



Exploring Pedagogical Practices at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School: An In-depth Analysis of Learning Activities and Educational Strategies

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Abstract: The learning process in Islamic boarding schools (Pondok Pesantren) holds unique characteristics compared to conventional education systems. Operating within a traditional framework that allows for substantial autonomy, these institutions foster a reciprocal relationship between religious scholars (ulama) and students (santri). However, in contemporary times, a trend of modernized, integrated pesantren has emerged, blending elements from both traditional and modern educational systems. This thesis delves into the teaching and learning processes at Al-Mujaddid Islamic Boarding School in Sabang City, aiming to explore the instructional activities, curriculum, methods, facilities, and teaching patterns. The research methodology employs a descriptive approach, incorporating both literature review and field research methods such as observation, interviews, and surveys. The study involves a sample of 50 students, 18 teachers, and one administrative leader from Al-Mujaddid Islamic Boarding School. The findings indicate that the learning activities at Al-Mujaddid are well-organized, disciplined, and efficient, allowing students to focus on their studies and activities. The teaching methods employed include lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, experiments, demonstrations, and dramatizations. While the facilities at Al-Mujaddid are generally comprehensive, the absence of a piped water supply (PAM) is noted. In terms of the teaching system and approach, Al-Mujaddid Islamic Boarding School adopts the Modern Gontor teaching method. This method features an integrative curriculum, combining religious and general knowledge into a cohesive unit. It is also comprehensive, addressing intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The research concludes by urging local authorities (Pemda) to prioritize the necessary facilities for Al-Mujaddid Islamic Boarding School. Additionally, parents are encouraged to consider enrolling their children in the institution, fostering a supportive environment for both students and teachers.

Keywords: Islamic Boarding School; Al-Mujaddid; Teaching and Learning; Integrated Education.

1. Introduction

Islamic boarding schools, or pondok pesantren, hold a pivotal role in shaping a profound understanding and practice of Islamic teachings as guiding principles in life [1][2]. Distinguished by unique characteristics, these institutions continue to be acknowledged in society, underscoring their contribution to producing competent and respected individuals [3]. The learning process within pondok pesantren is notably unique, particularly in its adherence to a traditional system that allows for considerable autonomy, setting it apart from modern schools [5]. The distinctive feature of a two-way relationship between religious scholars (ulama) and students (santri) defines the dynamic of learning within these institutions [6]. To ensure the sustainability and advancement of pondok pesantren, comprehensive development is essential, covering both personnel and material aspects. Personnel development aims to cultivate leadership and enhance the well-being of leaders, teachers, and students, while material development involves creating facilities conducive to optimal education delivery [4].

In the context of Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School in Sabang, the implementation of learning requires crucial supportive factors, including facilities conducive to the learning process, curriculum development, and well-organized administration. However, as is inherent in any learning process, challenges are inevitably faced by both teachers and students. Motivated by these challenges, the author is driven to explore the intricacies of learning activities at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School in Sabang. Building on this background, the author formulates several research questions to guide the study: 1) How are learning activities conducted at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School?, 2) What teaching methods are employed at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School?, 3) What facilities are available at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School?, and 4) What is the system or pattern of teaching at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School?.

To avoid any misunderstanding, clarifications for terms used in this thesis are provided. Learning is defined as the process of changing attitudes and behaviors through learning and practice. Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School refers to an Islamic educational institution in Sabang City with a pondok pesantren education system. The objectives of this research are twofold: to understand the learning activities at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School and to comprehend the material, methods, facilities, and teaching patterns at the institution. The postulate of this research posits that every learning activity should have organized material, methods, facilities, and teaching patterns, while the hypothesis suggests that the learning process at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School still faces deficiencies in terms of facilities, method implementation, and teaching patterns.

