# CHARACTER EDUCATION IN MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS: A MODEL FROM INDONESIA

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**Abstract:**
This paper aims to paint a picture of character education in modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. More specifically, it pursues the way such a boarding university educates its students in a total life integrated in the campus. This system is in line with the decree No. 23/2017 launched by the Minister of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia aiming at promoting full-day school system that requires both teachers and students to be at schools in eight hours. Instead of this situation, Darussalam Islamic University has been promoting a system, boarding campus system, as a way to integrate both the teachers and students in one milieu. It educates the students to totally actively involved in every single activity in the campus.

**Keywords:** boarding campus, character, education, milieu, system

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In the Information, Communication, and Technology (henceforth ICT) era, when morality seems to be unimportant to value, character education is important to teach. In the contemporary context, strengthening character education is very relevant to address the moral crisis happening in our country (Abdurrahman, 2016). However, not all schools and universities in Indonesia are successful in implementing such a case. One of the most alarming is the increase of juvenile delinquency. Zuhdi (2009:39) in Abdurrahman (2016) states that there are seven moral crises occurring among the people of Indonesia at this time including crisis of honesty, responsibility, discipline, justice, togetherness crisis and inability to think wisely, and are apparent in the hitherto condition.

The mentioned crises imply that young generation has decreased their morality. In Medan, North Sumatra, for instance, juvenile delinquency increases day by day. As reported by regional.liputan6.com, recently, there were two horrible cases of armed robbery occurred in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The crime shocked all the citizens in Medan, and occurred in the same month, September 2017. Similarly, detik.com reported that juvenile delinquency increases 13% in 2011 compared to 2010 in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, and was summarized in the following.

1) The number of homicide among teenagers in 2010 was 86 cases, while there were 64 cases in 2011 (decreased by 25.58%);

2) The number of sexual abuse among adolescents was 60 cases in 2010 and 68 cases in 2011, (increased by 13.33%);

3) The number of theft and violence among adolescents was 931 cases in 2010 and 895 cases in 2011 (decreased by 3.86%);

4) The number of thefts among teenagers was 6048 cases in 2010, and as many as 6007 cases in 2011(decreased by 12.54%);

5) The number of abuse among adolescents was 1937 cases in 2010, and as many as 1936 cases in 2011 (decreased by 0.05%);

6) The number of drug abuse among teenagers was 4989 cases in 2010 and 4694 cases in 2011.

One of the factors of these criminal cases is due to lack of character education at schools and universities. Students are not equipped with morality so that they are far from their religion. They do not know how to respect teachers, parents, and their surroundings. As a result, not all the lessons and courses taught at universities have affected the students particularly their morality.

On the other hand, national examination (UN) has become the main objective to measure the students' success at school. They have to pass such an exam so that they would get certificate of achievement. It would be more challenging for teachers to hone their students' character because it is not assessed. Even in the newest curriculum, the 2013 curriculum, teachers have difficulties in assessing students' attitude as has been observed by Lubis and Rahmawati (2015). They revealed that the teachers are lack of knowledge in assessing students' attitude as one of the indicators of success. Even though the government has launched its guide to such assessment, the teachers still fell difficult to practice it.

*Pesantren* (boarding schools) is a place where students and Islamic teacher (*kyai*) or his representatives learn formally, non-formally, and informally whether in the morning, at noon, or in the evening (Abdurrahman, 2016). There are hundreds of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia established either before the Independence Day of Indonesia or after that. It is also classified into two fold; modern Islamic boarding schools and traditional Islamic boarding schools. It is modern in the sense that the teaching and learning activity occur in modern ways like using whiteboard, broad marker, and classroom. Students' in modern Islamic boarding schools wear formal dress. Unlike modern boarding schools, traditional boarding schools do not have class to study. The teaching and learning activity occur in a hall with a *kyai* (teacher). The *kyai*

reads them a classical book and his students mark it in their books. One of the ways is by translating the book into their first language.

