

Contextualizing Thought of Islamic Modernist Towards Islamic Education in Indonesia¹

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Abstract

Clash of civilizations between Islam and the West is a reality that can not be avoided. For several centuries, the Islamic world has been experiencing pressure of Western imperialism which then causes deterioration in various fields. Islamic education is recognized by many Muslim scholars and thinkers as one of the best alternative to restore the glory of the Muslims. Besides functioning as a process to improve the quality of human life, Best practice of Islamic education will also prepare a new generation for better future. This study reveals the influence of modernist thought leaders in improving the system of Islamic education in Indonesia. By using a historical approach, the author attempts to analyze thought of modernist leaders as a criticism and improvement towards traditional Islamic systems which tends to be out of date. The advancement of technology should motivate Muslim awareness not fixated on the traditional education systems when returning to the comprehensive of Islamic concept, then there is no dichotomy between sciences and Islamic education systems. The objectives that need to be addressed in this study is the process of implementation of the thought modernist leaders when linked to the reality of Indonesian Muslim nowadays.

Keywords: Contextualizing, Islamic Modernist

Introduction

The clash of civilizations and ideology between Islam and the West is a reality that can not be avoided. Collapse of the Islamic civilization began in the mid-13th century which disintegrated after the attack of the Mongol dynasty and controlled center of Islam in the Middle East. At the same time the Islamic dynasty in Spain also collapsed after defeated by the European forces. After several centuries, the Islamic world has experienced the pressure of Western imperialism that entered and colonized almost any Islamic territory from Morocco

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in North Africa, India in Asia and Indonesia in Southeast Asia. Muslims experienced deterioration in the various fields and at the same time dealing with the Western hegemony in the economic, political and intellectual.

Beginning the early 19th century, ideological conflict between the Western world which is advanced and modern with the east which is represented by Islamic world and looking for its identity back, bounce back. Muslims began to organize itself over the modernization from downturn. Almost all Muslim scholars and thinkers agree that when discussing about weaknesses, bad condition and problems of Muslims, education is the solution. Education which in Arabic is known as Tarbiyah has a very high urgency in the process of community improvement. Education is essentially an effort to pass the value to be guidance and determinants of mankind to live a life and also work to improve the humanity and civilization. M. Natsir stressed, "Forward or withdrawal of a nation, depends greatly to a lessons and educational that apply in their circles. No single nation that retarded becoming advanced, but later embraced into the education of their children and youth".³

During this downturn, educational insight is derived from the narrow and confined to the only theological understanding. Islamic studies rely on traditional religious themes with orientation only to meet the practical needs of religious and partial, without preparing for the challenges of life in a globalized world that increasingly broad and complex. There is nothing wrong on the opinion that, "Islamic Education is not just 'transfer of knowledge' or 'transfer of training' ... but rather is a system arranged on a foundation of faith and piety, a system that is directly related to God Roehan Achwan,⁴ however the nature of Islam as a comprehensive religion has directed the universality balance and between orientation of hereafter with worldly life. It is time dichotomy of an educational system that only 'hereafter oriented' and leave the orientation of present progress, to be combined. The concept is then directed by modernist Islamic scholars in Indonesia to make improvements to the system of Islamic education which is still considered to be traditional.

Problem of Islamic Education in Indonesia

³ M. Natsir, 1961, *Capita Selecta*, Bandung: Penerbit Sumur, at page -53.

⁴ See Roehan Achwan, 1991, *Prinsip-prinsip Pendidikan Islam Versi Mursi*, Islamic Education Journal, Vol 1, Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, at page-50.

