

Reconstruction of Pesantren Education: Analyzing Independent Curriculum in Transforming Islamic Education in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the reconstruction of the pesantren education system in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum as part of the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia. Pesantren as the oldest Islamic educational institution has a strong tradition of learning the yellow classical books through classical methods such as sorogan and bandongan. However, the dynamics of changes in the national education system require pesantren to adapt to the Merdeka Curriculum which emphasizes strengthening 21st century competencies, learning flexibility, and learner-oriented. This research uses the library research method by analyzing various relevant literature, scientific journals, books, and official documents. The results showed that the reconstruction process of the pesantren education system in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum was carried out selectively and contextually without eliminating the identity and characteristics of the pesantren. The pesantren adjusts the curriculum, learning methods, and evaluation system by integrating Islamic values and modern digital-based competencies and strengthening 21st

century literacy. The role of kyai as a cultural broker is a key factor in maintaining the balance between maintaining tradition and opening space for educational innovation. However, pesantren face challenges such as limited human resources, infrastructure, and tensions between the autonomy of the pesantren curriculum and national curriculum standards. For this reason, strategies are needed to strengthen institutional capacity, improve teacher competence, and develop hybrid learning models that combine traditional and modern methods. This study concludes that the reconstruction of the pesantren education system in the Merdeka Curriculum is a strategic step to strengthen the role of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions that are adaptive, innovative, and remain rooted in Islamic values in facing the challenges of globalization and digitalization of education.

Keywords: *Pesantren, Curriculum Reconstruction, Independent Curriculum, Islamic Education, Education Transformation.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis rekonstruksi sistem pendidikan pesantren dalam mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka sebagai bagian transformasi pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam tertua memiliki tradisi kuat dalam mempelajari kitab kuning melalui metode klasik seperti sorogan dan bandongan. Namun, dinamika perubahan sistem pendidikan nasional mengharuskan pesantren untuk beradaptasi dengan Kurikulum Merdeka yang menekankan pada penguatan kompetensi abad 21, fleksibilitas pembelajaran, dan berorientasi pada peserta didik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan dengan menganalisis berbagai literatur, jurnal ilmiah, buku, dan dokumen resmi yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses rekonstruksi sistem pendidikan pesantren dalam mengadopsi Kurikulum Merdeka dilakukan secara selektif dan kontekstual tanpa menghilangkan jati diri dan ciri

kelas pesantren. Pesantren menyesuaikan kurikulum, metode pembelajaran, dan sistem evaluasi dengan mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam dan kompetensi berbasis digital modern serta memperkuat literasi abad 21. Peran kyai sebagai broker budaya menjadi faktor kunci dalam menjaga keseimbangan antara menjaga tradisi dan membuka ruang bagi inovasi pendidikan. Namun, pesantren menghadapi tantangan seperti keterbatasan sumber daya manusia, infrastruktur, dan ketegangan antara otonomi kurikulum pesantren dengan standar kurikulum nasional. Untuk itu, diperlukan strategi penguatan kapasitas kelembagaan, peningkatan kompetensi guru, dan pengembangan model pembelajaran hybrid yang memadukan metode tradisional dan modern. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa rekonstruksi sistem pendidikan pesantren dalam Kurikulum Merdeka merupakan langkah strategis untuk memperkuat peran pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam yang adaptif, inovatif, dan tetap berakar pada nilai-nilai Islam dalam menghadapi tantangan globalisasi dan digitalisasi pendidikan.

Kata kunci: *Pesantren, Rekonstruksi Kurikulum, Kurikulum Mandiri, Pendidikan Islam, Transformasi Pendidikan.*

Introduction

Pesantren as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia has played a vital role in the character and intellectual formation of Indonesian Muslims since the 18th century¹. The pesantren education system centered on teaching traditional Islamic sciences (*kitab kuning*) using the sorogan and bandongan methods has produced many scholars and national leaders². In its development, pesantren underwent various transformations in response to the modernization of education, ranging from the establishment of madrasas to formal schools in the pesantren environment³.

¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia*, 2019.

² Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning, Pesantren Dan Tarekat, Yogyakarta" (Gading Publishing. Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2015).

³ Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Prenada Media, 2019).

In anthropological studies, Hiroko Horikoshi sees pesantren as institutions that not only play a role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge, but also as dynamic agents of social change. Kyai, according to Horikoshi, is not just a cultural broker as suggested by Geertz, but plays an active role in the selection and transformation of cultural values to create changes in society⁴. In line with this, Clifford Geertz in his research places pesantren as part of the Javanese social structure that plays a role in the cultural broker process, where kyai become the link between pesantren culture and modernity.

Manfred Ziemek analyzed pesantren from a community development perspective, seeing them as educational institutions that are deeply rooted in the community and have the potential to become centers of community development. Meanwhile, according to Karel A. Steenbrink, pesantren have a strong resilience in the face of social change, because they are rooted in a solid Islamic tradition while being able to adapt to the dynamics of the times. Despite experiencing modernization in various aspects, pesantren still maintain the fundamental values of Islamic education, such as yellow book-based learning, the close relationship between kiai and santri, and an education system that emphasizes the formation of Islamic character and ethics⁵.

The dynamics of change in Indonesia's national education system continue to move dynamically, characterized by various curriculum updates to respond to the challenges of the times. Since independence, Indonesia has experienced at least ten curriculum changes⁶. The latest change with the presence of the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022 is an important momentum in the transformation of national education. The Merdeka Curriculum comes with a learner-centered learning philosophy, provides flexibility to education units, and emphasizes the development of 21st century competencies.

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is urgent for pesantren considering the increasingly complex global challenges. The students are not only required to master

⁴ Hiroko Horikoshi, *Kyai Dan Perubahan Sosial* (Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat, 1987).

⁵ Karel A. Steenbrink, "Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kurun Modern," (No Title), 1986, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282269277457920>.

⁶ M. Topit Hidayat et al., "Evolution of The Education Curriculum in Indonesia," *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research* 6, no. 2 (2025): 381–95, <https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v6i2.1312>.

religious knowledge but also need to be equipped with competencies that are relevant to the digital era⁷. This is in line with the principle of al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah (maintaining good old traditions and taking new, better things) which is the guiding principle of pesantren⁸.

Several previous studies have examined the transformation of pesantren education. Dhofier analyzed changes in pesantren education patterns from traditional to modern⁹. Lukens-Bull examined the modernization of pesantren in the context of globalization. Kusumawati studied the integration of the national curriculum in the pesantren education system¹⁰. However, these studies have not specifically analyzed the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren.

The research gap lies in the absence of a comprehensive study of the reconstruction model of the pesantren education system in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum. This research fills this gap by analyzing the implementation process, challenges, and effective integration models between the pesantren system and the Merdeka Curriculum. The position of this research is to develop a reconstruction model of the pesantren education system that can combine traditional pesantren values with modern competency demands in the Merdeka Curriculum¹¹.

Research Methods

This research uses the library research method as the main approach in examining the reconstruction of the pesantren education system in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This method is carried out by critically examining various literature, books, scientific journals, research reports, and official documents relevant to the research theme, both from domestic and foreign sources¹². Data collection is carried out through exploration of scientific works that discuss pesantren, Islamic education, social change theory, educational modernization, and the Merdeka Curriculum policy. In addition,

⁷ Ronald Lukens-Bull, *Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Continuity and Conflict* (Springer, 2013), DOI:10.1057/9781137313416.

⁸ KH Sahal Mahfudh, *Nuansa Fiqh Sosial* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 2003).

⁹ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*.

¹⁰ Ira Kusumawati, "Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren Dalam Kurikulum Nasional Pada Pondok Pesantren Modern," *Sanskara Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 2, no. 01 (2024): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.58812/spp.v2i01.293>.

