

Implementation of Policies to Increase Teaching Staff Professionalism: A Case Study of *Pesantren Ar-Raudhathul Hasanah Payabungdung Medan*

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Abstract: Pesantren as the oldest educational institution in Indonesia, with entrenched system and pattern, now has started to revitalize itself, using modern scientific methodology, having functional orientation, as well as open to development outside itself. Pesantren Ar-Raudhatul Hasanah (the Pesantren), located at Payabungdung Medan, is one of the formal educational institutions in North Sumatra. Thus, it has the same duties as other formal educational institutions: to develop quality education. Using qualitative approach and descriptive methodology, this study examined the implementation of policies to increase teaching staff professionalism in the Pesantren, specifically in relation to related government policies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document study. It was found that the Pesantren has complied with government policies to increase teaching staff professionalism through various mechanisms, such as: 1) Using dual curriculum, the Religious Affairs Ministry curriculum and Gontor curriculum; 2) Sending teachers to participate in various activities/events, such as national/ international seminar, workshop, symposium, and other related tasks as teachers and educators; 3) Bringing in expert on local, national and international scale; 4) Cooperating with the government and private institutions in activities related to teacher professionalism improvement; 5) Creating teacher working groups.

Keywords: Teacher Professionalism, Pesantren Ar-Raudhatul Hasanah, Government Policies

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I. INTRODUCTION

The word *madrasah* means “a place” of reading or studying where persons read or study (a college, a collegiate mosque, an academy) (Butt and Khalid, 2017). Madrasah could be deemed a new phenomenon among Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Its teaching and learning has not yet been standardised from one region to another, especially regarding curriculum and lesson plans. Effort to unite and standardise the madrasah system has only been tried since the 1950s after Indonesia obtained its independence. In its development madrasah is divided into levels; Ibtidaiyah, Tsanawiyah and Aliyah. Madrasah is younger than pesantren. The first madrasah was the Madrasah Manba'ul Ulum of the Surakarta Kingdom in 1905 and the Adabiyah School founded by Syekh Abdullah Ahmad in West Sumatra in 1909 (Malik Fadjar, 1998). Madrasah was founded to realize the renewal of Islamic educational system by some concerned Muslim scholars. The renewal, according to Karl Sternbrink (1986), consists of three things:

- The effort to perfect the pesantren educational system.
- Adjustment with Western education system, and
- The effort to bridge the traditional educational system with Western educational system.

According to Daulay and Tobroni (2017) madrasah is defined by the Decision Letter as: “Educational institution which makes the religion of Islam a foundational subject with religious knowledge taught at least 30 percent of the curriculum in addition of general knowledge...” The Letter in essence stated that to increase madrasah quality:

- a. Madrasah degree was made equivalent to general school degree at the same level.
- b. Madrasah graduate could pursue further studies at the higher level general school.
- c. Madrasah student could move to general school at the same level. (Three Ministers Collective Decision Letter, year 1975 Chapter II, Article 2).

Madrasah is a religious educational institution, which is able to train the spiritual teachers of religion for the future development (Khuziakmetov et. all, 2016). The signing of Joint Decision Letter (*Surat Keputusan Bersama - SKB*) of three ministers (Religious Affairs, Education and Culture, and Interior) indicated that the

position of madrasah is strong enough to equal the position of school. In addition the Joint Decision Letter was also deemed as a positive step to increase the quality of madrasah from the aspects of status, degree value and curriculum (Malik Fadjar, 1998). In one of the deliberation points for the Joint Decision Letter it was stated that steps to increase madrasah educational quality needs to be undertaken such that madrasah alumni could continue or transfer to common schools from the primary to tertiary level.

Asadullah and Maliki (2018) explained that Indonesia's madrasah system is unique in the Muslim world for several reasons. *First*, the majority of the country's madrasahs are in the non-state sector, in most cases teaching Arabic religious texts alongside a non-religious curriculum. Yet they belong to centralized bureaucracies, associated with Indonesia's two leading Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). *Second*, Indonesian madrasahs have been open to girls for nearly a century. Both Muhammadiyah and NU maintain a nationwide network of madrasahs led by women who interpret sacred texts and exert powerful religious influence. This is in stark contrast with madrasahs in South Asia which were until recently all-male institutions. *Third*, a large number of fee-charging non-religious private schools operate throughout Indonesia alongside madrasahs. The large size and heterogeneous composition of the non-state education sector are despite a large-scale public school construction programme undertaken in the country in the past (Asadullah and Maliki, 2018).

