religious Affairs regulations encouraging integration between religious education (*diniyah*) and the national curriculum. Initiatives such as Modern Pesantren and Digital Madrasah serve as catalysts for curriculum expansion and quality improvement (Kemenag RI, 2023).

b. Human Resources

The availability of educators with dual backgrounds—both in religious and general sciences—has been a valuable asset in the integration process. Adaptive teachers who are open to

innovation can bridge the differences between pesantren traditions and modern pedagogy (Suyadi, 2021).

c. Technology

The adoption of information technology in learning has begun in several pesantren, including the use of digital platforms for classical text studies, online learning applications, and interactive media. This enhances students' access to broader learning resources and strengthens their digital literacy (Ma'arif Institute, 2021).

Inhibiting Factors a. Cultural Barriers

As traditional institutions, pesantren often uphold strong conservative values. Efforts to reform curricula sometimes face resistance from groups concerned about the potential erosion of Islamic educational authenticity. These deeply rooted traditions can pose challenges to adopting new approaches (Zarkasyi, 2015).

b. Resistance to Change

Not all teachers and caregivers are ready or willing to adapt to integrative curricula. Limited training, lack of understanding of modern pedagogy, and fears of secularizing knowledge hinder the pace of transformation (Mujib, 2018).

c. Limited Facilities

Many pesantren still face infrastructure limitations, such as inadequate classrooms, poor internet access, and lack of technological devices. These constraints directly affect the effectiveness of modern curriculum implementation and digital-based learning (Hidayat, 2020).

1. Impacts of Curriculum Transformation 1. Changes in Students' Mindsets

The integration of religious and general sciences has significantly shifted students' perspectives. They no longer perceive general sciences as separate or inferior to religious knowledge but as an essential part of Islamic intellectual heritage that strengthens both understanding and social contribution.

Students are becoming more open to contemporary issues such as technology, environment, and the digital economy, while connecting them with Islamic values. Critical and reflective thinking has also developed, with students not only receiving information passively but actively analyzing and relating knowledge to real-life situations (Hidayat, 2020).

2. Improvement of Academic and Social Competence

The integrative curriculum has enhanced students' academic competencies. They demonstrate improved literacy skills, both in classical text comprehension and in understanding modern concepts. Proficiency in foreign languages, digital literacy, and analytical thinking have become part of the learning outcomes observed in several modern pesantren (Suyadi, 2021).

Socially, students have become more communicative, adaptive, and capable of engaging with diverse communities. Extracurricular activities such as debates, entrepreneurship, and community service have strengthened their soft skills, including leadership, teamwork, and social empathy.

3. Relevance of Pesantren Graduates in Society

Curriculum transformation has also increased the societal relevance of pesantren graduates. They are no longer confined to religious leadership roles but are active in diverse fields such as education, business, media, and government.

Graduates equipped with integrative curricula possess higher competitiveness and can bridge Islamic values with modern professional demands. This indicates that pesantren are not

merely preservers of tradition but also social and educational innovators contributing significantly to national development (Ma'arif Institute, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Islamic scholarship through curriculum development in pesantren is a strategic step to address the challenges of the times while preserving the intellectual heritage of Islam. The integration of *kitab kuning* and modern sciences has created space for students to understand religion in contextual and applicable ways. A curriculum adaptive to technological advances, entrepreneurship, and social needs has fostered a generation of pesantren students who are not only religious but also competent and socially relevant.

Changes in students' mindsets toward greater openness, critical thinking, and reflection represent one of the positive impacts of this transformation. They are not only able to study classical texts but also to relate them to contemporary realities. Their academic and social competencies have also improved, as seen in stronger literacy, communication, and life skills. Pesantren graduates now hold strategic positions across various sectors, demonstrating that pesantren can serve as highly competitive educational centers.

Nevertheless, this transformation process is not without challenges. Cultural barriers, resistance to change, and limited facilities remain obstacles that must be collectively addressed. Policy support, human resource capacity building, and the effective use of technology need to be continuously strengthened to ensure sustainable curriculum innovation.

As a recommendation, pesantren should build collaborative learning ecosystems that are open to change. Teacher training, strengthened networks among pesantren, and partnerships with other educational institutions can serve as strategies to accelerate transformation. Furthermore, pesantren must maintain spiritual values and *adab* (ethical conduct) as the primary foundation of every educational innovation.

With strong commitment and the right strategies, pesantren can become a model of Islamic education that not only preserves tradition but also actively contributes to shaping the future of the Muslim community and the nation.

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