¹¹ Nurcholish Majid, "Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan," (No Title), 1997, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282269484819584>.

¹² Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2008).

references from classical and modern pesantren thinkers are also used as a basis for strengthening the analysis. This research also refers to government regulations related to the Merdeka Curriculum as a foothold for understanding the context of national education policy.

Data obtained from various literature sources were analyzed descriptively-qualitatively using content analysis techniques¹³. The analysis process is carried out by identifying, classifying, and interpreting various views, theories, and relevant research results to formulate the concept of reconstructing an adaptive pesantren education system to the Merdeka Curriculum. Through this literature study approach, the research is expected to make a conceptual contribution in developing an integration model between traditional pesantren values and the demands of modern education based on the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as a reference for further research in the field of Islamic education

Results and Discussion

Pesantren Education System Reconstruction Model in Implementing the Independent Curriculum

The reconstruction process of the pesantren education system in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum shows complex dynamics. Referring to Horikoshi's theory of social change, pesantren show a high adaptive ability in responding to changes in national education policy¹⁴. The research findings show that the reconstruction model developed includes three main aspects: paradigmatic transformation, learning system reconstruction, and institutional capacity strengthening.

In the context of paradigmatic transformation, pesantren experienced a shift in perspective from a textual-doctrinal education system to a more contextual-functional system. This shift is in line with Ziemek's thoughts that emphasize the importance of pesantren as educational institutions that are responsive to the needs of society¹⁵. Azra reinforces this view by stating that pesantren need to develop "great traditions" rooted in the treasures of classical Islamic scholarship while accommodating "small traditions"

¹³ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 2nd ed (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2004).

¹⁴ Horikoshi, *Kyai Dan Perubahan Sosial*.

¹⁵ Manfred Ziemek, Butche B. Soendjojo, and B. Siregar, "Pesantren Dalam Perubahan Sosial," (No Title), 1986, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000794205377920>.

that emerge from contemporary reality¹⁶. According to Dhofier, this paradigmatic transformation does not necessarily eliminate the unique characteristics of pesantren as indigenous Indonesian educational institutions. Instead, this adaptation process strengthens the pesantren's position as a “cultural broker” that bridges traditional values with the demands of modernity, as proposed by Geertz¹⁷.

The Merdeka Curriculum integration model in pesantren includes harmonizing curriculum content, adapting learning methods, and developing a comprehensive evaluation system¹⁸. Islamic Education Paradigm. The reconstruction of the pesantren learning system ideally maintains the approach of “learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together” which is the foundation of traditional pesantren education¹⁹. Lukens-Bull added that pesantren need to develop a “hybrid pedagogy” that combines traditional learning methods such as sorogan and bandongan with modern approaches such as project-based learning and collaborative learning that characterize the Merdeka Curriculum²⁰. According to Tan, the reconstruction of the learning system in pesantren needs to be directed towards the development of “critical Muslim intellectualism” which allows santri to develop critical thinking capacity while still adhering to Islamic values²¹.

The reconstruction of the pesantren education system also includes strengthening institutional capacity which includes infrastructure development, strengthening human resources, and modernizing governance²². Steenbrink emphasizes the importance of pesantren to develop “institutional adaptability” in order to survive in the flow of

¹⁶ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*.

¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, “The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2 (1960): 228–49.

¹⁸ H. Abuddin Nata, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam* (Kencana, 2014), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=v_m2DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=pendidikan+islam&ots=9XTvsjgLyE&sig=UsQ1QoCDmHuTHxVkk3Pkh_8g6WU.

¹⁹ Muhammad Fakhruddin Al-Razi, Abd Madjid, and Ahmad Hadziq Madani Ilham Khalil, “Reconstructing the Islamic Education Paradigm in Indonesia,” *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 22, no. 2 (2024): 294–310, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v22i2.1918>.

