The existence of yellow books (kitab kuning) as the sources of Islamic Studies at Islamic Boarding Schools within the Industrial Revolution Dialectics

by Pps Mahyudin

The existence of yellow books (*kitab kuning*) as the sources of Islamic Studies at Islamic Boarding Schools within the Industrial Revolution Dialectics

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Abstract--- One pride of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia is related to their curriculum. Although Indonesian government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs has organized the curriculum for educational institutions, *Kitab Kuning* still exist as a part of curriculum used at Islamic Boarding schools. Along with the rapid development of technology in the industrial revolution era 4.0, the existence of *Kitab Kuning* as the sources of Islamic studies seems to be seriously threatened. This article will explain the existence of *Kitab Kuning* as the main sources of Islamic studies in the industrial revolution era. This research used a qualitative method. The research data was collected through observation, interview, documentation, and focus group discussion. The data sources were the leaders, teachers, students, experts of Islamic boarding schools knowing a lot about the *Kitab Kuning* and industrial revolution demands. The research results showed that the Islamic Boarding School Students got difficulties and required more time to understand the meanings contained in those *Kitab Kuning*. The students also tended to open links containing Islamic sciences that changed the students' habits from opening books to opening android, yet freedom of utilizing information technology is highly limited at the Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia.

Keywords--- Islamic studies, Islamic Boarding School, Curriculum, Kitab Kuning, Industrial Revolution

I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding school is an Islamic Education institution which still exists maintaining the existence of *Kitab Kuning* in postmodern era. From the historical aspect, Islamic boarding school is not only identical with the meaning of Islam but also Indonesian indigenousness[1]. Islamic boarding school is a unique Islamic educational institution which culture is different from the other Islamic educational institutions even in the world[2].

Kitab Kuning have become one important element which can be separated from the world of Islamic Boarding Schools[3]. Zamakhsari Dhofier explains, there are some important elements in one educational institution which has the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools including settlement (*pondok*), mosque, Islamic students (*santri*), *Kitab Kuning*, teacher, and Islamic scholar (*kyai*) [4]. Among the most interesting elements in the world of Islamic boarding schools in which the other educational institutions do not have is a subject which books realized in classic books popularly introduced as (*kitab kuning*) [5].

The term *kitab kuning* in the world of Islamic boarding schools has not been precisely known due to its terminological origin, whether it has a certain meaning or just because its yellowish paper color [6]. According to Sofyan *et al.*, *kitab kuning* were derived from a group outside the world of Islamic boarding schools assuming that *kitab kuning* are books with poor quality due to its materials, left-behind, and one cause of humans' logical thinking stagnancy[7]. Thus, one proposed term from some groups of Islamic boarding schools is classic book to replace the yellow book (*kitab kuning*)"[8].

Kitab kuning is interesting to discuss, of course not because of its yellowish paper color, but distinguishing characteristics that to understand the books, particular skills need to be well mastered not only the mastery of Arabic language. There are three general characteristics of *kitab kuning*. First, the presentation of each material is always started with the precisely defined terms to clearly limit the definitions in order to avoid misunderstandings related to the discussed topics. Second, each element of the discussed material is explained with all requirements related to the discussed objects. Third, in explaining the main contents, there are the book writers' arguments supported with strong references.

All *kitab kuning* taught at the Islamic boarding schools may be classified into 8 groups: 1). *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharf* (morphology); 2). *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence); 3).*Usulfiqh* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence); 4). Hadith (The Prophet Muhammad's Sayings); 5).*Tafsir* (Al-Qur'an exegesis); 6).*Tauhid* (Islamic Belief in One God); 7).Sufism and ethics, and 8). Others , including *tarikh* (Islamic History) and *balaghah* (Arabic Linguistics)[4], [1]. Some above mentioned *kitab kuning* provide understanding that each aspect of Islamic science is generally contained in the books.

To understand the *kitab kuning*, various fields of science should be well mastered; especially those related to language sciences, such as *nahwu*, *sharaf* and *balaghah*. Those who do not well mastered the required fields of science, cannot perfectly understand and take the lessons from the *kitab kuning*. Due to the difficulties in understanding the yellow books and the availability of various learning sources in this industrial revolution era, it may become the challenges for Islamic boarding schools to maintain the existence of *kitab kuning* as the learning sources of Islamic studies.

The statement above is not a pessimism but undeniable reality that the development of information and communication technology make the students tend to read various learning sources from online links and more interestingly that those learning sources make the students do not have to think harder to understand the contents.

