

Research article

Implementing Pesantren (Boarding School)-based Curriculum to Preserve Madrasas in the Post-truth Era in Indonesia

Abdul Rohman*

UIN Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract.

Madrasas in Indonesia play a crucial role in the country's national education system. Although, quantitatively, there are a significant number of *madrasas* in Indonesia, qualitatively, they are facing many problems. *Madrasas* are considered backwards and marginal institutions, face a lack of public trust, and some have even closed due to a lack of students. All of these are attributed to the factors related to the curriculum of *madrasas*. A curriculum describes the educational process that will be followed and the profile of graduates that will be produced by the *madrasa*. The present research is qualitative and explores the sustainability of *madrasas* by examining the curriculum and learning programs, and habituations at *Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Banat Nahdlatul Ulama* Kudus. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The subjects in this study were teachers, *Kiayi*, students, graduates, and *pesantren* administrators, selected by purposive sampling. The results show that *madrasas* that used a *pesantren*-based curriculum receive a better response from the society and higher sustainability amid global trends in the post-truth era.

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Rohman; email:
abdulrohman@walisongo.ac.id

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1. Introduction

Madrasas, which quantitatively have a significant number and have an important position in the context of the national education system in Indonesia, are qualitatively facing many problems. *Madrasas* are positioned as backward and marginalized institutions [1,2], raw inputs of *madrasa* are students from marginalized communities who have low learning motivation [3], many educators and education staff in *madrasas* are underqualified and miss matched [4], the learning process carried out in *madrasas* is of low quality [5], *madrasa* learning facilities are inadequate [6], *madrasa* graduate competencies are low and less competitive [7], *madrasas* management are not good so that it has implications for the low quality of *madrasas* [8], *madrasas* are categorized as institutions that are less responsive to modernity issues [9, 10], *madrasas* are only seen as educational institutions that study religious sciences, and place other sciences as a less important

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part of their life [11], even some madrasas were closed due to not getting students [12]. Thus, the quality of madrasas still needs attention, needs to be improved, and needs to be standardized.

Madrasas that are less advanced and lack public trust are caused by curriculum factors. From their curriculum, the society will know the portrayal of the educational process that will be implemented, and also will know the profile of the graduates that will be produced by the madrasa. The curriculum, which is a set of plans, or a series of learning packages, and its existence as a reference in the learning process, has a very important position in education [13, 14]. The style and direction of an education can be seen from the style of its curriculum. Moreover, Schubert [15] states that the agenda of social reconstruction through education can be carried out well if the curriculum supports it. The curriculum is a blueprint for an educational institution [16, 17], therefore the curriculum needs attention for madrasas if they want to improve the quality of their education.

A good curriculum should be supported by its implementation. A good curriculum does not run well itself as a function of social reconstruction if it is not followed up with the implementation. The curriculum is just a design, it has to be implemented as an integrated part of the education process [18]. The effectiveness of the curriculum will be determined by its implementation [19]. However, implementation will lose its direction if the design is not well prepared. In other words, the curriculum and its implementation are two-sides of things that cannot be separated, they are inter-related, and their existence is inter-influenced one another.

This paper aims to complement previous studies that place madrasas as backward, marginal, traditional-conservative, closed-minded institutions, and wants to show that there are a number of madrasas that have changed, madrasas are competitive. A number of madrasas have made innovations to provide services to the community in the midst of the incessant currents of changing times, by offering unique curricula, and these madrasas have also received high trust from the community. This study focuses on the curriculum and learning in madrasas which case on *Madrasa Tsanawiyah* (Islamic Junior High School) *Banat NU* Kudus Central Java Indonesia, that focusing on three questions, namely: first, how is the curriculum implemented in madrasas? second, how is the curriculum implemented in madrasas? Third, how does the construction of the curriculum and the implementation of this learning have implications for the sustainability of the madrasa?

2. Methodology

This research focuses on curriculum and instruction in madrasas. These two variables are very important in their position and role in determining the style and characteristic of the madrasa. The progress and decline of madrasas will be greatly influenced by the curriculum and instruction. Madrasah outputs and outcomes will also be determined by curriculum construction and learning implementation, and this in turn will have implications for public interest and trust in a madrasa. The societies will look at the profile of the madrasa in order to entrust their children to the madrasa by considering the variables of the curriculum and learning held. This research is qualitative, with primary data in the form of curriculum documents, learning practices, and habituation carried out at *Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Banat Nahdlatul Ulama* Kudus. Secondary data is other information i.e.: reference books, print media sources, electronic media sources related to madrasas. The participants in this study were teachers, *Kiyai, ustadz*, students, graduates, pesantren administrators who were selected by purposive sampling.

