Islamic Education in The Obstruction of Religious Radicalism
(Reflection on Epistemology-Methodology)

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Abstract: Islamic Education in the Obstruction of Religious Radicalism: Reflection on Epistemology-Methodology. The change of living pattern into permissive, open, highly-mobile life style, as well as the high risk of anarchistic actions, requires the establishment of steady education system which is capable of responding the demanding challenge. Islamic education in particular, is forced to constantly adapt to the existing phenomena arising in society. Based on this consideration, Islamic education curriculum has found its moment to be carefully redesigned as an inclusive, down to earth curriculum promoted as a picture of peaceful tolerant Islam.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Radicalism.

Introduction

Anarchistic demonstration triggered by racial and religious issues, such as the assault to Jemaah Ahmadiyya in Cikeusik Pandeglang Banten, church destruction in Temanggung, and the invasion toward pesantren YAPI in Pasuruan East Java were all clear evidence that conflict potential still prevails over culturecapital. No one can guarantee that all of those riots would end the horizontal conflicts which have frequently existed in our society recently. Otherwise, we may think that there is still greater potential of conflict buried in other areas throughout Indonesia. Ironically, that violence mentioned above were committed and masterminded by individuals or groups who name themselves as the representation of Moslem. In fact, Islam normatively never teaches its adherents to commit violence. In 1990s, there were more than five riots sparked by racial, religious pettiness, i.e., 1995 in Pekalongan, 1996 in
Tasikmalaya, 1997 in Rengasdengklok, 1997 in West Kalimantan, and 1999 in Ambon which generated the most victims.

The anarchistic actions, such as written before, indeed reflect Moslems perspective of “conflicted” characters, attitudes, and viewpoint instead of dialogue standpoint. Unconsciously, this conflict paradigm has also been grounded on religious education which is also full of conflict nuance, such as the dichotomy between the world-the hereafter, good-bad, angel-devil, reward-punishment (read: sin), etc. Hence, the dichotomy has resulted in perception that one certain side is better and right compared to the other side. Because the earlier is better and thus it is right then subsequently the later should be defeated and demolished by whatsoever method.

Besides, the problem emerges in the Islamic education system is the absence of clarity in regard to epistemological frame which as a matter of fact underlies the development of the existing scientific element. Therefore, it is unquestionable that Islamic education study objects are still complicatedly debatable. The term epistemology on its own offers broad and sophisticated definition. On one hand, it can be understood as specific science studying the sources, the structure, the methods, and the validity of knowledge. On the other hand, it can also be comprehended as science investigating the origin, the meaning, the structure, the method, and the legitimacy of science.

New Direction of Islamic Education

The success of education reform, especially in regard to Islamic education, will convey enhanced direction if it is built upon firm basic philosophical frame as well as well-founded education theories. Meanwhile, the philosophy of Islamic education will only be improved upon clear and established basic assumptions about human being either as individual or as part of society, their relation with the environment, the universe, the hereafter and God the creator. Furthermore, education

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theory can be developed upon the engagement of philosophical approach and empirical approach.

Seeing the exigency of educational philosophy, formulating the philosophical-epistemological framework of Islamic education relevant to Islamic teachings is considered as a significant stepping stone. Subsequently, the framework will then be developed through empirical elements placed in social-cultural context. Without this strong foundation, Islamic education reform will not have powerful grounds, nor will it move toward better direction.

Unfortunately, the study on Islamic education philosophy is still dominated by inert thoughts. This means that the existing studies tend to hold conservative-reproductive perspective instead of progressive-creative perspective. Therefore, it is fair enough if Islamic education practices cannot bear changes and developments regarded as cultural-intellectual achievement excellence due to efforts for preserving, inheriting, and glorifying past accomplishments. Moreover, the studies sourced upon figures are often trapped into thoughts deification, as maintained by M Arqon, Taqdis al-Afkar al-Dini. As a consequence, the rotation of the culture and Islamic thought tradition rolls statically since the motion of the history do not produce novice thoughts, instead it reproduces old thinking framed within culture/tradition understanding.