Appreciation needs to be awarded to and analysis is also need to conduct on some Islamic boarding schools which continuously maintain *kitab kuning* as the learning sources of Islamic studies, such as Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, Parmeraan, Dolok District, North Padang Lawas Regency and Mushthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School, Purba Baru, Lembah Sorik Merapi District, Mandailing Natal Regency. The appreciation is awarded since both Islamic boarding schools seem to be not affected by the rapid development of information technology. The focus of this research is related to first, *kitab kuning* as curriculum at Islamic boarding schools; second,the relevance of Islamic boarding schools' curriculum with the demands of industrial revolution; and third, opportunities and challenges of yellow books as curriculum in the industrial revolution era.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research related to Islamic boarding schools and *kitab kuning* have been conducted for thousands times by academicians, practitioners, observers of Islamic boarding schools, yet the difference of this research with the others read by the authors is related to the demands of industrial revolution. It can be explained that some researches are relevant with this research, such as that conducted by Arif concluding that the *kitab kuning* at Islamic boarding schools have become the main learning sources, and even some Islamic boarding schools consider the yellow books as the main curriculum[9].

Suparta explains that the learning systems used at Islamic boarding schools have produced many ulamas not only in Indonesia but also in Southeast Asian Countries [10]. The spirit of Moslems from Malaysia and Thailand to learn the Islamic studies in Indonesia is not separated from the existence of *kitab kuning* which have become the main curriculum of Islamic educational institutions. Muazza *et al*. assert that *kitab kuning* as the curriculum at Islamic boarding schools has produced young generations who are loyal to various rules, both religious and state rules and

regulations[11]. Solichin concludes that *kitab kuning* as learning sources of Islamic sciences at Islamic boarding schools are decided by the related Islamic boarding school's *Kiai*[12].

In response to the utilization of information technology media, Islamic boarding schools have strict rules for their students to use cellphones and gadgets. Moreover, the research conducted by Bajari *et al.* shows that it is not allowed to find any learning material from the information technology media, since all information should only be obtained from the *Kyai* even to the healthy life habits [13]. There is internet access restriction for the students that Rahman asserts that internet also has its strengths to improve the students' competences[14].

In line with the conclusions made by Bajari *et al.* and Rahman as explained above, this research is intended to assert that it is a big loss for Islamic boarding schools if they are not open to accept the present of internet media in their institutions. In response to the sources of Islamic studies, it is time for Islamic boarding schools to provide opportunities for their students to utilize various sources of Islamic studies available through internet media.

III. DATA COLLECTION

The curriculum used at the Islamic boarding schools in studying the Islamic sciences is in the form of *kitab kuning* since containing various fields of sciences. The result of research conducted at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School. Parmeraan and Musthafawiyyah Islamic Boarding School, PurbaBaru showed that seven categories in the field of Islamic sciences made yellow books as their main sources as presented in the following table.

Table 1. Type of the *Kitab Kuning* at the Islamic boarding school

No	Knowledge Field	Name *Kitab* in the institution	
		Darussalam	**Musthafawiyyah**
1	language (*Nahwu, Sharaf, Balaghah*)	Matan al-Jurumiyyah	Matan al-Jurumiyyah
		Matan bina wa al-Asas	Matan Bina wa al-Asas
		Syarah al-Jurumiyyah	Syarah al-Jurumiyyah
		Kaylani	Kaylani
		Kawakib al-Durriyah	Kawakib al-Durriyah
		Jami' al-Durus	Nahwu al-Wadhih
		Ilmu al-Balaghah	Ilmu al-Balaghah
2	Fiqh	Ilmu al-Fiqh	Ilmu al-Fiqh
		Mabadi' al-Fiqhiyyah	Mabadi' al-Fiqhiyyah
		Safinah al-naja	Safinah al-naja
		Risalah jami'ah muqaddimah hadhramiyyah	Sullam al-tawfiq
		Matan al-qarib	Matan al-qarib
		Kifayatul akhyar	Kifayatul Akhyar
		Tawdhih al-Ahkam	Tawdhih al-Ahkam
		I'anah al-Thalibin	I'anah al-Thalibin
3	Tauhid	'Aqaid al-Diniyyah	'Aqaid al-Diniyyah
		Ilmu al-Tawhid	Ilmu al-Tawhid
		'Aqidah al-Awwam	'Aqidah al-Awwam
		Kifayah al-Awam	Kifayah al-Awam
		Fath al-'Allam	Fath al-'Allam
		Al-Dusuki	
4	Hadits	Arba'in	Arba'in
		Ulum al-Hadits	Ulum al-Hadits
		Bulugh al-maram	Bulugh al-maram
		Tanqih al-qawl al-hadits	
		Riyadh al-Shalihin	Riyadh al-Shalihin
		Mukhtar al-Hadits	Mukhtar al-Hadits

5	Tafsir	Tafsir Jalalayn	Tafsir Jalalayn
6	Akhlak	Ta'lim al-Muta'allim	Ta'lim al-Muta'allim
		Nashaih al-Diniyyah	Nashaih al-Diniyyah
		Akhlaq li al-banin	Akhlak li al-banin
7	Tarikh	Nurul yaqin	Nurul Yaqin

Based on the research data, all *kitab kuning* above became the main references at the second Islamic boarding school in studying various fields of Islamic sciences. The most important thing was that there was no curriculum revision on *kitab kuning* at that Islamic boarding school. It was in accordance with the statement made by the leader of that Islamic boarding school saying that there was no curriculum revision of *kitab kuning* since the establishment of this Islamic Boarding School in 1984 until this research was conducted in 2019. Dolok as the first graduate of Darussalam Islamic Boarding School also said that the above mentioned books were the sources of Islamic sciences they used when learning at this Islamic Boarding School. The other informants said that learning using those yellow books were greatly difficult. It was not easy to fluently read, moreover, to understand the meaning and information contained in the texts.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Industrial revolution era requires complex changes in various humans' life activities, including educational world. If education makes no changes to meet the demands of the developing era, the purpose to produce persistent humans may not be realized. Thus, Sharma asserts that one greatest challenge for the educational world in facing the industrial revolution is how to realize competitiveness students with various technological devices[15].

