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DISCOURSES EXPLORING THE SPACE BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN INDONESIA

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GOVERNMENT OR LOCAL VALUE-ORIENTED?:
AN ANALYSIS OF MUHAMMADIYAH'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM POLICY

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Abstract

The article investigates how community-based education as developed by Muhammadiyah constructs its curriculum, whether it is merely governmentally standardized or, more than that, enriched with its own local values. It seems interesting to portray due to the political tendency of the ruling government in making sure that all educational practices including managed by private sectors, politically fitted into the government existing educational policy. The Muhammadiyah’s educational decision may show itself sometimes to be in line with and, in another time, to be different from the government policy. This article especially addresses Religious Education (RE) curriculum within Muhammadiyah, which to some extent enriches local value uniqueness over the government curriculum policy. To study this case, the article makes full use of historical, documentary and interview sources of shaping the standpoint of how the Muhammadiyah’s RE curriculum design seems different and to enrich what the government has decided. The result of the study shows that as a non-governmental organization, Muhammadiyah decides to take the existing RE curriculum of the government with taking account of the enrichment of local or Muslims’ values, competency and content standards endorsed by Muhammadiyah’s state of mind. Besides, by considering the cases of the School Based Curriculum started from 2006 and the 2013 Curriculum, Muhammadiyah’s initiatives not only follow the existing government policy but also try to look for other possible curriculum enrichment. Thus, politically speaking, Muhammadiyah education seems to combine both the government political decision and the local values of Muhammadiyah itself.

Key words: Muhammadiyah; Educational Standards; Religious Education; Curriculum Policy

Introduction

Muhammadiyah has been established since 1912—earlier than the Republic of Indonesia formally declared in 1945—and has autonomously fostered such social services as education and social welfare. Its activism in education seemed to have been set up as part of empowering

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communities. Historically speaking, at the first time, Ahmad Dahlan, its founder, inclined the educational service to be fully social, instead of reproducing economic interest. In other words, education had been created as a means of building on social criticism and awareness.

Directing the way to counter colonization emerging in Indonesia from physical to intellectual and spiritual struggle through the educational sector can be seen as a hidden strategic method. Apparently, Muhammadiyah has engineered its society by producing key persons with any capacity needed in boosting social change. Some of Dahlan's students, for instance, had an understanding and braveness in trying to change the Great Mosque's prayer direction fitted into their knowledge based on Astronomy they had learnt from their teacher, Dahlan himself. Here, like other modernist organizations that emerge in some regions in across countries, Muhammadiyah places education as a key sector for re-building and modernising Indonesian society.

As previously mentioned, educational institutions within Muhammadiyah, like other private sectors, are typical of the so-called 'community based education'. It is meant that those institutions are initiated by, developed by and dependent upon society or communities within both socially and economically. Further, any decision making comes from the society, but not from the government. Like other traditionalist institutions such as pesantrens massively built by Nahdlatul Ulama, a more traditionalist Indonesian Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah schools and madrasahs are established initially by their elites or members who are economically supporting. However, in the following times coincided with the much stronger government, certain political influence which may come from the government itself or persons involved in certain political interests, then partly change the organization social tendency, either to be controlled by as well as to be independent from the government intervention.

An attention that will be much paid in this article is Muhammadiyah’s policy on education especially in Religious Education (RE) curriculum. As well known, this organization has produced its own religious Islamic concept as a state of mind. The decree on ‘back to the Quran and the Sunnah’ meaning all Islamic matters in Muslims’ belief or worship for instance, must fit both Islamic resources. However, it is often different from those understandings mentioned in textbooks on Islamic teaching formally issued by the Government’s team. Moreover, regulations on Religious Education in general, are some times different from those being issued by the Government. Hence,


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Muhammadiyah’s standards in Islamic teaching may be considered as either coincided or tense with the Government’s as that happens for Muslim education in general.106

