

Educational Pragmatism and the Crisis of Meaning: Pesantren, Madrasah, and the Challenge of Postmodernity

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Abstract

When we begin to view education as a product or commodity, it fundamentally changes the relationship between teachers (*Kiai*) and their students (*Santri*). Education begins to be viewed in terms of a transaction between educators and clients rather than as a spiritual or pedagogical connection. With this shift has come a significant crisis of meaning within Islamic educational institutions such as madrasa and pesantren. These institutions have become subject to pragmatic, market-based rationality and bureaucratic accountability. This research asks why Islamic education continues to be seen as ineffective at addressing contemporary social challenges, how educational pragmatism results in a crisis of meaning within madrasa and pesantren, and what alternative visions of education can be derived from postmodernity. The methodology of this research includes a qualitative philosophical-critical method using Derridean deconstruction to challenge logocentric ideologies and grand narratives which limit interpretation within Islamic educational traditions. A critical discourse analysis is also utilised to analyse how market-based vocabulary (certification, accreditation, efficiency, employability) have dominated educational policy and self-identity representation for both madrasa and pesantren. Library research and interpretative analyses were conducted with respect to postmodern theorists, as well as critical and reformist educational theorists. The data for this study consisted of classical Islamic texts, theoretical works, peer reviewed journals, and policy documents. Content analysis was used along with theoretical triangulation to analyse the data. The research indicated that the perceived failures of Islamic education do not arise from deficits in either its norms or spirituality; rather, they are due to an epistemological and structural crisis that is shaped by knowledge dualism, technocratic pragmatism, and bureaucratic standardisation. Educational pragmatism converts learning from an ontological process of becoming into an instrumental logic of having, resulting in the loss of the ontological dimension of existence and therefore of pedagogical meaning. This study presents a constructive postmodern framework that utilises a deconstructive pedagogy, transdisciplinary practices, dialogical intersubjective relationships, and redefine Islamic education as a meaningful and socially responsive transformative project.

Keywords: educational pragmatism; deconstruction in education; islamic education; pesantren and madrasah; educational modernity and postmodernity

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of Islamic education in Indonesia was influenced by the complex interplay of religious traditions and the evolving structures of the Indonesian state. The introduction of secular pedagogical methods into traditional religious education represents a significant element of this history. Steenbrink (1986) has shown through his work on schools, madrasas, and pesantrens [1], that Islamic educational institutions did not simply evolve from being 'traditional' to 'modern', but rather they have adopted aspects of the modern school model and maintained their religious forms of authority and curriculum.

This transition came at a critical juncture in time. Prior to the 1975 Joint Decree of the Three Ministers which declared madrasa education equal to public schooling, the majority of madrasa curricula had a minimum of seventy percent general subject matter, with approximately thirty percent allocated to religious study. Although these changes facilitated greater access to education and recognition for madrasa education, the adoption of standardised curricula further solidified standardisation within madrasa development.

A second stage in this trajectory emerged when the Pesantren Education Law (*Pendidikan Pesantren*) was ratified in 2019, making formal recognition of pesantren education as a component of the National Education System and providing a basis for establishing equivalency in degree completion, professionalism and quality assurance [2]. By 2025, there will be formal recognition given to academic degrees awarded to graduates who are successful in completing their studies at Ma'had Aly-based universities. As such, it is anticipated that university-based higher education provided by pesantren will gain greater professional legitimacy [3]. These developments

present a number of additional concerns. What impact will increasing reliance on standards, credentials, and measurable quality indicators have on what is meant by Islamic education?

This challenge has become more urgent with respect to globalisation, digitalisation, labor market demands and the cultural changes which have affected the pesantren and madrasa schools. In addition to the challenges identified above, current studies identify several long-term challenges currently facing these educational systems including: epistemological dualism; stagnant curricula; low levels of professional competence amongst teachers; limited technological capabilities; and the separation of religious knowledge from modern knowledge [4]. Digital transformation has heightened the need for flexibility and technological enabled learning. Society 5.0 offers not only technology-driven challenges but also an historic chance for Islamic education to redefine its role in society with regard to the goals of humanity-centered development, that is, based on spiritual values, intellectually demanding and socially responsible [5]. This transformation has also raised expectations for institutions to continue maintaining their commitment to moral and spiritual values [6]. Additionally, the traditional education-based models of religious authority, character development and community engagement must continue to be supported through formal regulation and recognition of qualifications and standardisation [7], [8]. Therefore, the contemporary adaptation challenge is not simply about adapting Islamically but how adapting will reshape the epistemological/intellectual identity and purpose(s) of education in an Islamic School.