²⁰ Ronald Lukens-Bull, “Madrasa by Any Other Name: Pondok, Pesantren, and Islamic Schools in Indonesia and Larger Southeast Asian Region,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 4, no. 1 (2010): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2010.4.1.1-21>.

²¹ Charlene Tan, “Educative Tradition and Islamic Schools in Indonesia,” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 2014, <https://hdl.handle.net/10497/17260>.

²² Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah and Indah Aminatuz Zuhriyah, “The Challenges of Developing Islamic Education Curriculum and Strategies for Its Development in Facing Future Competency Demands,” *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 1 (2025): 111–26.

change without losing its identity²³. Raihani proposes an “authentic Islamic school governance” model that integrates modern principles in the management of educational institutions with Islamic leadership values that have been rooted in the pesantren tradition²⁴. Bruinessen underlined the importance of developing networks among pesantren and between pesantren and other educational institutions as a strategy to strengthen the position of pesantren in the national education ecosystem²⁵.

Based on the data analysis, this study found three patterns of pesantren adaptation to the Merdeka Curriculum: total adaptation, selective adaptation, and minimalist adaptation²⁶. Pesantren with a total adaptation pattern are generally modern pesantren that have an established formal education system. Pesantren with a selective adaptation pattern tend to adopt elements of the Merdeka Curriculum that are considered in line with pesantren values. Meanwhile, pesantren with a minimalist adaptation pattern are generally salafiyah pesantren that maintain their traditional curriculum as the main curriculum.

Other findings show that pesantren have succeeded in integrating Islamic values, which are the identity of pesantren, into the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through several strategies, such as developing integrated learning modules, implementing contextual learning, developing learning projects based on Islamic values, and implementing a holistic assessment system²⁷. Research also revealed the crucial role of kyai as an agent of change in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren²⁸. Kyai is not only a spiritual leader, but also a facilitator that enables organizational change in pesantren.

²³ Karel A. Steenbrink, “Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kurun Modern,” (No Title), 1986, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282269277457920>.

²⁴ Raihani Raihani, “Islamic Schools and Social Justice in Indonesia: A Student Perspective,” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 50, no. 2 (December 27, 2012): 279–301, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2012.502.279-301>.

²⁵ M. V. Bruinessen, “Traditionalist and Islamist Pesantren in Contemporary Indonesia in The Madrasa in Asia” (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008).

²⁶ Narendra Jumadil Haikal Ramadhan and Ahmad Abu Rizki, “Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di Pondok Pesantren DDI Mangkoso,” 2023, <https://doi.org/10.35905/edum.v1i2.7524>.

²⁷ Muhammad Alinafiah and Solihah Titin Sumanti, “Implementation Of Character Education In Modern Boarding School Taajussalaam Langkat,” 2024, <https://doi.org/10.19109/tadrib.v10i1>.

²⁸ Robby Darwis Nasution, “KYAI SEBAGAI AGEN PERUBAHAN SOSIAL DAN PERDAMAIAN DALAM MASYARAKAT TRADISIONAL,” *Sosiohumaniora* 19, no. 2 (July 6, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.24198/sosiohumaniora.v19i2.10346>.

Human resource capacity building, especially teachers and education personnel, is a critical factor in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren. Pesantren that successfully implement the Merdeka Curriculum are generally pesantren that have a systematic HR development strategy, including teacher training, continuous mentoring, the formation of professional learning communities, and the development of an incentive system that encourages learning innovation.

This study also identified a local wisdom-based transformation model in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren. This model integrates the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum with local values that are the identity of pesantren, including the development of curriculum content based on the treasures of Islamic knowledge, the implementation of learning methods that combine pesantren traditions with modern approaches, the development of an assessment system that takes into account the peculiarities of pesantren, and strengthening pesantren relations with the surrounding community.