Addressing such educational issues as Religious Education policy then becomes the main discussion of this article. It will try to analyse how Muhammadiyah’s educational policy has been constructed compared from that of the Government. Besides, it also discusses a possibility of Religious Education curriculum uniqueness for instance local values of Muhammadiyah policy under the State educational regulations. Systematically it then begins with taking account of some basic theories on education or Religious Education curriculum in the context of the government and community decisions, analyse findings based on such resources as documents and relevant literature to take more understandable conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

Educational management and decision making process can be taken through either the so-called community-based or government-based education (Nilson, 1999).107 Community-based education (CBE) means that any decision of education begins with society or communities’ voices, but not the government’s. In contrast, Government-based education (GBE) focuses on the top-down policy making from the government to the societies. The latter, however, politically places the communities are merely to be a target of the educational development brought and addressed by the government.

The emergence of the above binary oppositions of the educational decision making can be originated from the very initial discourse and practicality of the so-called Non-Governmental Organization. There are dozens of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) emerging in both developed and developing countries considered able to negotiate with the State(s) policy as to their development system.108 In Indonesia, the flourishing of those NGOs has occurred since 1980s. Their presence has become a balance power to a corrupt tendency of the ruling government especially relating to public policy. The work of Syamsuddin109 showed a strategic way of the so-called ‘allocative politics’ by which Muhammadiyah tried to negotiate its standpoints on the policy such as marriage and education Act. The legislation process intervention has been one of the types of how the NGOs, like Muhammadiyah, in encountering and balancing the State regulations.

The presence of Muhammadiyah, like other social and religious movements, taking part in optimizing and sustaining educational services has happened as not all social development can be

107 Nilson, D
108 Fakih, M. Masyarakat Sipil untuk Transformasi Sosial: Pengolahan Ideologi LSM Indonesia (translated from The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Social Transformation: A Participatory Inquiry in Indonesia, a dissertation at University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996, p. 5
covered and run by the State(s) as the single agent. Even if, in the amended 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia states that ‘the government shall provide a National educational system’ for Indonesian society and, at the same time, every citizen has a right to have an access to education, the participation rate to basic and middle education has longer been contested. Having considered the fact, the presence of Muhammadiyah’s schools seems to be a momentum of empowering society so far untouchable by the governmental calculation and intervention.

Referring to the constitution, the social participation genuinely to some extent free from the State intervention has been stated in the 2013 Education Act, stating that education is both under government and community responsibility. From that legal perspective, they, the Government and the community can side by side or supportedly build on and develop the National education. It is also legally accepted as one of them independently develop and proceed an educational circumstance where both national and local values are promoted. The recognition to the non-governmental activism in education, accordingly, is the main point of providing a spacious arena for it to grow connecting to its own identity, cultures and values.

It is considerably important to strengthen a decision making process by which the Government and the communities have an opportunity to enrich the National education system. As highly recognised, the country, Indonesia, is unlikely to shape a monolithic system of education by taking account of the Indonesian pluralistic society, culturally and religiously. It seems the truth that the Government may produce certain educational standards such as National curriculum and, at the same time, the communities either established or growing also have a place to develop its potentiality including their local values offered and educated in its classrooms. Therefore, the ideal type of educational policy for building Indonesian pluralistic society is ‘negotiable policy’ which combine top-down and bottom-up decision making approach; standardization and creativity models of curriculum development, and enforcement and wisdom in shaping educational communities based on issued laws and regulations.

Contribution and Evolution of Muhammadiyah Education System

The Indonesian national education system does not begin with and grow from a neutral, empty space of the real Indonesia itself. Before independence, it had longer been colonialised by some European—Portuguese and Dutch—and Japanese military and political forces. Those colonial governments by means partly influenced how the National education to be shaped. Their effect can be traced back from such infrastructure as school buildings and such as subjects as Natural and Social sciences typical of public schools that can be contrastingly compared from the indigenous, Muslim learning place, pesantren whose lessons are essentially pure traditional Islamic sciences. In

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110 The term ‘negotiable policy’ is a reflective phrase used, by the writers of this article, to place the importance of ‘Social Interaction’ model of curriculum design between ‘members of the adopting group’ such as Muhammadiyah and other public and private actors with their communities. See Kelly, A.V. The Curriculum: Theory and Practice 6th Edition London: SAGE Publications Limited, 2009, p. 128.
short, before Indonesia formally declared, there had been some educational practices underlying the following forms of Indonesian educational system.