2. Background

The understanding and historical growth of Pesantren can be traced through the history of Pesantren. In Acehese, it is referred to as Dayah, revealing an intriguing historical spectrum [7]. During the growth of Pesantren, especially as a means of transmitting knowledge, particularly Islam, in the archipelago, the first figure to establish Pesantren was Syekh Maulana Malik Ibrahim (d. 1419 H) from Gujarat, India [8][9]. Maulana Malik Ibrahim, in advancing his mission, utilized mosques and established Pesantren as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge. He successfully propagated Islam in Perlak and Samudra Pasai [10], aided by Malik As-shaleh, who played a crucial role in introducing Wali Songo into the intellectual network of the Muslim community in the archipelago [11]. During this period of growth, Pesantren played a crucial role in the realm of knowledge and politics, exemplified by figures like Syech Abd Rauf al-Singkili and Syams al-Din al-Sumantrani, who held political influence in Aceh [12][13]. The development of Pesantren in this period not only accelerated vertical mobility through the dissemination of religious teachings but also horizontal mobility (social awareness). Pesantren expanded beyond a curriculum based solely on religion, incorporating contemporary issues into their education systems (society-based curriculum). From this historical orientation, Pesantren became actively involved not only with the government in development but also made invaluable contributions to education. The intersection of literature and social dynamics created an awareness and concern within Pesantren to actively guide the nation's journey in accordance with the aspirations of religion and society.

In its development, Pesantren has undergone dynamics and adaptations to the times. Some Pesantren underwent depoliticization, leading to the exclusion of Pesantren education from official government reports after 1927 [14]. This impacted government funding, resulting in the disproportionate development of Pesantren compared to government schools. A small fraction of Pesantren transformed into madrasahs, citing a return to the Quran and Sunnah to reject blind imitation, resist colonialism, enhance general education, and respond to Islamic reformers' encouragement. Education in Pesantren follows a religion-based curriculum. However, as times have evolved, Pesantren has begun to engage with contemporary issues in society, adopting a society-based curriculum. Learning materials in Pesantren cover various levels, ranging from foundational (Tajhiziyah) to specialized levels (Bustanul Muhadditsun). The curriculum includes subjects such as the Quran, Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Ushul Fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), Tauhid (the oneness of God), Akhlak (ethics), Arabic language, Tajwid (Quranic recitation rules), Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad), Balaghah (rhetoric), History, and Mantiq (logic).

The teaching of yellow books (classic Arabic-language books) is a hallmark of Pesantren [15], and yellow book competitions serve as motivation for students to enhance their reading interest and understanding of Islamic knowledge [16]. However, Pesantren also adopts the national education curriculum to ensure alignment with general teachings. The importance placed on mastering yellow books in Pesantren signifies the institution's commitment to the classical Islamic education tradition. However, Pesantren also adapts to the national curriculum to meet contemporary demands. Learning materials encompass various levels, ensuring students gain a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings. Teaching methods in Pesantren are based on the comprehensive and intensive traditions of Islamic scholarship [17][18]. This includes face-to-face learning with kyai (Islamic scholars), group discussions, memorization, reading yellow books, and involving students in religious activities. Character education and the formation of noble morals are the primary focus of Pesantren's teaching methods.

In the learning process, the relationship between students and kyai is close-knit. Students not only learn formally but also internalize Islamic values through daily interactions with kyai and fellow students. This method goes beyond the transfer of knowledge; it includes the formation of strong character and personality. Pesantren plays a significant role in Indonesian society. Beyond being educational institutions, Pesantren serves as centers for the development of Islamic knowledge and local culture. Its role extends beyond formal education, encompassing social, economic, and political activities [19][20][21]. In the realm of education, Pesantren contributes to shaping a generation with a strong Islamic foundation. Education in Pesantren is not just about mastering religious knowledge but also about character formation, personality development, and practical skills. Students are provided with a holistic understanding of Islam and are taught to be positive contributors to society.

Furthermore, Pesantren also serves as a vessel for preserving local culture and the traditions of Nusantara Islam. Pesantren acts as guardians of cultural and religious identity, uniting diverse communities in Indonesia. The existence of Pesantren contributes to shaping the distinctive, inclusive, and tolerant characteristics of Indonesian Islam. Pesantren also

plays a role in social and economic contributions. Many Pesantren are involved in community empowerment activities, such as skills training, infrastructure development, and social assistance. Pesantren act as agents of change, enhancing the well-being of surrounding communities. In the political arena, some Pesantren are engaged in political activities and wield influence at both local and national levels. While Pesantren generally refrain from direct involvement in practical politics, the fatwas, and opinions of kyai can influence the political views of some students and the local community. Despite playing a crucial role in society, Pesantren face several challenges. One of these is adapting to technological advancements and globalization. Pesantren must strike a balance between the traditions of Islamic scholarship and the evolving needs of the times [22].