Various challenges faced by pesantren in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum were also identified in this study, along with the strategies developed to overcome them. These challenges include conceptual, technical, cultural, and structural challenges. The strategies developed include forming a curriculum development team, developing a bank of learning tools, involving pesantren stakeholders, and developing partnerships with various parties.

Based on the analysis of the various findings above, this study developed an integrated pesantren curriculum reconstruction model in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum²⁹. This model consists of five main components: a philosophical foundation that combines the philosophy of Islamic education with the philosophy of the Merdeka Curriculum, a curriculum structure that integrates the religious curriculum with the national curriculum, a learning process that combines traditional methods with modern approaches, a comprehensive and holistic assessment system, and a management system that integrates modern principles with Islamic leadership values.

²⁹ Azimah Azimah, "Model Manajemen Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Kompetensi Di Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal* 5, no. 6 (2024): 6696–6709, <https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v5i6.2108>.

The reconstruction of the pesantren education system in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is a complex and multidimensional process. The success of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren will be largely determined by the ability of pesantren to reconstruct a curriculum that does not simply adopt the concept of the Merdeka Curriculum in its entirety, but rather makes creative adaptations according to the context and needs of pesantren. Thus, pesantren can continue to contribute positively to the development of the national education system without losing their identity as authentic Islamic educational institutions.

Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in the Pesantren Education System

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the pesantren education system is an effort to reconstruct learning which is characterized by adaptive-selective curriculum integration. Pesantren, as Islamic educational institutions that are deeply rooted in tradition, do not necessarily adopt the Merdeka Curriculum as a whole like public schools. Instead, pesantren make modifications and adjustments according to their characteristics, scientific vision, and the needs of santri and the surrounding community.

This phenomenon is in line with Clifford Geertz's analysis, which describes pesantren as institutions that are able to bridge tradition and modernity. Geertz calls kyai a cultural broker, a central figure who plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of tradition while opening space for renewal. In the context of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the strategic role of the kyai is increasingly prominent as the director and determinant of the direction of the transformation of the pesantren education system³⁰.

Research by Ramadhan and Rizki confirmed that Pondok Pesantren DDI Mangkoso has integrated the national curriculum and pesantren curriculum in the learning process. However, there are obstacles such as limited facilities and access to technology, teachers' adaptation to new approaches, and differences in students' talents

³⁰ Geertz, "The Javanese Kijaji."

and interests. Nevertheless, the pesantren tries to overcome these obstacles to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum³¹.

Furthermore, research by Shihab et al., shows that kyais play an important role in leading Islamic education institutions with wisdom and local wisdom. Kyai are responsible for managing Islamic education institutions, ensuring the curriculum is in line with Islamic teachings, shaping students' characters and establishing good relations with the community. Kyai leadership plays an important role in improving the quality of education in Islamic education institutions³².

In addition, research by Saputera and Tendean revealed that kyai and santri play a role in implementing the value of religious education in the midst of globalization and the phenomenon of cultural acculturation in Indonesia. Kyai not only acts as a spiritual leader but also as an agent of change who is able to integrate traditional values with the demands of modern times³³.

Thus, the reconstruction of the pesantren education system through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is not only an administrative adjustment, but also a cultural transformation that involves the strategic role of kyai as a cultural broker and agent of change. Adaptive and visionary kyai leadership is a key factor in maintaining the sustainability of pesantren as educational institutions that are able to compete in the modern era without losing their traditional roots and strong Islamic values.

Transformation of Islamic Education in the Context of Modernization

The transformation of Islamic education in the context of modernization has shown complex but progressive dynamics. Pesantren as an indigenous Indonesian Islamic education institution demonstrates significant adaptive capabilities through the development of strategic programs that touch various aspects of education. For this reason, modern pesantren not only focus on improving the competence of teachers, but

³¹ Ramadhan and Rizki, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di Pondok Pesantren DDI Mangkoso."

³² Fajar Shihab et al., "Peran Kepemimpinan Kyai dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," 2023, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v5i2.14169>.