As described in picture 1, 2 and 3, there has been an evolutionary process of how the National education system is shaped and what the connectedness of the Government's and the community's, especially Muhammadiyah, educational policy looks like. Picture 1 illustrates that the National educations system is a complex system which includes the Dutch (school), pesantren, madrasah and other educational models. Picture 2 simply shapes the next pattern of Muhammadiyah's self reliance, in the one hand, of becoming part of the whole National education system and that of the independent education system or it is often called sub system of the National education. The third picture, finally, there has been the negotiated type of educational policy making process between the Government and Muhammadiyah. These brief schemes at least reveal that the construction of the National education system originates from the socio-educational complexity, rather than singularity.

Picture 1  Picture 2  Picture 3

Drawn from a specific contribution of Muhammadiyah education system, it is historically interesting by tracing back the initial model of Muhammadiyah's madrasah built in 1911, combining pesantren and Dutch (secular) school model.111 This Muhammadiyah type of education has considerably contributed in building a relatively new Indonesian educational system. The so called Madrasah Diniyah Islamiyah Muhammadiyah (MDIM) taught such subjects as religious and foreign sciences. In terms of curriculum approach, it applied the dichotomic and connected way interchangeably. The former accentuated how the Islamic teaching taught was separated from the foreign sciences and vice versa. The latter, on the other, accentuated on relating Islamic decrees to

social issues. The teaching process even encouraged students to directly implement Islamic teaching in students’ real life.

The origin of madrasah as one of the Muslim education system can be taken from, for instance, the growth of such madrasah system in the Muslim middle ages (750-1258) and the education system in Al-Azhar University, Egypt, when its integrated curriculum, both Islamic and modern ("secular") sciences, was designed by Muhammad Abulah and Rasyid Rida, the two education reformers in that University. This type of Madrasah might be more conservative by looking at it in the mid- and end-twentieth century Pakistan where traditionalist Muslim curricula were dominantly or fully taught. Meanwhile, madrasah developed by Ahmad Daclian, the Muhammadiyah founder, was an intellectual effort (ijtihad) for combining as well as integrating the spirit of “progressive Islam” through Islamic teaching and modern sciences. For Muhammadiyah, both sciences are condicio sine qua non as well as the complete worship, both individual (with God) and social (with all creature), to re-build the Indonesian society and humanity.112

Moreover, Daclian also contributed in establishing Madrasah Zo'ama (for males) and Za'imah (for females) in 1935. Subjects taught in this Madrasah were mostly Islamic traditions oriented to create truly Muslim scholars (see picture 4).113 The depth and width of Islamic teaching taught were expected of being able to bring students to be intellectually well informed (faqih), but not merely to put basic knowledge of Islam into practice as educated in MIDN. It can be said that Madrasah Zo'ama and Za'imah had been a continued level of MIDN early established and Kweekschool Muhammadiyah (now is Madrasah Muallimin serving secondary school) than was then established around 1940s. Therefore, Muhammadiyah has had a real practice of managing madrasah system.

As massively established by Nahdatul Ulama, a more traditionalist Indonesian Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah also had its history of establishing a kind of pesantren approximately in 1909 where Daclian taught merely traditionalist Muslim traditions. However, in the following time, he used to incline the madrasah as the core of schooling while pesantren (boarding system) was placed as its complementary system where, for the rest of time, his students could apply in practice intensively what they had learnt in madrasah. Such combined education system was by means different from pesantren system spread out by those traditionalist Muslims. In this respect, pesantren in Muhammadiyah historically was not in separation from madrasah system.