The quality development of competitive Human Resources as demanded by the industrial revolution era should be first initiated by a good education quality. One indicator of good education quality is related to the curriculum used[16]. Along with the above mentioned statements and reality, the curriculum used in the world of Islamic boarding schools, especially those related to various problems of the recent Islamic studies seems to be not directed to the readiness to welcome the industrial revolution era 4.0. This statement is based on purpose, material, method [17], and evaluation contained in the recently applicable curriculum. The curriculum of Islamic boarding schools has not given reactive attitudes to the development of technology. Besides, the development of curriculum at Islamic boarding schools for time to time does not show significant changes to realize students with sophisticated language competences.

The arrangement and development of curriculum may not be carelessly made[18], yet should be based on well considered studies to be used as the bases in conducting educational processes to reach the educational and learning goals more efficiently and effectively[19]. In depth studies to the curriculum changes include purpose, learning material, method, and evaluation. The appropriateness between purpose, material, method, and evaluation as a curriculum system may be realized through studies. If not based on studies, there must be gaps between the related elements and the curriculum.

The curriculum resulted from well considered studies may become an indicator of educational world readiness in preparing qualified and competitive graduates to face the globalization era, with a good mastery on the development of technology which is important to all people and the future of a country[20]. The readiness of educational world in the curriculum aspect as a part of readiness indicator for the quality development of highly competitive citizens[21]. Meanwhile, yellow books as the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools have not been directed for the students' readiness in facing the industrial revolution era which is full of global competitions.

Some characteristics of industrial revolution era include digitalization, various internet data, internet citizens[22]. The recent educational world condition may give both negative and positive impacts [23], [24]. If the education system is not ready, such as teachers, their professionalism may degrade sharply and even vanish. In the contrary, if teachers happily welcome with full of innovations, those may accelerate and maximize the productivity of teachers and students. Thus, the

teachers are required to integrate their classroom activities with several online platforms through blended/ hybrid learning[25].

Herianto *et al.* also explains that the possible solution may be made by the educational world in facing the industrial revolution era is by studying the appropriateness of curriculum and policy in education[26], the readiness of Human resources in utilizing ICT[27], optimizing the students' competences and develop the values of students' characteristics, as well as the readiness of infrastructures and facilities for the digital-based learning [28].

Developing the humans' competences in industrial revolution era according to Baldini*et al.* is one requirement in industrial revolution era in which 75% of jobs involving scientific competences [29], technology, engineering and mathematics, internet of things, and life-long learning [30]. If associated with the working world in the recent industrial revolution era, there must be a harmony between the workforce's skill quality and digital technology.

The Islamic boarding schools' challenges in facing the industrial revolution 4.0 are related to the implantation and development of educational values. Thus, education should make the following strategies: 1) students are educated and trained to work while learning. Students' thinking intelligence should be widely developed; 2) growing the students' personality with Indonesian personality to become a individual who is dynamics, confident, brave, responsible, and independent; 3) learning is not only given during the learning hours, but also given in each opportunity outside the school hours; and 4) examples of good activities should be well implemented since they are powerful to create the students' good characters.

By looking at various aspects that should be implanted and developed as mentioned above, those aspects cannot actually be separated from reviewing the curriculum, particularly in this case is that implemented in the Islamic boarding schools which has not been directed to the trainings to work while learning, and has not contained materials with Indonesian nuances and some other aspects which require to be comprehensively studied.

VI. RESEARCH RESULT, SUMMARY, AND CONTRIBUTION

Kitab kuning as the sources of Islamic Studies used at Islamic boarding schools is not directed to the realization of students' competences in meeting the demands of industrial revolution proven by the materials contained in those *kitab kuning*, as well as the learning strategies and methods which give no chance for the students to know the recent development of Islamic studies. *Kitab kuning* as the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools have never been renewed in accordance with the development of the recent era.

Besides, to understand the contents of *kitab kuning*, the students require more time, even those who have been learning the yellow books for more than six years still do not completely understand the contents of the texts because those who want to well understand the content of *kitab kuning* should first properly and precisely understand the arabic grammatical patterns, including *nahwu, sharaf, balaghah*.

It is expected that this research result may provide valuable contributions to Islamic Boarding Schools and the related parties to be more open in response to the utilization of information and communication technology within their learning systems. Besides, curriculum revision should be made by each institution since education is dynamic and one dynamic aspect of education is related to its curriculum.

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