Resource limitations, both financial and infrastructural, pose challenges for some Pesantren. Adequate support is needed to enhance the quality of education and community empowerment. Nevertheless, Pesantren also have opportunities for continued growth and positive contributions. Their role in character education, moral formation, and cultural preservation is a recognized value. Community empowerment and involvement in various aspects of community life provide opportunities to strengthen Pesantren's position in social dynamics. Pesantren plays a crucial role in the development of education, Islamic scholarship, and cultural diversity in Indonesia. As traditional educational institutions, Pesantren continue to adapt to the times while upholding Islamic values and local culture. Education in Pesantren, covering the mastery of yellow books and the national curriculum, provides a scholarly foundation and strong character for students. Intensive teaching methods, close relationships between students and kyai, and active involvement in society are distinctive features of Pesantren. Pesantren not only contribute to education but also to the preservation of local culture, community empowerment, and social roles. Despite facing challenges, Pesantren have significant potential for continued growth and positive contributions to the progress of both society and the nation. Thus, the recognition and support for Pesantren's role in various aspects of life are key to ensuring the sustainability of its contribution to building a nation based on Islamic values, local wisdom, and national spirit.

3. Method

The population in this study refers to a number of subjects that are the focus of the research, aiming to uncover and generalize occurrences and relevant data. The primary population comprises all students of Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School in Sabang City, as well as the teachers instructing at the institution. Additionally, the population includes the leaders, teachers, and students of Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School, with a total of 18 teachers and 110 students. The sample is chosen as a small subset of the population that becomes the subject of the research. In this case, the research focuses on the leaders of the Islamic Boarding School, academic (administrative) teachers, and one teacher from each field of study. For student samples, a sampling technique is applied, representing 50% of the student population, totaling 50 individuals, each representing their respective classes. The discussion of this topic employs a descriptive method, which is an exploratory approach to organizing, explaining, and analyzing collected data [23]. The descriptive method is often referred to as an analytical method as it carefully outlines and analyzes data [24][25].

Data collection techniques involve observation, interviews, and the use of questionnaires. Observation is conducted by directly observing the learning activities at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School to reinforce the data obtained from interviews. Interviews are conducted with individuals who are part of the research sample based on a predetermined set of questions. Meanwhile, questionnaires are distributed to students of Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School in Sabang City. Data analysis in this study is descriptive, with the aim of qualitatively describing and documenting the condition of the research object [24][26]. The analysis is carried out systematically, involving steps such as data collection, selection of relevant data, and in-depth discussion.

By employing the descriptive method, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the learning activities, methods, and facilities at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School. This method allows for the exploration and documentation of the unique characteristics and practices within the institution. The inclusion of multiple data collection techniques, including observation, interviews, and questionnaires, enhances the robustness of the study by triangulating information from various sources. The systematic and thorough data analysis process ensures that the findings accurately reflect the current state of the learning environment at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School.

4. Results

4.1 History of the Birth of the Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School

The history of an entity is a trace that is etched eternally, looking to the past to weave the future. Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School, an educational institution that combines the Islamic boarding school system with the Modernization model, tells its unique story. By synthesizing the advantages of an Islamic boarding school system that is full of values, soul and philosophy of life, together with the sophistication of a modern education system that emphasizes effectiveness and efficiency, this Islamic boarding school was born as an answer to the urgent needs in Sabang City. Talking about the background of this Islamic boarding school, it cannot be separated from the results of interviews with the head of the

leadership, who revealed that its establishment came from community requests. The existence of modern Islamic boarding schools in Sabang City is very important because of the lack of alternative Islamic boarding school education in the area. People who want to provide Islamic boarding school education to their children are forced to send them to Islamic boarding schools in Banda Aceh, which is closer. Unfortunately, most Sabang City residents are unable to do this, triggering an urgent need for modern Islamic boarding school institutions in the city. In the first step to address this need, figures who care about education in Sabang City submitted a proposal to the local government to establish a modern Islamic boarding school. This proposal was well received by the Sabang City government, and funds were allocated to build buildings and provide adequate facilities. Financial support also came from the central government, reaching more than 500 million rupiah. Since then, the Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School has stood strong for more than 4 years, going through various obstacles and trials but still remaining steadfast.