The implementation of religious education is still fixated on the conventional model emphasizing on lecturing method which tend to be monologue and doctrinaire in nature, focusing on memorization rather than analysis and dialogue, and paying more attention on materials instead of methods. This is indeed as a result of traditional perception that knowledge delivered to the students is not in the form of process which appreciate comprehension, reasoning, and exercise, instead it is taught in the form of product which prioritize memorization and perceives knowledge as the final product.

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The approach on teaching methodology and learning practice as stated above can be categorized as doctrinaire-literal-formal-approach, since it emphasizes strongly on religious formality, normativity, textual aspect which typically detached from the existing context. Besides, religious education is considered further as the sole indoctrination activity on truth which seems to be indisputable. One obvious indicator of this teaching-learning model is the absence of discussion material provided at the end of the session which actually offers opportunities for review and analysis. This occurs due to defensive-apologetic pattern developed in attempt to secure one’s religiosity by means of the religious sacredness doctrines.

Islamic education which has been ignoring reasoning potentials and its improvement must be redirected to create creative generation. One essential strategy is by establishing reasoning development.

Besides the problem of educational methodology, the symptom of scientific dichotomy is portrayed as critical issues related to Islamic education in Indonesia. Islamic education dualism, according to Muhaimin, relies on two aspects, i.e., first, formal perspective in which the entire aspect of life is seen through two opposing sides namely the world vs. the hereafter, physical versus spiritual. Hence, Islamic education tends to privilege the hereafter life and the spiritual aspect. As a consequence, the discourse that Islamic education cares only ritual, spiritual Ilahiyah (pertaining to Allah) comes out. Meanwhile, the other aspects such as economy, politic, law, art-culture, science, technology, etc. are regarded as profane elements far from Islamic education areas. Second, the dichotomy of Islamic education system in Indonesia rooted from the legacy of Dutch colonialism. This means that the practice of segregating education between general education and religious education had been started since the Dutch colonialism.

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The division of general education and the religious education resulted in educational gap, hence the subsequent consequences. Some of the negative effects were the emergence of exclusive religious schools and the reduction of the definition of ulama (moslem scholars) into fuqaha (Islamic jurisprudence expert). Consequently, normative-absolute approach has been constantly implemented in Islamic education. Thus, students are directed to possess strong commitment and complete dedication to the religion which is being learnt.

Furthermore, if the two aspects mentioned above are connected to philosophical perspectives, then they relate tightly to Moslems' understanding toward the sources of Islamic sciences. Islamic education institutions have been remarkably leaning to delivering religious sciences (tafaquh fi al-Dini), yet ignoring modern sciences. This is certainly influenced by the understanding of the sources of sciences. A number of Moslem still holds strong belief that religious sciences outweigh other type of science.

Islamic education in the perspective of historical spectrum clearly shows the domination of bipolar trend, i.e., physical-spiritual, faith-infidelity, naqli-aqli, religion-world, righteous-sinner, etc. which plunge deeply into Moslems' unconscious state of mind. Therefore, according to M Arkoun, this mainstream assumption is called “religious-reasoning” as opposed to “scientific-reasoning”. We may sincerely apprehend this type of education which is highly likely dominated by bayani reasoning as the underlying basis of religious comprehension.

Once education is related to epistemology, then it appears as curriculum, especially in regard to the epistemology of curriculum, including teaching-learning methods, and all aspects reside within the educational institutions.

“JSIT”: Islamic Radical Movement?

As a solution upon the epistemological problem noted above, Tarbiyah movement subsequently emerged in forms of Sekolah Islam

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Terpadu (Integrated Islamic Schools). In Indonesia, the integrated Islamic education institutions acquired their momentum at the beginning of reformation era. Initially, there had been a number of Islamic education institutions of the same type established beforehand such as those initiated by Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.