Education is a process to improve the quality of people in all aspects of life. The role of education as means in the process of betterment of human being is recognized by all scholars or thinkers, as a function of education in to transfer knowledge, in essence also as an effort to inherit the value that will be determinant for the human being to live a life as well as to improve the civilization of mankind. Thus, "The education is the best means for creating a new generation of youth who will not lose the bond with their own traditions but also at the same time not be foolish or intellectually retarded in their education or are not aware of the developments in every branch of human knowledge".⁵

In the context of Islamic education, educational terms can be found in the Qur'an by the term 'at-Tarbiyah', 'at-Ta'lim', and 'at-Tadhib', however, more expression with the word of 'rabbi', the word 'at-Tarbiyah' is a form of fi'il Madhi Rabba, which has the same meaning with the word 'rabb' which means name of Allah. In the Qur'an does not find the word 'at-Tarbiyah', but there are terms with similar meanings, namely: ar-rabb, rabbayani, murabbi, rabbiyun, Rabbani. However, in hadith used the term Rabbani. All of these phonemes have connotations different meanings.⁶ Specifically Husain and Syed Sajjad Syed Ali Ashraf interpret Islamic education is an education that trains students feeling therefore in their attitudes, actions, decisions and approach to all kinds of knowledge, they are influenced by spiritual values and very aware of the ethical values of Islam.⁷

In its development realized that Islamic educational is still experience of backwardness. According to Syamsul Ma'arif, "Islamic Education is in a stage catastrophic and unfortunate. Since the Islamic education is far behind compare to Western education ... Islamic Education was not in the golden age (Andalusia and Baghdad), which could become centers of Islamic civilization both in the field of culture, arts or education, what happening is precisely the opposite, it is western oriented".⁸

⁵ Quoted from Conference Book, London, 1978: 15-17 In Hujair AH. Sanaky, 1999, "Studi Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Modern", Islamic Education Journal , Concept and Implementation, Vol V Th IV, ISSN: 0853 – 7437, August 12, 2010,

www.sanaky.com/.../STUDI_PEMIKIRAN_PENDIDIKAN_ISLAM_MODERN.pdf.

⁶ See Al-Attas An Naquib, 1988, *Konsep Pendidikan Dalam Islam*, Bandung: Mizan, at page-12.

⁷ Syed Sajjad Husain dan Syed Ali Ashraf, 1986, *Crisis Muslim Education*, (Krisis Pendidikan Islam), Bandung: Risalah, at page-2.

⁸ Syamsul Ma'arif, 2007. *Revitalisasi Pendidikan Islam*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu., at page-2.

Backwardness of Islamic educational could be seen from the effort to constrict the perspective only limited the theological discussion. Islamic education only discuss on the themes or religious subjects only for the need of religious worship and muamalah. Dichotomy of science and its applications should no longer be a debate when it reverts to the concept in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Islamic education should be exclusive, resulting in backwardness of Muslim or it should not too inclusive resulting in loss of identity. Islamic education is also considered to be underdeveloped in the methodology. Methods of Islamic education which is assumed to be out-of-date affect that Islamic education is not able to produce a generation that can compete in a globalized world. Memorizing system is sample that dominate most of the process of learning and teaching Islamic education (especially the traditional education system), is precisely considered to be the cause of the weakness of creativity and the ability to analyze problems. Fazlur Rahman expressed his opinion that is interesting to note, "If we want to build a quality of education, it must return to the Qur'an and the Qur'an should be placed as a center of Islamic intellectualism".⁹ This spirit of understanding applied by Modernist Islamic leaders in Indonesia, when they tried to restore Islam to its original source of Qur'an.

History and Leader of Islamic Modernist

Although it is not clear when the term of traditional Islam and the Islamic modernist emerge, in fact this nature really exist on the condition of Muslims in Indonesia. A.M. Saefudin¹⁰ analysis that the dichotomy or separation of the modernist-traditionalist Islam in Indonesian created by the International Zionism as one of the divisive slander and undermine the situation of Muslims in Indonesia.

Modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia is closely related to the growth of its emergence ideas of Islamic modernism in the Asian region. The idea of Islamic modernism found its momentum since the early 20th century, in the education field was realized with the establishment of modern educational institutions adopted from the Dutch colonial education system. The initiator was the organizations 'modernists' of Islam such as Jami'at al-Khoir, al-

⁹ Fazlur Rahman, 1985, *Islam and Modernity About Intellectual Transformation*, (Islam dan Modernitas Tentang Transformasi Intelektual), Bandung: Graha Ilmu, at-page. 2.

¹⁰ See A.M. Saifuddin, 1991, *Pembaharuan Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia*, Bandung: Mizan, at-page. 141.