4.2 Learning Process at Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School

The learning system at the Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School is adapted from the Kulliyatul Mu'alimin Al-Islamiyah (KMI) Curriculum, which was inspired by the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School in East Java, as a pioneer of the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia. By dividing the Tsanawiyah (3 years) and Aliyah (3 years) levels, this Islamic boarding school creates a learning environment that combines religious, general and Dayah activities in its curriculum. From the results of interviews with teachers at the Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School, learning at this Islamic boarding school is carried out through the Kulliyatul Mu'alimin Al-Islamiyah (KMI) system. The learning process involves a series of activities, starting from dawn prayers, learning Arabic and English vocabulary, conditional sports, classes, breaks, to religious activities such as midday prayers, noon prayers, and others. The students' assessment via questionnaire showed a good and adequate understanding of the subject matter, with an average score reaching 78.39 on a scale of 100.

4.3 Achievements of Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School

Pondok Pesantren Al-Mujadid tidak hanya menjadi lembaga pendidikan yang menghasilkan santri berprestasi, namun juga meraih keberhasilan di berbagai bidang. Prestasi tersebut mencakup lomba Cerdas Cermat, Lomba Baca Puisi, Olimpiade Matematika, hingga prestasi dalam seni dan keterampilan. Keberhasilan ini tidak hanya mencerminkan keunggulan akademik, tetapi juga keberhasilan dalam membentuk karakter dan kreativitas santri. Meski demikian, setiap perjalanan pasti disertai dengan rintangan. Pondok Pesantren Al-Mujadid juga menghadapi sejumlah kendala, seperti keterbatasan sarana dan prasarana, fasilitas olahraga yang minim, keterbatasan tenaga pendidik, dan tingginya biaya operasional. Meskipun tantangan tersebut ada, pondok pesantren ini terus berusaha mengatasinya melalui pengembangan sarana dan prasarana, peningkatan fasilitas olahraga, rekrutmen tenaga pendidik dan karyawan baru, serta optimalisasi dana operasional.

4.4 Constraints and Obstacles Faced by Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School

In pursuit of its dedication to elevate the standard of education, Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School has meticulously crafted a holistic array of strategic initiatives. The primary focus revolves around the augmentation of facilities and infrastructure, the refinement of sports amenities, the enlistment of proficient teaching personnel and staff, and the judicious management of operational funds. Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School harbors a positive outlook, firmly believing that by effectively addressing these prevailing challenges, it is poised to deliver a superior educational experience and achieve unprecedented milestones in the times ahead.

4.5 Efforts to Improve the Quality of Education at the Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School

Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School embraces hope and a clear vision for its future. With strong determination, this Islamic boarding school aspires to become a superior educational institution in Sabang City. By providing quality and competitive education, they want to produce the next generation who are qualified, have Islamic character, have broad insight, and are ready to compete at the national and international level. Apart from that, this Islamic boarding school hopes to establish close collaboration with various external parties, including local governments, the business world, and other educational institutions, to support the development and progress of the Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School in the world of education. Thus, this Islamic boarding school is committed to continuing to develop and make a positive contribution to the world of education in Sabang City and its surroundings.

5. Conclusion

Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School demonstrates a commendable commitment to fostering quality education, as evident in its well-organized and disciplined learning environment. The institution employs a diverse range of teaching methods, incorporating lectures, discussions, practical sessions, and more. While boasting facilities such as a representative Dormitory Building, Library Room, and Laboratories, there remains a need for improvements, particularly in water facilities. The learning system adopts the Modern Gontor Method, integrating religious and general knowledge

comprehensively. Moving forward, it is recommended that the local government provide support for essential facilities, parents actively engage in supporting their children's education, and teachers continue to enhance their teaching practices in alignment with the planned curriculum. Through addressing these aspects, Al-Mujadid Islamic Boarding School is poised to offer even superior education and achieve greater milestones in the future.

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