Tensions arise in regards to this issue due to modernization processes today being articulated in terms of bureaucracy and markets. As a result, Indonesia's Islamic schooling system has seen an increasing amount of interaction with accreditation, accountability, quality assurance and standardization as the tools of legitimacy for schools/institutions [9]. Performance metrics generated through these accreditation processes may also create additional tension with regard to the managerial rationality used within the context of pesantren, which historically was based upon the charismatic leadership of the kiai [10].

In addition, the marketization of education typically leads to viewing students as consumers/customers and their education as investment opportunities demonstrating their worth through measures of efficiency, competition, credentials and job placement [11]. Neoliberalism's emphasis on human capital and performance, may reduce students' moral/ethical/spiritual development to measurable outcomes [12], [13]. It is not a case of whether accreditation, technology, professionalisation or employment opportunity are fundamentally incompatible with Islamic education. The real question is; do the tools currently available evolve from being methods of pursuing education toward becoming standards that define what education ought to be?

The relationships among curriculum, school leadership, digitalisation, legal status and accreditation in the context of Islamic education continue to be debated at a high level of fragmentation theoretically. While a number of studies have demonstrated how Islamic educational institutions may choose to accommodate changing conditions of contemporary society, few investigations have been conducted into the effects these changes have had on the fundamental concepts of education. Research has shown how bureaucratisation of education has altered both the exercise of authority and moral evaluation through formalised systems of education [9]. However, while research on adaptative pesantrens have illustrated how regulatory influences are resolved against institutional identity [14], very little theoretical investigation has occurred as to how education transforms from human development to something which can be quantified, verified, aggregated and traded.

In order to address this area of study, this paper develops the idea of the predicament of pesantrens and madrasas as a crisis of educational meaning. When I use the term instrumental educational pragmatism I am not referring to the philosophical Pragmatism developed by Peirce, James or Dewey — rather I am describing a rationality that is fundamentally concerned with assessing knowledge, institutions and students according to their utility, efficiency, measurability, certification, competitiveness and employability potential. In this way this paper addresses why it appears that Islamic education is currently ineffectual, and how instrumental educational pragmatism contributes to a loss of meaning for Islamic education. Further, this paper examines if alternative understandings of Islamic education could emerge as a result of a postmodern critique of instrumental educational pragmatism.

Philosophical critical inquiry (deconstruction by Derrida) along with Foucault's discourse analysis were employed to analyse the nature of the crisis of meaning presently faced by Islamic education. The study found that the challenges facing Islamic education are less related to shortcomings in the values inherent to Islam than they are a product of a structural crisis stemming from the dualisms in knowledge and technocracy, and bureaucratic standardisation. The most significant contribution of this study lies within its identification of two disparate meanings of education: education as having—having credentialing competency-based measurable results; and education as becoming—the generation of mentally-capable ethically-responsible spiritually-grounded relational social-responsibility oriented persons. The intention of this paper was not to disavow modernity but to reclaim the technological instruments of modern education as mere means toward an end and to prevent those instruments from becoming ends in themselves relative to Islamic education.

METHODS

In order to better understand how instrumental educational pragmatism shapes the purposes and meanings of Islamic education today — particularly within madrasas and pesantrens — this study used a qualitative critical-philosophical inquiry method. A systematic approach was taken by employing a philosophical library research design methodology based on four major literatures. These included: current Islamic educational philosophy; studies about both madrasas and pesantrens (which are two different forms of schools); post structural/post-modern literature on knowledge and culture; and Indonesian educational policy. The literature was chosen based on its relevance to the subjects of knowledge dualisms, standardisation, accreditation, employability, educational purpose and human formation.

Qualitative content analysis occurred at the first level of data analysis in order to find common recurring themes such as: accreditation, competency, efficiency, spirituality, adab, employability, and educational quality. Deconstruction, as described by Jacques Derrida [15], [16], [17], was employed at the second level of data analysis to explore the many binary oppositions that occur in Islamic education: religious, secular; traditional, modern; material, spiritual; and instrumentally, formatively. Additionally, discourse analysis, as developed by Michel Foucault, was used at the third level of data analysis to investigate how specific ways of understanding successful education can be institutionalised through the use of power/knowledge; standardisation; and regimes of truth. Comparative interpretive methods along with theoretical triangulation were also used together to link the findings from this study with previous literature about Islamic educational thought — specifically Fazlur Rahman's double movement. Using all three of these methodologies, we believe it created an overall dichotomy of education as having and education as being/becoming.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Perceived Failure of Islamic Education Is Epistemological and Structural

An overarching theme of the data was that the perception of inadequacy of Islamic education today is not a loss of religious fervor, but a crisis created by continuing divisions in the way of knowing (epistemology) and continuing segmentation of institutions. There is one consistent pattern throughout the research on the structure of the divide between religious and general knowledge in Indonesia's pesantren and madrasah [18], and it will continue to define how curriculum organisation and educational identity are organised. The division here is not solely related to what is studied; rather, it represents a much larger schism between religious sciences (ulum dini) and the study of science in its modern or secular forms (ulum dunya) which have historically contributed to the creation of fractured, segmented intellectual identities among Muslims [19].