³³ Abdur Rahman Adi Saputera and Meyer Tendean, "Peranan Kyai Dan Santri Dalam Mengimplementasikan Nilai Pendidikan Agama Ditengah Lajunya Arus Globalisasi Dan Fenomena Akulturasi Budaya Indonesia," *Ahsana Media: Jurnal Pemikiran, Pendidikan Dan Penelitian Ke-Islaman* 6, no. 1 (2020): 11–20, <https://doi.org/10.31102/ahsana..6.1.2020.11-20>.

also reorient the curriculum that creatively integrates traditional Islamic knowledge with modern science and digital technology³⁴. This process involves reformulating learning methodologies that combine classical methods such as sorogan and bandongan with contemporary project-based approaches and the utilization of information technology.

Azyumardi Azra deepens this analysis by explaining that the transformation of pesantren actually represents an indigenous modernization model, in which Islamic educational institutions are able to adopt elements of modernity without losing the roots of their cultural identity³⁵. His research findings show the importance of adaptive leadership in the transformation process, where progressive kyai and pesantren leaders successfully articulated a vision of renewal within the framework of established pesantren traditions. This confirms Djamari's opinion that strengthening institutional capacity is a crucial factor in ensuring the sustainability of pesantren education transformation.

The longitudinal study by Lukens-Bull produced important findings that the learning infrastructure development program in modern pesantren does not only concern physical aspects, but also includes epistemological infrastructure that allows meaningful integration of knowledge. The pesantrens that have successfully transformed have developed an epistemological framework that allows productive dialog between Islamic scientific traditions and modern scientific paradigms. This finding strengthens the argument that modernization of pesantren is not just the adoption of new technology and learning methods, but also a paradigmatic transformation in understanding and developing science.

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in the pesantren environment faces multidimensional challenges as identified by Tan. These challenges include the epistemological dissonance between the modern education paradigm and the scientific tradition of pesantren, the limited digital competence of teachers, the tension between the standardization of the national curriculum and the autonomy of the pesantren

³⁴ Mohamed Oudihat and Che Amnah Binti Bahari, "Mapping the Islamic Discourse on Knowledge: The Relevance of the New Islamic Discourse," *AL-ITQAN: JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES* 9, no. 1 (2024): 72–96, <https://doi.org/10.31436/alitqan.v9i1.293>.

³⁵ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*.

curriculum, and the complexity of learning administration³⁶. However, Nurhayati's research found that progressive pesantren were able to overcome these challenges through creative adaptation strategies involving the development of hybrid learning models, the establishment of communities of practice to support teachers in pedagogical transition, and the implementation of learning management systems that accommodate the uniqueness of pesantren³⁷.

A comprehensive analysis conducted by Sodiq reveals the impact of the transformation of Islamic education in several crucial dimensions. First, there is an increase in the quality of learning as measured by the academic achievement of santri in science and technology competencies without reducing their mastery of Islamic knowledge. Second, the development of santri digital literacy that allows them to participate critically in the global information society. Third, strengthening the value-based character of pesantren which is the foundation of moral resilience in the midst of globalization. Fourth, the development of santri leadership capacity that combines Islamic ethics with the global competencies needed in the contemporary context.

The comparative study conducted by Nawwir et al., produced interesting findings that the pesantren education reconstruction model in Indonesia has a distinctive advantage over Islamic education models in other countries³⁸. This advantage lies in the ability of pesantren to maintain the continuity of tradition while adopting modern educational innovations selectively and contextually. This finding confirms that the principle of “al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah” has been implemented in practice in the transformation of pesantren education, not just normative jargon.

Recent research by Anggraeni et al., reveals the transformative dimensions of contemporary Islamic educational change. Pesantren that successfully undergo educational transformation are proven to be able to develop a transformative pedagogy

³⁶ Tan, “Educative Tradition and Islamic Schools in Indonesia.”