Generally, the integrated Islamic education institutions are formulated in modern way, adopting meritocratic elements combined with traditional and conventional education values. Moreover, these institutions attempt to offer new synthesis of collaborating balanced general education goals and Islamic education objectives. This synthesis is supported with qualified academicians, human resources, facilities, and funds, as well as favorable educational milieu.

The awakening of the integrated Islamic education practically began to develop in 1980s or 1990s. Either madrasah or integrated Islamic schools has adopted general education system which was inherited from the Dutch colonialism education system through developing and improving the agent of education as well as Moslem educational practitioners. In addition, these schools also increase the portion of Islamic materials taught at the schools.

The existence of the integrated Islamic education is expected to be capable of answering the challenge of modernization, globalization, and information development. The presence of the integrated Islamic education institutions within national constellation has once provoked discussion among education experts to reveal the hidden meaning behind the phenomenon. However, this is reasonable since the national education system has not been able to provide significant educational quality.

The growing number of moral recession, juvenile delinquencies, anarchistic actions etc. shall be thoughtful consideration for education practitioners to establish integrated Islamic schools. The new face of Islamic education institutions propose to provide graduates equipped with academic, moral and spiritual excellences. To realize the goals, a brand new space, that is Islamic schools leading in all aspects, is highly required.
The name of integrated Islamic schools suggests its commitment in offering students with qualified, well-balanced future life with thorough provision of religious and general sciences. The integrated Islamic schools aim at producing output equipped with science mastery as well as virtuous morality. To achieve this excellence, the input, educational process, teachers, educational administrators, management teams, educational services, as well as the facilities should be organized professionally.

Integrated Islamic schools generally provide complete facilities to support the teaching and learning process. Therefore, these schools tend to offer expensive school fee compared to the common model of schooling. The costly payment is applied to cover facilities required for schools’ development. In addition, the schools also emphasizes on the creation of positive learning climate as well as favorable learning milieu.

The integrated Islamic school is an Islamic education institution supported with skilled human resources (teachers, educational staff, students) and developed facilities aimed at producing graduates capable of applying science and technology proficiently, possessing strong spirituality (iman-Islam), and holding virtuous moral.

Historically, the integrated Islamic schools undeniably cannot be alienated and have been long rooted from earlier accomplishments achieved by the Prophet, his companions, and former Moslem scholars. The schools were established due to people’s desire on the reforms of epistemology, methodology, institution, and personality of Islamic Education. The four aspects of reforms then characterize the integrated Islamic schools. The term ‘integrated’ on its own advocates the incorporation of curriculum, iman(faith), science and its implementation, management, and education programs.

Meanwhile, the uniqueness of the schools’ curriculum resides in its integration with the supplementary teaching-learning process called muwasaffat which consists of 10 key teachings, i.e., salim al-Aqidah, shalih al-Ibadah, matin al-Khuluq, qadiru al-Kasbi, musaqof al-Fikri, qowiyu al-

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Jism, mujahidu li al-Nafsi, munaddhom li al-Syuunihi, harisun ‘alawaktih, nafi’un ‘alaghoirih.\textsuperscript{14}

The curriculum of the integrated Islamic schools refers to national curriculum set by the ministry of education instead of that arranged by the ministry of religious affairs. The curriculum is then improved through integrated Islamic curriculum. The integration of the curriculum is actualized through intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular.

The execution of the integrated Islamic schools education is commonly performed through two systems namely, full day school and boarding school. The earlier is typically applied at elementary school level with longer study hours (07.00-16.00). In the meantime, the common study hour at general elementary school is shorter (07.00-12.00).

This system emerged due to several factors. First, it is done for the sake of education quality development. Second, parents who have long working hour urgently require education institutions which have longer study hour so that they can entrust their children to the schools while the parent are away for working. Third, it is established to minimalize juvenile delinquencies. Fourth, it is inspired by the model of education namely suffah held by the Prophet Muhammad SAW.\textsuperscript{15}

Boarding school, on the other hand, is dormitory based education system. This suggests that students are required to attend national system of education as well as stay in dormitory provided by the school management team. This education system has in fact been familiar among Indonesian since the similar set of education has long been around, namely pondok pesantren. Furthermore, Nurcholis Madjid maintained that pesantren is indigenous-culture type of educational institution.\textsuperscript{16} The boarding school is commonly applied at secondary education (junior high and senior high schools).