That this fracture remains in place has been attributed to the continued existence of parallel educational systems where public education represented the domain of secular knowledge and Madrasas and Pesantrens were defined as institutions for the study of religion [20]. Thus there exists a multi-dimensional type of dualism with regard to education that is structured in terms of epistemology, institutional segregation and socio-economic inequality. This dualism will continue to be created and reinforced through educational policies and organisational structures [21].

This dualism appears at three levels including paradigms, institutions and curricula. While it appears in all three forms, it is at the institutional level that the historical separation between general education and Islamic education has most clearly separated administration into two discrete areas that promote the difference between religious and general knowledge [22]. The separation between ulum al-din and ulum al-dunya at the level of epistemology divides students' spiritual development from their intellectual and social capabilities thereby creating significant barriers to integrating these aspects in contemporary Islamic education [5].

In addition some environments reproduce this hierarchical relationship by giving precedence to naqli knowledge (revealed knowledge) versus aqli knowledge (rational knowledge) and viewing general sciences as supplementary subject matter [23], [24]. It is therefore possible to see curricular fragmentation when Islamic studies and modern subjects are each taught as separate domains resulting in graduates who are possibly spiritually inclined yet intellectually fragmented, or conversely they can be technically proficient but lack ethical perspective [25]. Therefore the issue is not simply the number of religious or general subjects contained in a student's curriculum, but rather whether there exists an epistemological base that provides the conceptual basis for understanding how different types of knowledge relate to a unified educational goal.

This tension is made especially clear by the addition of standardised state-curriculum to established pesantren tradition. Hybrid Islamic schools will commonly encounter tension between the standardised curricula required of all public schools and the pedagogy of the kitab kuning; thus, they will have to deal with epistemological dualism on a day-to-day basis in terms of what to teach and how to teach it [26]. For these hybrid schools, "integration" may be less about combining the old and new into something entirely new, but more about adding new material to existing processes without changing the basic relationship between the old and the new [26].

Similarly, post-reform madrasa school curricula tend to give higher priority in their institutional practices to “general” subject areas, which creates a conflict between the idealised goals of Islamic education and the pragmatic needs of a functioning system [27]. If religious knowledge is seen as secondary or supplemental to other types of knowledge, then even if the goal of eliminating dualism through curriculum integration was achieved, the dualism itself would still exist, albeit in a new configuration. Furthermore, bureaucratic reform and standardisation/technocratic reform result in structural changes that affect the way authority over education is exercised. Bureaucratic reform adds additional layers of accountability and oversight through processes such as quality assurance, accreditation, and standardisation, but at the same time moves decision making authority away from its traditional base in scholarly legitimacy toward formal administrative authority [9].

A good example of this type of ambiguity is found in the 2019 Pesantren law. Legal recognition can increase institutional legitimacy, but may also promote specific understandings of what constitutes a pesantren that do not provide equal opportunity for both modernist/reformist responses to result science, technology, and changes in society today [28]. Bureaucratic rationalisation increases organisational efficiency, however overly rigid hierarchical and legal-rational approaches to managing organisations can limit innovative thinking and flexibility to respond to local conditions [29]. Finally, technocratic governance narrows institutional focus on measurable outcomes based upon pre-defined criteria, thereby increasing the likelihood that humanistic, social, and spiritual aspects of faith-based education are marginalised [30]. National uniform curriculum standards present significant challenges for application across vastly diverse Islamic educational institutions each having unique social, cultural, pedagogical, and theological characteristics [31].

The research results show that there are no signs of institutional modernisation having a detrimental effect. Instead, many pesantrens have taken advantage of the required bureaucracies by using curriculum hybrids, cultural filtering, leadership hybrids, and market-driven responses, all while maintaining their religious identity [14]. Institutional modernisation will produce better sustainable institutions when there is a combination of new curriculum designs, innovative uses of technology to deliver instruction, and improvement to the administrative side of things within a framework that preserves existing religious traditions [32]. Universities based on the model of pesantrens have reacted to the pressure of competing globally through a combination of religious motivation and technocratic planning strategies, while at the same time, they developed organisational structure and academic programs to accommodate the demands of a modern education system [33].