Madrasas curriculum data were collected from curriculum documents and interviews with teachers, *Kiyai, ustadz*. Meanwhile, data on the implementation of learning and habituation were collected through observation and interviews with teachers, *Kiyai* of pesantren, *ustadz* who teach in madrasas and Islamic boarding schools, and *santri*. Curriculum, learning and habituation data in madrasas were analyzed using descriptive methods to provide an overview of the curriculum structure, implementation of learning in madrasas and Islamic boarding schools. In relation to the curriculum, the aspects collected are the structure of subjects, books (*kitab*) that become references. Then, the description of the curriculum and learning is analyzed using interpretive analysis to see how it relates to public trust in the madrasas so that it has implications for the sustainability of the madrasas.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Kurikulum Terpadu dengan Pesantren

MTs Banat NU Kudus implements an integrated curriculum between the three Ministerial Judgement on curriculum which applies a composition of 30 percent of Religious Subjects and 70 percent of General Subjects. But, *MTs Banat NU* enriches religious subjects with a *pesantren* curriculum with references to the "Yellow Book" (*kitab kuning*) as teaching material. Structurally, the curriculum of *MTs Banat NU* Kudus consists of: (1)

General Subjects: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Studies, Indonesian Language, Physical Education, Cultural Arts and Skills; (2) Religious Subjects: *Al-Quran Hadith, Aqidah Akhlak, Fiqh*, History of Islamic Culture and Arabic Language. The difference between this madrasa and others is in the enrichment of Religious Subjects, namely the use of teaching materials determined by the Ministry of Religion, and the use of "Yellow Book" reference as a characteristic of *pesantren*, namely: *Fiqh* enriched with the Book of *Taqrib (Fath al-Qorib al-Mujib)*, *al-Quran* with *Tafsir Jalalain*, *al-Hadith* with *Arbain al-Nawawiyah*, *Aqidah* with the book *Aqidat al-Awam*, Morals with the Book of *Akhlak li al-Banat* and *al-Washiyat al-Musthofa*, *SKI* with *Sirah Nabawiyah*, Arabic with *Kitab al-Maqsud* (semantics), *Imrity* (grammatical) [20].

Madrasas also provide a choice of curriculum in the form of the *Tahfidz al-Quran* program, and science development for students according to their specialization. They are classified into separated classes. The *Tahfidz al-Quran* program is grouped into two classes for each grade in the madrasa and placed in the *Ma'had Manhaj al-Quran*, while science specializations are grouped into one class for each grade and placed in *Ma'had Mubarak Maimunah* [21]. The *MTs Banat NU* Kudus curriculum is also strengthened by integrated boarding schools with *madrasas*. Ninety-one percent (as many as 867 students) of *MTs Banat NU* are housed in Islamic boarding schools located around madrasas, namely: *Ma'had Mubarak Maimunah*, *Ma'had Asnawiyah*, *Ma'had Manhaj al-Quran*, *Ma'had fi Ulum al-Syar'iyyah Yanbu' al-Quran (MUSYQ)*, *Ma'had Wafy al-Quran*. These *pesantren* are managed integratedly with *madrasas*. While nine percent (as many as 90 students) come from the area around the madrasa that is not in a *ma'had*, they live in homes with their parents, but participate in the activities of the closest *pesantren*. The distribution of students in *pesantren*, i.e.: *Ma'had Mubarak Maimunah* as many as 122 people, *Ma'haj Manhaj al-Quran* 165 people, *Ma'had Asnawiyah* 207 people, *Ma'had fi Ulum al-Syar'iyyah Yanbu' al-Quran (MUSYQ)* 250 people, *Ma'had Wafy Al-Quran* 120 people, Living with parents (from the area around the madrasa) 93 people [22].

In *pesantren*, students learn religion through "yellow books" (*kitab kuning*) which contain religious values and knowledge taught by *Kiayi* through *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods. The *Kitab Kuning* discuss on *fiqh*, *aqidah akhlak*, Islamic history, the Koran, al-Hadith, Arabic with an emphasis on *Nahwu* (grammatical) and *Shorof* (semantic). In *pesantren*, students also learn about character values which are carried out through habituation in daily life and are supported by *Kiayi's* modelling, such as habituation of praying in congregation, time discipline, *sholawatan*, *maulid al-diba'*, art of *hadrah*, and others [23].

3.2. Sistem Pembelajaran

In normal era, learning at *MTs Banat NU* Kudus is carried out classically, each class consists of 33 students, and each class is facilitated by a student's homeroom teacher (*wali kelas*). Learning is carried out by each subject teacher with various learning methods starting at 07.00 to 13.00 pm. Each class is equipped with information technology-based learning media. During the COVID-19 pandemic, educational communication is held via online. Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was carried out online using the media *zoom meeting* in which teachers were at school and students were at their homes, because all *pondok* were closed. In these activities, student participation in learning was very good [23].

