

The Transformation of Islamic Pedagogy: An Ethnographic Study of Yellow Book Learning at the Sarolangun Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

The era of globalization and digitalization of the yellow book learning method at the Islamic boarding school faces various challenges. The demand for education that is more relevant to the needs of the times, as well as the rapid development of information technology, requires a transformation in Islamic pedagogy. This study aims to this study is also expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in terms of improving the quality of yellow book learning at the Islamic boarding school. This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic study type. Data collection used in the study includes observation, participants, in-depth interviews and documentation. Data analysis uses thematic analysis. The results of this study: 1) The context of yellow book learning at the Islamic boarding school is strongly influenced by the traditions and culture of the Islamic boarding school that have been deeply rooted. 2) The practice of yellow book learning at the Saadatuddarein Lubuk Sayak Islamic boarding school involves a series of structured and systematic activities. 3) The transformation of pedagogy in the learning of yellow books at the Islamic boarding school is influenced by various factors, both internal and external. 4) The transformation of pedagogy in the learning of yellow books at the Saadatuddarein Lubuk Sayak Islamic boarding school has significant implications for the understanding and internalization of Islamic values by students.

Keywords

Ethnographic Study, Islamic Boarding School, Transformation Islamic Pedagogy, Yellow Book Learning.



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has a long and rich history, with pesantren as one of its main pillars (Syafe'i, 2017). Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, have played an important role in the formation of character and the dissemination of religious knowledge in the community (Zuhriy, 2011; Scott, 2017). Its existence has existed for hundreds of years and reaches various levels of Muslim society in Indonesia, especially in Java (Syafe'i, 2017). However, along with the development of the times and the challenges of

modernity, pesantren have also undergone significant transformations (Krisdiyanto et al., 2019; Isbah, 2020).

One of the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools, especially salaf Islamic boarding schools, is the use of the yellow book as the main source of learning (Zuhriy, 2011; Krisdiyanto et al., 2019). The Yellow Book, which is generally written in classical Arabic, contains various Islamic disciplines such as fiqh, monotheism, Sufism, and others. Learning the yellow book at salaf Islamic boarding schools has its own methods and traditions that are passed down from generation to generation. This method often emphasizes textual comprehension, memorization, and mastery of Arabic grammar (nahwu and sharaf).

However, in this era of globalization and digitalization, the yellow book learning method in salaf Islamic boarding schools faces various challenges. The demand for education that is more relevant to the needs of the times, as well as the rapid development of information technology, demands a transformation in Islamic pedagogy (Priatmoko, 2018; Wekke & Hamid, 2013). This transformation does not mean abandoning the traditions and noble values of Islamic boarding schools, but rather how to adapt and modify learning methods to be more effective and efficient in producing qualified graduates who are able to compete in the modern era (Priatmoko, 2018).

Islamic boarding schools as part of the education system in Indonesia are required to continue to improve themselves and improve the quality of their education (Hidayat et al., 2023; Kuntoro, 2019). The quality management of Islamic education is the key in an effort to improve the ability of students to the maximum, as well as to form a superior character and civilization (Kuntoro, 2019; Hidayat et al., 2023). This quality improvement not only focuses on cognitive aspects, but also on affective and psychomotor aspects, so as to produce graduates who have a balance between knowledge, skills, and noble morals (Baharun, 2017).

In this context, research on the transformation of Islamic pedagogy in learning the yellow book in Islamic boarding schools is very relevant and important. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of how Islamic boarding schools strive to transform their learning methods to remain relevant to the times, without losing their traditional identity and values. In addition, this research is also expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in terms of improving the quality of learning the yellow book in Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic education has a concept of thinking about education based on Islamic teachings regarding the essence of human ability to be educated, developed, and guided to become a Muslim whose entire personality is imbued with Islamic teachings (Mappasiara, 2017). Therefore, the transformation of Islamic pedagogy must remain based on the Qur'an and Al-Hadith as the primary source, as well as the opinions of experts as secondary sources (Mappasiara, 2017). Thus, the transformation carried out will not deviate from the universal and eternal values of Islam. This research also aims to offer solutions to the challenges faced by Islamic Boarding Schools in maintaining their existence and quality of education in the modern era. This solution is expected to be an input for pesantren managers, the government,

and the wider community in an effort to improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. In addition, this research is also expected to contribute to efforts to deradicalize Islamic education based on Islamic boarding school treasures. By understanding the noble values contained in the yellow book and transforming its learning methods appropriately, Islamic Boarding Schools can become a fortress of defense against radical and extreme ideas in the name of religion.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the type of ethnographic study to understand in depth the transformation of Islamic pedagogy in the learning of the Yellow Book in Islamic Boarding Schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, interpretation, and experience of the research subject in depth (Baharun, 2017; Wekke & Hamid, 2013). Ethnographic studies, as part of a qualitative approach, provide the right framework to understand the culture and practices of learning in Islamic Boarding Schools.