The implementation of boarding school has several underlying assumptions, i.e., first, to provide alternative education. Second, to bridge

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid…….p. 73-75.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid……., p. 79.
the existing gap between children and parents as they graduate from elementary school. Third, to provide children with psychological supports as they get into puberty. Fourth, to integrate qauliyah-kauniyah science.\(^{17}\) In reality, boarding school system has been successful in exercising students’ independence, building their strong character and personality as Moslem, and developing their survival spirit.\(^{18}\)

Considering Islamophobia, either in Indonesia or abroad, particularly in western countries, it is actually triggered by two factors, namely external and internal factors. The external factor appears as the result of ‘global scenario’ aimed at debilitating Islam. Meanwhile, the internal factor relates to actions performed by small number of Moslems which contradict universal values. This phenomenon occurs both nationally and globally. The anarchistic actions on behalf of religious interest, such as public facility bombardment, terrorism attacks by minority fundamentalist Islam constitute the reasons for Islam hatred which continuously receives resilient justification.

Terrorism\(^{19}\), both globally and locally, has produced new constellation. Moreover, it emerges as a result of radical way of understanding Islam.\(^{20}\) This Islamic radicalism movement is organized in structured massive network, yet materializes into various appearances, started from ‘soft-rather moderate’ up to the most extreme group. Some of these organization have been systematized worldwide such as HizbutTahrir Indonesia (HTI), Jamaah Ikhwanul Muslimin (JIM), and Jamaah Islamiyah (JI). Some other governs solely in Indonesia such as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Front Pembela Islam (FPI), and Forum Laskar Jihad (FLJ).\(^{21}\)

One major character of these radical groups is the justification of anarchistic actions to defense the truth. In the case of Indonesia’s Jamaah

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\(^{17}\) Maksudin, *Pendidikan Islam Alternatif...* p. 79-80.

\(^{18}\) Ibid..., p. 82.


\(^{21}\) Ismail Hasani, *Wajah Pera Pembeluta Islam...*, p. 137-183
Ikhwanul Muslimin\textsuperscript{22} (JIM), as part of its cadre recruitment, since the era of new order, it has applied Tarbiyah movement by underground organization operated around university campuses namely gerakan dakwah kampus (campus Islamic preaching movement). Through this movement, Partai Keadilah (PK) was politically initiated, which further transformed into Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS),\textsuperscript{23} and subsequently launched the integrated Islamic education.

The integrated Islamic schools have been mushrooming rapidly and are becoming the growing trendsetter. The education institutions labeled with integrated Islamic schools present in almost every cities in Indonesia. These schools are officially governed under Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu (JSIT) with its central office in Jakarta. It is named as integrated school due to its mixing between modern science and religious science. General sciences are typically taught at public schools (read: schools which are not based on religious foundation), begin from elementary schools up to university level. While, religious (Islamic) sciences are commonly controlled under Islamic education institutions, namely madrasah. The combination of the two terms, school and Islam, indicates the teaching of both general sciences and religious sciences.

The emergence of the integrated Islamic schools network originated from Tarbiyah movement (PKS) which was initially inspired from Egypt Ikhwanul Muslimin thoughts indicates the potentials of radical Islam internalization among students learning in the schools.

Conclusion

The change of living pattern into permissive, open, highly-mobile lifestyle, as well as the high risk of anarchistic actions, requires the establishment of steady education system which is capable of responding the demanding challenge. Islamic education in particular, is forced to constantly adapt to the existing phenomena arising in society. Based on this consideration, Islamic education curriculum has found its moment to


be carefully redesigned as an inclusive, down to earth curriculum promoted as a picture of peaceful tolerant Islam, endlessly *sholih li kullizamanwamakan*.

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