What was happened to the practice of teaching and learning activity in *pesantren* had cultivated morality to the students (*santri*). The students should obey what the teacher (*kyai*) says to do unless they would not be considered good. As a result, the alumni of the Islamic boarding schools have good character when they perform in society.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Character Development

One dictionary defines character as "*the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual*". Character (*akhlaq*) is internal states, traits, qualities or abilities that individuals' process which lead them to perform the behavior without thought and deliberation and have developed into a habit whereas its values laid on the teachings of religion (Izfanna and Hisyam, 2012).To date, the issue of character education is apparent in Indonesia particularly the latest curriculum. It is explicitly stated in the decree No. 20/2003 chapter 2 verse 3 that the aim of national education is to shape a wholeness human who are noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible. If judging more in the dimension of "wholeness human" in the Act consists of two parts that are inter-hooks. The dimension is the religious and social dimension. They are religious in the realm of devotion and faith and social in the field to-conversations, independence, and democratic citizenship as well to be responsible. Therefore, in the efforts of human achievement whole requires a proper education system.

Morals are the plural of the *khulq*, which etymologically means habit, behavior, nature and temperament. From these few words, it can be seen that it is a basic nature owned by someone. In addition to some of these attributes, *Mu'jam Lisan* Al-Arab adds that morality is a religion. It is because there are commands, prohibitions and directions for the improvement of a person (Suryadarma and Haq, 2015). These are some meanings of morality in language.

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, the word *khuluq* and *khalqu* are two attributes that can be shared. If using the word *khalqu* then what is meant is the birth shape, whereas if using *khuluq* word then that is the inner form. Because man is composed of the body that can be realized with the visible (*bashar*), and from the spirit and *nafs* that can be realized with the eyes eye of the heart (*bashirah*), so that the power of the *nafs* is realized with *bashirah* greater than the body that is realized with the *bashar* (Suryadarma and Haq, 2015:368). In accordance with this, Imam Al-Ghazali quoting the word of Allah SWT contained in Al-Qur'an Surah Al Shaad verse 71-72.Thus the relationship between the two.

In terms of terminology, morality grows and integrates within a person. It is from the nature that is reflected the attitude and behavior of a person, such as patient, affection, or otherwise angry, hate because of revenge, jealousy, and envy, (Salim, 1986

as quoted by Suryadarma and Haq, 2015). In everyday life, morality is often identified with morals and ethics. Moral is actually different from the moral or ethical formula, because morals more show the inner human situation. Moral also means a decrease in a human tendency for other tendencies in him/hers, and lasts continuously (Amin, 1986 cited in Suryadarma and Haq, 2015:369).In the definition it is also impressed, al-Ghazali hinted that the back of good and bad morals and outward behavior is shari'a and reason. In other words, to judge whether morality is good or bad must be traced through religion and common sense. This is in line with the statement that reason and shari'a are complementary. Reason and revelation alone are not enough in moral life, both must be reconciled (Al-Ghazali, 2005 cited in Suryadarma and Haq, 2015).

Al-Ghazali argues that morality is not merely an act, nor is it just the ability to do, nor is it knowledge. However, morals must combine themselves with the situation of the soul that is ready to bring the actions, and the situation must be inherent in such a way that the action emerge from it is not a moment but a habit in everyday life.

Morals education is at the core of education. Morals lead to behavior. *Akhlaqul karimah* is when human behavior follows the rules of Islam in every aspect of life, as implied in hadith 'Aisha which means " the prophet's (peace be upon him) *akhlaq* is al-Qur'an. The education beyond moral education is only technical or life-skills (life skills).

Moral education in al-Ghazali's conception is not only limited to what is known as mediated theory, but includes its personal nature, intellectual and individual charity in society (Suryadarma and Haq, 2015:372). On that basis, moral education according to al-Ghazali has three dimensions, namely (1) dimensions of self, people with themselves and God, (2) social dimensions, society, government and association with others, and (3)the metaphysical dimension, the *aqidah* and the basic handle (Suryadarma and Haq, 2015).