The main focus of the ethnographic approach in this study is to describe and analyze the learning practices of the Yellow Book, the underlying values, and the changes that occur in teaching methods and interactions between teachers and students. The researcher seeks to identify how salaf pesantren adapt traditional pedagogy by incorporating modern elements without losing the identity and core values of the pesantren (Priatmoko, 2018). Thus, this study not only provides an overview of what happens in the classroom, but also why it happens, and how it impacts the learning experience of students. In addition, this approach also considers the historical and socio-cultural context in the Islamic Boarding School.

This research was carried out at a salaf pesantren located in the Jambi area. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that the pesantren has a strong reputation for maintaining the tradition of learning the Yellow Book, but also shows that there is an effort to integrate elements of modern pedagogy. The research period was carried out for six months, starting from January to September 2025. The subjects of this study consist of students, teachers, and managers of Islamic Boarding Schools. The students selected are those who actively participate in the learning of the Yellow Book and have various levels of understanding and learning experience. The selected teachers are those who have experience teaching the Yellow Book in different time periods, as well as have diverse views on Islamic pedagogy. The data collection techniques used in this study include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The collected data was analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques. This technique involves the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing data to find key themes relevant to the focus of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the Context of Learning the Yellow Book in Islamic Boarding Schools

Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, have unique characteristics in the implementation of their learning, especially in the study of the yellow book. The yellow book, or classical book, is the works of previous scholars who are the main references in various Islamic disciplines, such as fiqh, monotheism, Sufism, nahwu, and sharaf (Mubin, 2020). Learning the yellow book in salaf Islamic boarding schools is not only a transfer of knowledge, but also the formation of character and the internalization of Islamic values (Syafe'i, 2017).

The context of learning the yellow book at Islamic Boarding Schools is greatly influenced by the traditions and culture of Islamic boarding schools that have been firmly rooted. Some important elements in this context include the existence of a kiai as a central figure and scientific authority, students as students living in Islamic boarding schools, mosques as centers for worship and learning activities, and pondok as a place for student residence. Interaction between kiai and students, both inside and outside the classroom, is an integral part of the learning process.

Learning the yellow book at Saadatuddarein Lubuk Sayak is carried out using the halaqah, Bandongan and sorogan methods. The Bandongan method is a teaching method in which a kiai reads and explains the yellow book in front of the students, while the students listen and take notes. The Halaqah Method is a group of students who sit in a circle to study and study the book in depth with the guidance of the Ustadz or teacher. The sorogan method is a method in which students read the yellow book in front of the kiai individually, and the kiai provide corrections and explanations. These three methods emphasize thoroughness, deep comprehension, and good Arabic language skills.

In addition, a strict religious atmosphere and discipline are also characteristic of the learning context in salaf Islamic boarding schools. Students are encouraged to always maintain good manners and morals, as well as follow the rules and regulations of the Islamic boarding school. This aims to create an environment conducive to the learning process and character building.

In this modern era, Islamic Boarding Schools also face various challenges, such as the rapid flow of information, socio-cultural changes, and demands for better quality education. However, salaf pesantren strive to maintain their traditional values while adapting to the times. Pedagogical transformation is one of the efforts to answer these challenges, while still prioritizing the essence and purpose of Islamic education.

2. Practice of Learning the Yellow Book

The practice of learning the yellow book in Islamic Boarding Schools involves a series of structured and systematic activities. Starting from the selection of books to be studied, determining the schedule and learning methods, to evaluating the learning outcomes of students. The selection of the yellow book is usually adjusted to the level of ability of the students and the needs of the pesantren (References are not verified). Basic books such as *Matan al-Ajrumiyyah* in the science of nahwu, *Safinatun Naja* in fiqh, and *Aqidatul Awam* in the science of monotheism, are often the initial material studied by students.