Ershad, Muhammadiyah, etc.¹¹ The author of this discourse clearly described the early history of the development of Islamic education since been progressing up to the process of modernization. In the early period, the idea of adoption of this modernization in Islamic education at least, there were two main tendencies in the experimentation of the Islamic organizations above. First, the adoption of modern educational systems and institutions was as whole system. Starting point here was the system of Islamic education and modern educational institutions (the Netherlands), not the system and the traditional Islamic educational institutions ... Second, the experimental reform started from the Islamic education system itself. Here, Islamic education institutions which already existed since a long time was modernized; Traditional Islamic education such as; Madrasa and mosque, Islamic boarding schools, modernized by adopting certain aspects of modern education system, especially in curriculum content, techniques and methods of teaching and so on.¹² In connection with this study, the author attempted to explore the idea of two leaders that represent ideas of modernists in Indonesia, particularly in establishing Islamic educational system; Ahmad Dahlan and Mohammad Natsir.

Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan was born in Yogyakarta, August 1st, 1868. He was an Indonesian national heroine. He was the fourth son of seven siblings from a family of KH Abu Bakar. KH Abu Bakar was a leading scholar and preacher at the Great Mosque of Yogyakarta Sultanate at that time, and the mother of KH Ahmad Dahlan was the daughter of H. Ibrahim, who also serves Yogyakarta Sultanate rulers at that time.¹³ His name was Mohammed Darwis before he went to pilgrimage; the name of Ahmad Dahlan was the turn after perform the pilgrimage in Mecca. And KH. Ahmad Dahlan before founding organization of Muhammadiyah, He joined as a member of Boedi Oetomo which was the first youth organization in Indonesia.¹⁴

With the depth of religious knowledge and his diligence in following the ideas of Islamic renewal, KH. Ahmad Dahlan then actively spread the idea of renewal of Islam to the people while he trade batik. KH. Ahmad Dahlan did preaching and religious discussion, so at the urging of his disciples on 18 November 1912 KH. Ahmad Dahlan founded the

¹¹ Quoted from Edy Yusuf Nursamsu Santosa, *Kontekstualisasi Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam Akhmad Khan di India*.

http://uinsuka.info/ejurnal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=52, July 11, 2010.

¹² Ibid, at 7.

¹³ Bagus Prabowo, *Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan*, <http://id.wordpress.com>, July 12, 2010.

¹⁴ Fani Dirgantara, *Biografi KH.Ahmad Dahlan*, <http://f4ni.wordpress.com>, July 11, 2010.

organization of Muhammadiyah. In addition, he was also active in in political parties like Budi Utomo and Sarikat Islam. Almost all of his life was used to perform for the progress of the Islamic ummah and nation. KH. Ahmad Dahlan passed away on 7 Rajab 1340 H or 23 February 1923 AD and was buried in the Coral Kadjen, Kemantren, Mergangsan, Yogyakarta.¹⁵

Mohammad Natsir who have title Datuk Sinaro Panjang, telling the story of his life in a book: "Eighty-one years ago, I was born from the couple husband and wife, Khadija Sutan Sari Pado. Precisely on July 17th 1908, in Alahan Panjang, Valley Gumanti, Solok regency, West Sumatra. I grew up from a family of devout Muslims".¹⁶ M Natsir received religious education from childhood. He recited the Qur'an every day since in Holland Inlands School (HIS). Motivation to learn the religion from his parents was very strong. He went to public school in the morning and religious schools (Madrasah Diniyah) in afternoon. Effort and perseverance brought results. In a very young age, he has the advantage of intelligent compared to friends of his age. This was revealed by his statement, "I can recite yellow manuscript, while other comrades who could not read it".¹⁷

M Natsir had never active in the field of Islamic education (Pendis), it was a modern Islamic educational institutions in Bandung. M Natsir had been mandated to become a supervisor for 10 years, since 1932. In addition, M. Natsir had also become members of the Council of Regency Bandung in 1940-1942 AD, and chairman of the Education Bureau in 1942-1945 AD Bandung. In the year 1945 AD, Pak Natsir become a member of KNIP, which had members of 232 people. Pak Natsir was quit from KNIP, when he became Minister of Information offered during the Cabinet Sahrir and Hatta, in the year 1946-1949 AD. In 1950 AD, Pak Natsir had played pivotal role in preserving national unity and the Proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia, it was known "Mosi Integral Natsir".¹⁸

¹⁵ Hadi Rukiyah, *Konsep Pendidikan Perspektif Ahmad Dahlan* <http://hadirukiyah.blogspot.com>, July 12, 2010.