Another contribution of Muhammadiyah in establishing educational institutions is when it built Sekolah "Angka Lari" (2nd Level School) or Sekolah Rendah in 1924. This school was Muhammadiyah Public school added with Religious (Islamic) Teaching. This type of school was in practice affected by the Dutch school system where modern sciences were mostly delivered while

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113 see Peratoorien Chooesoes Pambahagiaan di dalam Madrasah Zo’ama Muhammadiyah, 1935

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Islamic teaching was to be added as well as complementary. This Daehlan's initiative was because of his previous involvement of giving a religious lesson in *Kwekschool*, a Dutch school, in Jetis, Magelang, Middle Java. Besides spreading out the madrasah system, Muhammadiyah has considerably mushroomed the school model. Today it has had a couple of thousands of schools across the country.

Since 1970s, Muhammadiyah education institutions have become part of the whole national educational system as described on picture 2. Relating to this changing shape of the Muhammadiyah education system, scheme 1 also posits it in the dynamics of National educational policy. Politically speaking, any education policy of the government must be followed by this organization. In line with the much stronger power of the New Order regime, the top-down system of educational policy tended to increase. One of the leaders of the Muhammadiyah educational board, Projoksumono, said that the place of Muhammadiyah for the government was 'just to help'. It seems that Muhammadiyah has had a commitment of taking part in succeeding the National education projects. But, on the other hand, it can be meant that the government policy is generally dominant. However, the scheme also indicates that Muhammadiyah council for education has had an important place for making its schools nearer to Muhammadiyah's values. The challenge is that how Muhammadiyah's education system can operate fitting its own identity while the government as the supra-structure tends to dominate public sectors especially education.

![Diagram](image-url)

**Scheme 1**

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114 see Rangrang Pengadjaran (Leerplan) pada Sekolah Kelas II Muhammadiyah, Soera Moehammadjah, No. 4 Th 2, 1924.
After the Reform era, since the early 2000s, Muhammadiyah’s schools have changed its political mainstream in education in order for being revitalised of its identity as one of Muslims’ standpoints in Indonesian education. This effort is truly able to be tracked when this organization criticized the 1998 Education Act. One of the attracting issues debated within the regulation was the significance of Religious Education (RE) for Indonesian students. After having a long-term struggle, Muhammadiyah, along with other Muslim organizations, finally reached a goal of placing RE as an obligatory subject and must be taught by a teacher who has the same religion as his or her student’s religion mentioned in the 2003 Education Act. The more technical rules of the 2003 Education Act such as the Government Regulation on Religious Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture’s Regulations especially on outcome, content, process and evaluation standards issued in 2005 and 2013 respectively, have become an anchor how standardized education processes in Indonesia operate. In terms of the policy impact, Muhammadiyah has so far made use of those regulations just to be a standard which means a minimum aspect that must be both formally and substantially fulfilled. In this respect, Muhammadiyah can optimize its local values as additional standards as long as the government’s standards have been covered. However, in practice, the regulations seem not easy to deal with. For instance, the teaching times per week for RE administratively accepted are 5 hours whereas those for RE in Muhammadiyah’s schools are 7 hours, meaning that the local policy of such private sectors as Muhammadiyah is by no means considered.

![Scheme 2](image)

**Scheme 2**

Scheme 2 at least sums up political trends of Muhammadiyah’s education system when it encounter the government policy. First, it began with the type of management including
Muhammadiyah's Religious Education after reform era: Enriching?