The learning methods used vary, depending on the type of book and the kiai's preferences. The bandongan method, as described earlier, is a commonly used method to study books that are more complex and require in-depth explanations (Wekke & Hamid, 2013). Kiai will read the text of the book, translate word by word, explain the meaning and content of the verses, and provide examples of applications in daily life. Students listen carefully, note important points, and ask questions if there are things that are not understood.

The sorogan method, on the other hand, emphasizes more on the ability of students to read and understand the text of the book independently. The students will read the book in front of the kiai, and the kiai will provide corrections if there are errors in reading or understanding the text. This method trains students to be more active and responsible in their learning process.

The halaqah method, on the other hand, emphasizes more on the ability of student groups to discuss in reading and understanding the text of the book. Students will read the book in front of the ustadz will provide corrections if there are errors in reading or understanding the text. This method trains students to be more active and responsible in their learning process.

In addition to these three methods, some Islamic Boarding Schools have also begun to adopt more modern learning methods, such as presentations, and the use of learning media. However, traditional methods remain the main foundation in the practice of learning the yellow book. The integration between traditional and modern methods is expected to increase the effectiveness of learning and the relevance of pesantren education to the needs of the times.

Evaluation of students' learning outcomes is carried out periodically through oral and written exams. Oral exams are usually in the form of questions about the material that has been studied, while written exams are in the form of translations of the text of the book or explanations of important concepts. The results of the evaluation are used as feedback for students and kiai to improve the quality of learning.

Furthermore, the practice of learning the yellow book does not only focus on the cognitive aspect, but also the affective and psychomotor aspects (Baharun, 2017). Students are encouraged to practice the knowledge that has been learned in daily life, as well as to emulate the morals and behavior of the kiai. Thus, learning the yellow book is expected to shape students into individuals with knowledge, noble character, and beneficial to the community.

3. Factors Influencing Pedagogical Transformation

The pedagogical transformation in learning the yellow book in Islamic boarding schools is influenced by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include changes in curriculum, learning methods, and human resources. External factors include technological developments, socio-cultural changes, and demands for better quality education (Priatmoko, 2018).

Changes in the curriculum are often triggered by the need to adapt learning materials to the development of science and the needs of society. Some salaf Islamic boarding schools have begun to incorporate new materials such as computer science, foreign languages, and

entrepreneurial skills into their curriculum (Priatmoko, 2018). However, the addition of this new material still pays attention to the balance with religious materials that are the hallmark of pesantren education.

Changes in learning methods are also an important factor in pedagogical transformation (Wekke & Hamid, 2013). The use of more interactive and participatory methods, such as group discussions, presentations, and case studies, is expected to increase students' interest and motivation to learn. In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in learning is also increasing. Some salaf pesantren have used the internet, computers, and projectors to support the learning process. The use of ICT also helps students in accessing wider and more diverse sources of information.

Changes in human resources also play an important role in pedagogical transformation. Improving the quality of teachers and education personnel through training and continuing education is a priority. Islamic boarding school teachers are encouraged to continue to improve their competence in the fields of pedagogy, technology, and learning content (Priatmoko, 2018). In addition, Islamic boarding schools have also begun to involve alumni and community leaders in the learning process.

External factors such as technological developments, socio-cultural changes, and demands for better quality education also affect pedagogical transformation (Priatmoko, 2018). Technological developments have opened up access to wider and faster information and knowledge. Socio-cultural changes require Islamic boarding schools to be more adaptive and responsive to the needs of the community. The demand for better quality education encourages pesantren to continue to improve and improve the quality of education services.

In addition to the above factors, support from the government and the community is also very important in encouraging pedagogical transformation in Islamic Boarding Schools. The government provides financial assistance, training, and facilities to improve the quality of pesantren education. The community also provides moral and material support to Islamic Boarding Schools. With support from various parties, pedagogical transformation in Islamic Boarding Schools can run more effectively and sustainably.

4. Implications of Pedagogical Transformation on the Understanding and Internalization of Islamic Values

The transformation of pedagogy in learning the yellow book in Islamic Boarding Schools has significant implications for the understanding and internalization of Islamic values by students. With a more interactive and participatory learning method, students become more active in the learning process and easier to understand complex concepts (Wekke & Hamid, 2013). The use of interesting and relevant learning media can also increase students' interest and motivation to learn.