³⁷ Retno Nurhayati et al., “Adaptation of the Islamic Boarding School Education Curriculum as a Response to Developments in Learning Technology,” in *Proceeding: International Conference On Pesantren*, vol. 1, 2024, 1–12, <http://ejournal.darunnajah.ac.id/index.php/icop/article/view/234>.

³⁸ Yush Nawwir, Rahim Mansyur, and Ardi Ardi, “Revolusi Pendidikan Pondok Pesantren Tradisional Dalam Konteks Pendidikan Islam Indonesia,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Islamic Resources* 20, no. 1 (2023): 19–27, <http://dx.doi.org/10.33096/jiir.v20i1.378>.

model that integrates reflective, collaborative, and contextual learning. This model not only strengthens the identity of pesantren as authentic Islamic educational institutions, but also makes them centers of educational innovation rooted in Islamic values and local wisdom³⁹. This finding indicates that the transformation of pesantren is not imitative of Western education models, but rather creates a creative synthesis derived from Islamic intellectual traditions and the Indonesian sociocultural context.

An in-depth analysis of the transformation process of Islamic education in the context of modernization reveals a pattern of adaptation that is selective, gradual, and integrated. Pesantren do not make wholesale adoption of modernity elements, but rather make critical selections based on compatibility with the values and goals of Islamic education. The transformation process is also carried out in stages by considering institutional readiness and human resource capacity. Most importantly, modern elements are not adopted separately, but rather integrated into the pesantren education system through a contextualization process that takes into account local characteristics. This pattern of adaptation allows pesantren to maintain relevance in the modern era without losing its distinctive identity as an Islamic educational institution rooted in tradition.

These findings confirm that the transformation of Islamic education in the context of modernization represents a model of educational development that is not only adaptive to the demands of the times, but also transformative in producing a generation of Muslims who have intellectual, spiritual, and moral excellence to contribute to global civilization. The transformation model of Islamic education developed by pesantren offers an alternative perspective in the discourse of educational modernization which is often dominated by the Western paradigm, as well as demonstrating the viability of the concept of education that integrates tradition and modernity in the context of contemporary Muslim society.

Conclusion

The reconstruction of the pesantren education system within the framework of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is a complex and multidimensional

³⁹ Dewi Anggraeni et al., "Adaptation and Transformation of Pesantren Education in Facing The Era of Muslim Society 5.0," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 3 (2024): 705–26, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i3.114>.

transformation process, but at the same time shows the great potential of pesantren as an adaptive and relevant Islamic educational institution in the modern era. Pesantren are able to combine the values of Islamic tradition with the demands of 21st century competencies selectively and contextually. This is reflected in the various patterns of adaptation carried out, ranging from total adaptation by modern pesantren, selective adaptation by semi-modern pesantren, to minimalist adaptation by salafiyah pesantren.

The key to the success of this process lies in the strategic role of kyai as an agent of change (cultural broker) who not only maintains the continuity of tradition but also opens space for innovation. Kyai plays a central role in directing the vision of pesantren to remain rooted in Islamic values while being able to answer the challenges of globalization and digitalization of education. On the other hand, strengthening the capacity of human resources, especially teachers and education personnel, is a crucial element in ensuring the successful integration of Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren.

Pesantren need to continue to develop hybrid learning models that combine traditional methods such as sorogan and bandongan with modern project-based, collaborative, and digital approaches. This effort must be supported by improving learning infrastructure, access to technology, and an evaluation system that is holistic and oriented towards strengthening the character of students. In addition, pesantren also need to strengthen partnership networks with various parties, including the industrial world and other educational institutions, to broaden santri's horizons and opportunities in the future.

As an Islamic educational institution with strong roots in tradition, pesantren must maintain local wisdom and Islamic values in every transformation process. Thus, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren is not only an administrative adjustment, but also a cultural transformation process that is able to produce a generation of students who are intellectually superior, spiritually mature, and ready to contribute to the development of the nation and global civilization.

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