The subject of Religious Education (RE) in Muhammadiyah schools is called ISMUBA which is abbreviated from Al-Islam, Kemuhammadiyah, and Bahasa Arab (Islamic Teaching, Muhammadiyah Studies and Arabic). The Islamic teaching itself is divided into four foci of teaching such as Aqidah (Belief), Akhlaq (Ethics), Quran-Hadis and Tarikh (Muslim History). Meanwhile, the existing name of the subject officially issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture is Pendidikan Agama Islam (Islamic Religious Education) and Akhlak Mulia (Good Ethics). The two different names for this subject may have several indications. First, RE package in Muhammadiyah seems much wider in terms of scope and content of the teaching due to the Muhammadiyah Council for Basic and Middle Education, for instance, develops its own standpoints and values beyond curriculum standards decided by the National Board for Educational Standards. Second, RE version of the Government indicates that there has been accentuation on the separation of the understanding

Picture 4
concept with the term "Islamic Religious Education" and of the practical aspect with the term "Good Ethics". However, by making the separation, as if this ethical issue is not part of the religion itself.

Relating to the government regulations on RE, Muhammadiyah education, as part of the National education system, consistently takes those stated in the 2013 Education Act and several key aspects especially curriculum standards either issued in 2005 or 2015. The former becomes a foundation of the 2006 curriculum commonly known as School based Curriculum (SBC) and the later for the 2013 curriculum. As described in scheme 3, Muhammadiyah then develops its own local potentials by producing the Muhammadiyah school regulations and curriculum guidance especially on Islamic Teaching.

![Scheme 3]

If the Educational National Standards relating to curriculum design as a scope of debates are considered, Muhammadiyah education seems to have referred to the standards being issued. Scheme 4 below at least indicates that there are some local values of Muhammadiyah emphasized in broadening and enriching the existing values being projected by the government. The two areas which are highly possibly enriched by Muhammadiyah education correlate with competency and content standards. As a modernist Muslim organization, it has had its own state of mind on religion. Muhammadiyah characters mentioned in that scheme here for instance linked to the spirit of being back to the Quran and Hadis (Prophet’s decisions). Such spirit, in some cases, can be distinguished from the more traditionalist one like Nahdhatul Ulama often referring their religious standpoints to certain Muslim school of thought especially Syafii school of law. The place of Syafii interpretation to the Quran and Hadis seems to be highly considered. From this perspective, religious standpoints

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115 See the four curriculum aspects such as objectives, experiences, methods and evaluation, for instance in Stanley A.F. “The Tyler Rationale and the Ralph Tyler Project: An Historical Reconsideration” PhD Dissertation in the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, 2009.
endorsed by an author of the RE official textbook supported by the government are by means in line with certain religious standpoints, put simply, either traditionalists or modernists.

Scheme 4

Leading the 2006 and 2013 curricula, for the government, is not only how to make sure that students are able to master knowledge and skills, but also linked to its commitment to include 18 primary characters such as discipline, social care and other individual and social characters. As evidence to enrich those National characters, Muhammadiyah council for education located in Yogyakarta produces 40 religious values endorsed to be taught in Muhammadiyah’s schools. Those values are

...caring the poor and the needy, progressive thinking, simple, responsible, wise, peaceful, dynamic, discipline, economical, affection, happiness, freedom, cleanliness, sincerity, honesty, cooperation, modesty, balance (moderate), role model, commitment, creative, serving, loyalty, reading, respect, nationalism, innovation (tajdid), self confidence, unity, proactive, voluntarism, humility, patience, praiseworthiness, decent, critical, socially good practice, accuracy, carefulness, tolerance and resilience.\textsuperscript{169}

Conclusion

As an independent, non-Governmental organization, Muhammadiyah sets up its own education system, however, in the following time, it has either partly or fully and either cooperatively or independently established its educational policy under National education system. Its strategy not to follow all the Government policy seems to be its character which is autonomous and typical of Non-governmental organizations.

Muhammadiyah’s Religious Education (RE) uniqueness can be seen from such standards as competencies and contents, its local values and much more times of teaching provided compared from those of the Government’s. It reveals that providing more contents and values has made it run beyond the RE curriculum standards issued by the Government. Muhammadiyah does not totally take ‘a different way’, but exactly enriches formal values/characters being issued by the Government.

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