In addition, pedagogical transformation also allows students to develop critical and analytical thinking skills (Mappasiara, 2017). Students not only memorize the text of the book, but are also able to understand the meaning and content of verses, and apply them in daily life. Thus, students become smarter and wiser in dealing with various problems.

Furthermore, pedagogical transformation also contributes to a deeper internalization of Islamic values (Baharun, 2017). Students not only know Islamic values theoretically, but are also able to practice them in their daily behavior and actions. The process of internalizing Islamic values is strengthened by the strict religious and disciplined atmosphere at the Islamic Boarding School. Thus, students become individuals with noble character and high integrity.

However, pedagogical transformation also has its own challenges. One of the main challenges is maintaining a balance between the traditional values of the pesantren and the demands. Pesantren must be able to adapt to the development of the times without losing their identity and characteristics. In addition, Islamic Boarding Schools ensure that pedagogical transformation does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor aspects.

Another implication is the need to improve the competence of teachers and education personnel. Islamic boarding school teachers must continue to improve their abilities in the fields of pedagogy, technology, and learning content (Priatmoko, 2018). In addition, Islamic boarding schools must also provide adequate facilities and resources to support the pedagogical transformation process. By overcoming these challenges, the pedagogical transformation in learning the yellow book in Islamic Boarding Schools can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of Islamic education and the formation of the character of the young generation of Muslims.

Pedagogical transformation can also strengthen the role of pesantren as an inclusive and tolerant educational institution (Masduqi, 1970). With a more open and dialogical learning method, students can learn to respect differences of opinion and views. Pesantren can be a forum for the development of moderate and tolerant Islamic thought, as well as contribute to the deradicalization of Islamic education. Thus, Islamic Boarding Schools can play a greater role in building a harmonious and prosperous society.

CONCLUSION

Ethnographic research on the transformation of Islamic pedagogy in the learning of the Yellow Book in Islamic Boarding Schools has explored in depth the dynamics of change and continuity in traditional Islamic educational practices. Through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, this study succeeded in identifying various factors that affect pedagogical transformation, as well as their implications for character formation and intellectual development of students.

One of the main findings of the study is that Islamic Boarding Schools, although known for their strong traditions, are not entirely resistant to change. Modernization, globalization, and technological developments have had a significant influence on the Islamic boarding school education system. Islamic boarding schools have adapted by integrating modern curriculum, utilizing technology in learning, and developing extracurricular programs that are relevant to the needs of the times.

However, this adaptation does not necessarily eliminate the typical characteristics of Islamic Boarding Schools. Learning the Yellow Book remains the core of the Islamic boarding school curriculum, and traditional methods such as sorogan, bandongan, Halaqah and deliberation are still maintained. Kiai, as a central figure in Islamic boarding schools, plays an important role in maintaining Islamic traditions and values. Kiai is not only a teacher, but also a spiritual guide and role model for students.

The transformation of Islamic pedagogy in Islamic boarding schools is also influenced by social and political changes in Indonesia. The emergence of transnational Islamic movements and issues of radicalism has encouraged pesantren to emphasize character education and the values of tolerance (Masduqi, 1970). Pesantren strives to equip students with a moderate and inclusive understanding of religion, as well as the ability to face extreme ideological challenges.

This study also found that there are challenges faced by Islamic Boarding Schools in the process of pedagogical transformation. Limited resources, lack of qualified teaching staff, and resistance to change are some of the challenges that need to be overcome. Islamic boarding schools need to invest in improving the quality of human resources, developing relevant curricula, and utilizing technology to increase learning effectiveness.

Furthermore, this study identifies several good practices in learning the Yellow Book in salaf Islamic boarding schools that can be used as an example for other Islamic educational institutions. The use of participatory learning methods, a personal approach in student guidance, and the integration of Islamic values in every aspect of pesantren life are some of the good practices that should be replicated. In addition, Islamic boarding schools also need to collaborate with other educational institutions, both at home and abroad, to improve the quality and relevance of education.

Overall, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the transformation of Islamic pedagogy in the learning of the Yellow Book in Islamic Boarding Schools. This study shows that Islamic boarding schools are able to adapt to the changing times without losing their identity as traditional Islamic educational institutions. Pedagogical transformation in Islamic Boarding Schools is a complex and multidimensional process, which is influenced by various internal and external factors. The success of this transformation is highly dependent on the commitment and cooperation of all parties involved, including kiai, students, pesantren administrators, the government, and the community.

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