MTs Banat NU Kudus carried out teaching-learning activities with an active learning approach which provide students having space for exploration, elaboration of various aspects they learn. Various methods are implemented to support active learning for various subjects, both general subjects and religious subjects. The experimental method is also applied especially for science learning. *Madrasas* also have a research team that conducts experiments to find various alternative medicinal plants that are easily found in the archipelago [24]. This research team has succeeded in winning various Olympics at the national and even international levels, so that *MTs Banat NU* Kudus is designated as a research school by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia [25, 26]

3.3. Input and Output of Madrasa

MTs Banat NU Kudus has received high trust from the community. He has 27 classes (*rombel*), where there are 9 classes in each grade, each class consists of 33 students, with a total of 957 students. The input of *MTs Banat NU* students came from various regions of Central Java, and several students from other provinces, namely: Kudus 93 people, Pati 86 people, Jepara 99 people, Rembang 85 people, Blora 45 people, Grobogan 57 people, Demak 88 people, Semarang City 75 people, Semarang Regency 39 people, Salatiga 41 people, Kendal 74 people, Temanggung 29 people, Pekalongan 32 people, Tegal 15 people, Brebes 12 people, Purwokerto 11 people, Batang 29 people, Jakarta 28 people, Sumatra 25 people [20].

The number of applicants for new student admissions yearly is relatively stable with a tight level of competition. Students which are accepted approximately half of the number of applicants. Data for the last three years can be seen that the number of registrants in 2019 was 711, of which 297 were accepted; in 2020 there were 699 registrants, of

which 296 were accepted; while in 2021 there were 705 registrants, of which 297 were accepted. This number is very good in the context of private educational institutions in the regions at the junior high school level [20].

MTs Banat NU Kudus directs its students to have personality aspects as learning outcomes, both affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. From the affective point of view, madrasas and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have internalized various character values to students through various habits in *madrasas* and *pesantren*. Historically, *pesantren* and madrasas are educational institutions that shape character, instill spiritual values, morality and humanity to *santri* [27]. From a cognitive and psychomotor point of view, this institution is unquestionable, in which the students and alumni of madrasas and *pesantren* have academic achievements in various fields, both at the local, national, and international levels. This can also be seen in the graduates of *MTs Banat NU* whose graduates are accepted at various levels of qualified education at the next level. In this context, one parent of *MTs Banat* students explained that:

For me, the important thing of the learning process is that my children can learn the foundations of morality and they can habituate character values to prepare their future life, and this will be easier to instill if they live in a pesantren. In pesantren, children also learn to live independently, to communicate and to socialize to others. Moreover, in madrasa they also have advantages in the academic field, in which children learn various subjects like other schools at the junior high school level. The quality of learning is also carried out well in madrasa and pesantren [28].

3.4. Societies' Needs in the Post-Truth Era and Its Implication to the Sustainability of the Madrasas

The post-truth era, which is marked by the denial of facts, common sense and substantial truths, has occurred very vigorously. The factually verified information was eclipsed by the hoax news [29] Conspiracies that go viral will be easily trusted by the public, especially the development of information technology with social media that currently exists further strengthens this condition [30]. Truth is considered as an untruth, and otherwise untruth is considered as truth. This phenomenon is caused by the occurrence of doubts and denial of the credibility of science, the declining quality of traditional media, increasingly popular social media, fake media spread easily, and the climate of postmodernism [31].

In this situations, parents feel worried about their children, they look for alternative education to provide a foundation for the future of their children, education that

can provide the basics of attitude in life in the post-truth era, namely education that comprehensively addresses a moral, affective, attitude in one hand, and also teach cognitive and psychomotor in other hand. In fact, the current education is dominated by cognitive domain, meanwhile affective one is often neglected [32, 33]. Therefore, education that is integrated with Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), or *madrasas* that apply a *pesantren*-based curriculum become an alternative to offer to the community. In this education system, children can learn about general sciences and religious sciences adequately and comprehensively, even they are also accustomed to commendable morals and behavior as the basis of morality through habituation and modelling in Islamic boarding schools [34, 35]. *Madrasas* that apply the *pesantren* curriculum are the right choice. This is as implemented in *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Banat NU* Kudus, Central Java.

4. Conclusion

Madrasas, which are important educational institutions in the context of Indonesia's national education system, their sustainability is an important agenda that needs to be maintained. Curriculum and learning are aspects that can be considered to maintain the survival of *madrasas*, especially in the post-truth era where in this era society needs educational institutions that provide the students to learn a set of values as a foundation for facing at a changing world in one hand, and also learn cognitive and psychomotor as well, in other hand. Parents need a school that provides their children learn a set of character values for their future life. Therefore, *madrasas* that implement a *pesantren*-based-curriculum in which students can learn all aspects of the education (affective, cognitive and psychomotor) proportionally show an effectiveness in addressing a need of societies. In addition, *madrasas* that apply this pattern are also proven to get trust from the societies, and they have many students who want to study at these institutions. And it is fact that it will imply the *madrasas* to maintain the sustainability.

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