¹⁶ M. Natsir 1998, *Politik Melalui Jalur Dakwah*, Jakarta: PT. Abadi, at page. 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸ Pak Natsir great service to change back to the state federation of the Netherlands formed a unitary state of Indonesia on April 3, 1950, which these services he was appointed as Prime Minister. See Anwar Harjono at. all, 1995, *Mohammad Natsir, Pemikiran dan Sumbangannya untuk Indonesia*, .Jakarta: Media Dakwah.

He was instrumental in restoring the Republic of Indonesia which have been divided 17 states again to become a unitary state which territory stretched from Sabang to Merauke. For his services, the Sukarno appointed Pak Natsir as the First Prime Minister of the Republic of Indonesia. This was the highest political achievement of Pak Natsir during his lifetime. Since the year 1949, Mr. Natsir known as chairman of Masyumi, the largest political party in Indonesia at that time. This important position was held until the year 1958 AD. His final achievement, M. Natsir founded the Council of Indonesian Islamic Da'wah (DDII) as a forum for his dedication to the people after efforts to revive Masyumi failure. Pak Natsir passed away on Saturday, February 6th, 1993 at 12:10 pm when he was 85 years in the hospital Cipto Mangunkusumo after being treated for three months due to pneumonia.¹⁹ Both these figures represent the authors demm Modernist Islamic thought in Indonesia, for later writers tried to express their execution in Indonesia as a contextualization of the influence of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Contextualizing Islamic Modernist Thought

KH. Ahmad Dahlan is a man who had a big attention to Islamic education. according to his opinion, a strategic effort to save Muslims from the static patterns of thinking towards the idea that dynamic is through education. Education should be placed as the major priority in the process of Moslem community development.²⁰

His statement was in line with the thoughts of Mohammad Natsir which is expressed in a speech on June 17, 1934 at Bogor, "Advance or retreat of a community mostly depending on lessons and education which is apply among them. Not a single nation that retarded become advanced, unless after conducted and improved the education of children and youth. Japanese nation, an East nation that is nowadays as the subject of discussion of people all over the world because of the advance of their nation, will still be in the dark if they do not open the door for his country which was closed for smart people and scientists from other countries that will provide education and knowledge to their youth, beside to send their youth to other countries in order to gain knowledge".²¹

¹⁹ Ridwan Saidi, 1993, *Pemimpin Pulang, Rakaman Peristiwa Wafatnya Pak Natsir*, Jakarta: Yayasan Piranti Ilmu, pg. 14.

²⁰ Samsul Nizar, MA, 2002, *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam: Pendidikan Historis, Teoritis*, Jakarta: Ciputat Pers, at page. 100.

²¹ M. Natsir. 1957. *Capita Selecta I*, Jakarta. Pustaka Pendis. at page. 77.

In term of educational purposes KH. Ahmad Dahlan said that Islamic education should be directed towards establishing a virtuous Moslem, devout in religion, broad insight and understands of science mundane problems, and were willing to fight for the betterment of society. The aim of such education is a renewal of conflicting educational goals at the time, i.e.: boarding school education and the Dutch model of school education. On one side, the pesantren educational purposes are only to create pious individuals and deepen religious knowledge. In contrast, the Dutch model of schooling is a secular education in which religion is not taught at all.²² Even further, he provides a solution to this inequality of education system with the rationale: "the perfect education goal is to deliver intact individual who is mastering both, the western/modern science and Islamic legacy—material and spiritual, world and the Hereafter. For KH. Ahmad Dahlan both of these (modern-Islamic legacy, material-spiritual and world-hereafter) is something that can not be separated from each other. This is the reason why KH. Ahmad Dahlan teaches Islamic studies and modern science as well as in Muhammadiyah Islamic school."²³

Regarding educational materials, educational objectives set out from the educational purposes, KH. Ahmad Dahlan believes that the curriculum or educational materials should include:

a. Moral education, namely as an attempt to embed good character man based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

b. Individual education, which is an effort to foster awareness of sustainable intact individuals between mental development and ideas, between faith and intellect as well as between the worlds and the hereafter.

c. Social education is an effort to foster a willingness and desire to live in a society.²⁴ This purpose and curriculum of education is implemented by KH Ahmad Dahlan in founding of Muhammadiyah schools from kindergarten to college level.