## 2.2 Modern Islamic Boarding Universities

Modern Islamic Boarding universities or *universitas pesantren* can be found throughout Indonesia. Setyaningsih (2016: 182) states that *pesantren* is a traditional Islamic educational institution to study, understand, deepen, live, and practice the teachings of Islam by emphasizing the importance of religious morality as a guideline of everyday behavior. In reality, it is classified into two fold; traditional Islamic boarding universities and modern Islamic boarding universities. The difference between them is only in its form of teaching and learning activities. However, both traditional and modern Islamic boarding universities employ boarding universities system as their way to teach either formal education or religious or character education.

Besides religious education, general education, and job-oriented training,the students (*santri*) receive other training, such as in budgeting their monthly allowances,which will allow them to become fiscally responsible adults (Lukens-Bull, 2000:37). Another level of practical training is in simple living.This kind of training enables the students to cope with their activities, feelings, studies, or even problems found in the campus. In other words, every single activity in campus has a powerful meaning to make them religious and moral.

In the past, modern Islamic boarding universities were only the place for religious teaching (Izfanna and Hisyam, 2012:79). It also had been the place for fighting against colonials in Indonesia albeit such a system was not acknowledged as formal education. Today, it has been acknowledged as one of the educational institutions based on the National Educational System of Indonesia No. 20 article 30 2003 on the religious institution (Ministry of National Education).

## 2.3. Boarding Campus System

In the past, most education centers were boarding schools in which students live full time. Still there are boarding schools at high school or college level. However, for universities, students just tend to attend the class and leave the campus. Even, dormitories are just like rental projects rather than keeping the students to live in the campus.

The boarding campus system is designed specially to form educational environment where students could interact with teachers to inculcate their knowledge and experiences directly. In addition, in the boarding campus system students have a council to manage their own activities, for the development of their spiritual, intellectual and physical potentiality, including the enforcement rules and regulation of their own. In this boarding campus with all its facilities, students could freely carry out their activities in all aspects according to their respective talent, under the guidance of tutors.

## 2.3.1 The Methods Of Boarding Campus System

The methods of boarding campus system can be deiliberated in the following points:

a) A good example. In this regard, teacher or supervisor as the central figure tries to introduce upon the students the whole principle of campus life. He personally acts in front of every individual how to be perfect and sincere guardian. He himself shows in front of the student how to be disciplined teacher and finally he must also give an example how to be generous, to donate all his personal possession for the development of the campus. So then everyone can imitate clearly.

b) Establishing conductive milieu. This boarding school conducts that the medium of education and teaching in this regard include the whole aspects of lives which can be seen, heard, felt and touched daily by the students inside the campus.

c) Guidance and counseling. The activities to be carried out by every individual in this campus must be started from orientation, guidance and clear example, particularly in implementing the important educational values.

d) Habituation. To impart educational values upon students, the school always uses the habituation method. Through which the students in some cases compelled to do educational and instructional programs, which are too difficult to be carried out.

e) Doing an assignment. In this case the students are taking actively the various aspects of educational process through the school assignments. Such as

organizing the student's activities, undertaking various responsibilities of the school economic enterprises out of personal interest, and doing some social services for the sake of humanitarian, and so on.

f) Discipline. The discipline is considered as a spirit of activities in the campus. This discipline is practiced to introduce upon the students the reality of life in the community. The method is done by doing not by lips. Some examples of boarding campus discipline in this regard are: language discipline, class attendance discipline, sport discipline, dress discipline, examination discipline, shopping and so on (Bahroni, 2016).

Since the academic and non-academic activities are integrated in one system, the assessment of academic achievements of students is combined with that of non-academic achievements, so that the whole potentiality and achievement of the student in all fields during their study at the residential college could be identified. This is also to prevent the imbalance intellectual, spiritual and physical development of the student. By this system many kinds of educational process in the form of programme and activities could be easily undertaken, because the three centers of education (home-school-community) are mixed in one campus. Students are accustomed to practice "learning by doing" method and are supervised by their supervisors and teachers.

It is believed that human being containing of two parts; psychological and physical, while the perfect human is a person who has physically and spiritually good, educated and developed.