Problems of Madrasah in Indonesia

First, weak foundation, vague purpose, irrelevant curriculum, unqualified teachers, hazy evaluation. Madrasah education is imprecisely defined from primary to tertiary levels. According to Moh Raqib madrasah alumni is also not creative gauged from the abundance of unemployment among them as they prefer to become civil servant in which quota is limited. This shows a lack of creativity to generate self-employment. This lack of creativity often caused by the lack of emphasis on creativity in the educational system.

Second, the lack of teacher's professional competence. Kiliņ et. all (2015) suggest professionalism as an individual, they have knowledge and skills to move to a specific field and taking the responsibility for his or her professional improvement. Professionalism is also associated with the teacher as an employee. Teacher professionalism within the scope of a teacher is creating effective teaching practices, creating an environment suitable for learning, and improving professionals knowledge and skills to provide students with learning experiences (Kiliņ et. all, 2015).

Third, educational leaders who are weak in communication and negotiation. They often do not have sufficient ability to build internal communication with the teachers.

In addition of internal factors, there are also external factors:

First, the discriminative treatment of Islamic education system by the government. The fund allocation given by the government to Islamic education is comparatively very little compared the funds given to non-Islamic education system.

Second, the bureaucrat's paradigm on Islamic education has been dominated by sectoral approach not functional approach. Islamic education is not considered as part of the education sector as it is not under the Education and Culture Department.

Third, Islamic education institution is the last alternative of many youths in society after they are not accepted in non-Islamic educational institution. This view of society can certainly be an indicator of their lack of trust of Islamic education system.

The position and role of Islamic education with its variety of educational institution are still topics of contention. Islamic education should be able to play its part as alternative education promising a good future. But the fact remains, madrasah, school, and Islamic higher education institution tend to affiliate with Islamic social organization such as Muhammadiyah, NU, and Persis or Perguruan Islam bodies/foundations.

It is hoped that there would be efforts for schools and related institutions to create an ideal Islamic education system to develop optimally spiritual, emotional and intelligence quotients. The three of them are integrated in a virtuous circle, which then create a new paradigm in society that Islamic schools are of good quality. As such the discriminative attitude and the problem of educational quality could slowly change. Certainly through the concept of integrated curriculum, the education process could balance between religious studies and non-religious studies.

Regional Autonomy

The regional autonomy is a limited freedom assumed by a local government in managing its own household (Hidayat, 2010). The emergence of regional autonomy policy and decentralisation aims to provide opportunity to educational participants to obtain skills, knowledge, and attitude which can contribute to society. Madrasah could also survive more in the fast-changing curriculum, as it does not follow the national curriculum. The decentralization management delegates responsibility to school to conduct teaching and learning process according to local need. As such, madrasah could manage its activities without central government intervention.

Through teaching and learning based on local need, curriculum is not burdened with unnecessary materials. The teaching and learning process is hoped to be effective such that a higher achievement could be obtained. The involvement of government in education caused madrasah management to include additional programs to increase educational quality. Remedial and course programs to increase cognitive, social and emotional ability of students from low socio-economic background could be added.

In the spirit of decentralization which allows society to channel its aspiration and participate in education quality development and improvement, society needs to have a high degree of care of educational institutions in their vicinity. This could inculcate a high degree of ownership through contribution in management, control, development, and other forms of participation to make local community proud of educational institution in their mindset.

Marbun and Pin (2017) state that the problem of madrasah arises of the forgetting of its roots. There is dual interpretation. Madrasah is not an extension of pesantren. On one hand, madrasah is identical with school because it has a relatively similar curriculum with non-Islamic school. The solution of madrasah problem is the policy taken to determine madrasah's fate, which should not put at a disadvantage its Islamic specialty in the short and long term (Marbun and Pin, 2017).

There should be no more discrimination between madrasah and school. The local government needs to pay adequate attention. Eventhough all this while madrasah is under the control of central government. If the current design of madrasah development is deemed effective to achieve and maintain vision, mission, and purpose of national education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs need to optimize coordination with Education Council and School Committee, in addition of increasing accountability. Madrasah as an educational institution from, by, and for the society has not obtained fully our attention. The increase in educational quality would not be realized without the participation of all parties. As such, madrasah needs to be helped, defended and fought for.

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