Specifically, Mohammad Natsir explains his concept of educational materials with emphasizing on the unity of Islam as a principle of education. He states that: "Knowing God, believe in the unity of God, believe and devote to God, must be the principles of education which shall be given to the generation that we educate, if we as teachers or father and mother,

²² Samsul Nizar, MA, Op. cit. at page. 100.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ See Deliar Noer, 1985, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia*, Jakarta: LP3ES, pg. 85.

really love children who God has entrusted to us".²⁵ In addition, Natsir want to emphasize his argue that Islam is essentially a 'tarbiyah' religion, religious education, being taught by God to His servant, in which one of His nature is Rabb (Supreme Educators, Supreme Controller) - who educate and organize the universe (Rabb al-alamin). The word 'Tarbiyah' summarizing all the worldly and ukhrawi, psychologically and physically, intellectually and ethics-manners, formal and non formal, dedicated to self, family and whole community, all of which are universal, integral and harmonious. Since tarbiyah is a process that never stops as certainly as the body was conceived, then the obligation in studying and educating as well as get an education it is the duty of all ages, from cradle to grave.²⁶

Furthermore, regarding teaching methods, KH. Ahmad Dahlan did not use a textual but contextual approach because it is not enough only to be memorized or understood cognitively religious instruction, but also must be carried out according to the situation and conditions. If the ways of teaching and learning at the pesantren using Sorogan Weton system, madrasah Muhammadiyah using the class system as in Dutch schools. Lessons curriculum of Islamic boarding schools taken from religious scriptures. While at the madrasah Muhammadiyah lesson curriculum taken from general books. Another thing which also needs attention is the student-teacher relationship. In Islamic boarding schools the student-teacher relationships are usually impressed authoritarian because the authority of scholars have considered sacred. While madrasah Muhammadiyah started to develop teacher-student intimate relationship by eliminating sacred relationship. Similarly, Mohammad Natsir confirming the similarity of implementation from his concept of educational with Muhammadiyah which is the result of *ijtihad* thought of KH.Ahmad Dahlan. He said:

When I see our schools completely empty of religious teaching, I intend to build a modern education along with religious education. Then I founded the school of Islamic Education (Pendis). Compare with Muhammadiyah style, not much different, only we were more practical. For example, we pioneered the Friday prayer in school. Also teaches art to sublimate feelings. Islam did not prohibit the arts, including Tonil (folk art).²⁷

²⁵ See M. Natsir, 1961, *Capita Selecta*. Jil 1&2. Bandung: Penerbit Sumur Bandung. pg. 116.

²⁶ Anwar Haryono, 1995, *Indonesia kita: Pemikiran Berwawasan Iman-Islam*. Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, h. 88.

²⁷ M. Natsir, 1984, *Indonesia di Persimpangan Jalan*, Jakarta: PT Abadi, at page. 3.

From His statement, we can see that there is similarity of the two figures thoughts who are trying to combine the traditional with the modern education system, between the West and Islam. *Syumuliah* concept in Islam is supposed to be more understanding by *ummah*. No more dichotomy of science in Islam.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, we concluded that KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Mohammad Natsir are educational leaders who have important role for education in Indonesia. The ideas put forward by KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Mohammad Natsir as an effort in modernizing the Islamic education system, has been enlightening, especially for Muslims in Indonesia. The idea of both this modernist Muslim leaders have brought renewal in establishing Islamic educational institution which was originally an Islamic boarding school system become applying classical system, which in a classical education is incorporated into the general lesson of *madrasah* education. However, both these figures remain focused on moral education or *akhlak* and Islamic legacy as part of the community improvement process. Modernization of thought, systems and education methods that made by these two figures are part of the process of Islamization of knowledge which is expected by all Muslims as mark of the Islamic revival.

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