## 2.3.2 The Educational Values In The Boarding System

There are many educational values in the boarding campus system, they are:

a. Community Oriented. The Graduates of university are expected to be able to adjust themselves to their environment in their community. Therefore the atmosphere of campus and dormitory is designed like the real community and students are trained to live and mixed with various kinds of people.

b. Self-reliance. The spirit of self-reliance is the utmost importance requirements for the better living. By self-reliance a person will never depend on others, he will survive in whatever kind of condition and situation.

c. Simple life. Simplicity does not mean humble, give up making efforts, or despair, but simplicity has very noble and great meaning of life. Simplicity means; ability to take priority based on needs and wants, taking the needs and leaving the wants. The spirit of simplicity on the other hand is meant as a positive conduct towards every situation of life, and not surrenders upon the problems of lives. The precise meaning of it is to procure for the individual's values that will prepare them to face the trials and tribulations. It is to have strength, courage, determination, and self-control. And behind these all, lie nobility, bravery, and zeal to never give up, as well as the development of a strong mentality and character that are imperative and necessary in preparing them to face the hardship in life.

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### 2.3.3 Character Education in Islamic Boarding Campus

The character in Islamic boarding universities lies in the practice of teaching and learning activity. This morality is taught in lessons called *ngaji,* which involve the teaching of an Arabic text (Lukens-Bull, 2000:39). The terms character and moral in this paper are used interchangeably.

The teaching of character or moral in Islamic boarding universities is different from such religious day universities in common. Lukens-Bull (2000:39) postulates that it is different in the sense that the teachers in Islamic boarding universities do not teach them to be moral, but must have experience as its center. It is in line with Berkowitz (1995 as cited in Izfanna and Hisyam, 2012) stating that there is one approach of character education arguing that the best way to implement character education is by integrating character development in every aspect of universities life, for example through direct instruction, modelling, reinforcement, and various community-building strategies when and where appropriate, and then encourage students put their thoughts and feelings into action in a variety of universities activities. As a result, all students in Islamic boarding universities are involved in every single activity in campus (i.e. selling goods, going laundry, ironing clothes, etc.). Such activities aim to make them to be moral or to have good character.

Character education in modern Islamic boarding universities also lies in the five spirit of the boarding universities namely sincerity, simplicity, self-sufficiency, Islamic

brotherhood, and freedom. The five spirits of the boarding universities are called in Bahasa Indonesia as *Panca Jiwa.* These are identified as the main pillars in developing students' character. This spirit also serves as the basis of such boarding universities for cultivating character or moral in the students' minds. In many ways, the details of Islamic boarding universities lifestyle have not changed muchover time.

Character education at the modern Islamic university had been built in the students. They were able to integrate the knowledge gained in the classroom and in the campus society. They did not involve in juvenile delinquency or any type of crime. They tried to implement what they learned at school that these acts were forbidden by the religion. Abdurrahman (2016) finds that there are at least six values of life applied in the modern Islamic universities namely, 1) theological value (value of divinity), 2) physical/physiological value, 3) ethical value, 4) aesthetic value, 5) logical value, and 6) teleological value.

Despite those six values of life, Abdurrahman (2016) encountered some problems in the implementation of character education; they are 1) students' heterogeneous background, 2) students' financial capacity, 3) students' psychological problem, 4) bad impact of information and communication technology, 5) parents' complain on the living cost, 6) too strict rules led to boredom, 7) theft of students' belonging; 8) environmental hygiene and 9) the availability of water for sanitation.

## 3. Conclusions

Based on the review of literature above, some conclusions are drawn. First, The methods of boarding campus system can be deiliberated by a good example, establishing conductive miliue, guidance and counseling, habituation, doing an assignment, discipline, Second, the educational values in the boarding campus system include the community oriented, self relience, and simple life (simplicity).

The whole educational values which have been elaborated above, seriously imparted upon the students from very basic aspect of educational activity through various methods in order to prepare well qualified human resources as well as Muslim leaders who have complete character, behavior and personality.

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