Finally, the growth of madrasas within the confines of pesantrens demonstrates how charismatic religious authority and modern bureaucratic authority can be combined into hybrid forms of institutional organisation, instead of one replacing the other. Overall, the belief that Islamic education fails is best understood as an epistemological/structural crisis; and not due to lack of sufficient Islamic values or emphasis on spirituality. Therefore, the two major issues with Islamic education are resolving the internally divided epistemology between different forms of knowledge and developing methods to deal with externally imposed bureaucratic structures that emphasise quantifiable compliance over philosophically and contextually relevant responses.

Educational Pragmatism and the Crisis of Meaning

The changing educational goals from developing individuals to developing them as tools are examples of the transformation due to instrumentalisation of education. Education is becoming more valued because of its ability to help create employable people who can work together to accomplish their assigned tasks in a given industry, therefore, the skills learned are no longer just theoretical but are more practical. Since many universities are using the market model, it has created a new way of looking at the worth of a degree. Many believe that one of the ways to determine the “value” of a university degree is to compare it to the amount of money a graduate will make after graduation. This is a way of determining if the cost of attending the college was justified. According to Tomlinson (2022), new public management and marketisation demonstrate this by creating a link between academic credentials and economic value [34].

Where there are successful educational markets, the term “value” is often associated with measurable items such as the number of job openings available for graduates of a particular institution or department. It is also determined by the perceived value of a degree by employers. Another factor is the ranking of colleges and universities. Institutions with lower rankings are less likely to attract top-quality candidates. In addition to measurable factors, some attribute value to the placement of a college within a larger system. Those colleges ranked in the upper tier are seen as having more prestige than those in the lower tiers.

A major criticism of this focus on marketable skills is that less valuable attributes of education are becoming less visible [35]. For example, when universities are focused solely on creating productive workers, they may not place enough emphasis on areas such as critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility. These areas are important for helping young adults develop into well-rounded members of society. New public management and neoliberal reform continue to emphasise this type of direction through the encouragement of vocationalism and responsiveness to labor market needs, efficiency, and accountability through performance indicators and standards see also [36], [37].

Instrumentalisation occurs beyond the boundaries of institutional policy. It is also found in the meanings attributed to learning and personhood. The emphasis on performativity in modern education has led to a focus on delivering the best results possible while minimising risk and uncertainty and encouraging intellectual curiosity [38]. Performativity seeks to deliver knowledge and understanding efficiently and predictably so that educational providers can avoid taking risks in order to remain competitive. As a result, education becomes reduced to outputs and measurements rather than allowing students to engage in exploratory searches for meaning.

Audit culture further emphasises this by transforming educational activity into performance data that is regulated externally through use of rankings, quantitative assessment methods, and predetermined outcomes [39], [40]. When higher education is driven by neoliberal values of instrumentalism, then personal growth or formation may be replaced by the pursuit of employability and continuous competition as the primary objectives of learning [41].

When bureaucratic policies create conditions that encourage the marketising of education, students tend to prioritise attaining high grade levels or acquiring qualifications above engaging in open-ended searches for understanding [42]. The accountingisation of education demonstrates how teaching activities are being converted into manageable reporting activities and measured against quantifiable data points (e.g. student satisfaction ratings, graduate outcomes, measures of workload and performance metrics) that reflect educational quality [43]. Accountingisation is representative of marketised management that reinforces the idea that New Public Management and outcome-based learning represent a constriction in definitions of education as primarily centered around forming individuals (*Bildung*), relative to other definitions including *Bildung* [44].

The Islamic Education Literature of Indonesia, demonstrates how this logic has been incorporated into both *madrasa* and *pesantren* via quality assurance (QA) and competency-based quality, accreditation, certification, efficiency, and employability. QA for graduates from *pesantrens* is clearly linked to the overall competitive position of an institution; the level of trust by society; professional competence; flexibility or adaptability; entrepreneurial spirit; and preparedness for employment [45].

Similarly, formal recognition through accreditation, certification and degree programs are seen as a way to measure and demonstrate quantifiable levels of quality and professionalism within Islamic education. This is evident in instances where institutions seek to reconcile the criteria with those of spiritual allegiance/loyalty and charismatic legitimacy [46]. The adoption of accreditation mechanisms based on the International Standard ISO 21001:2018 has promoted increased accountability, managerial discipline, professionalism and organisational effectiveness among the administration of traditional *pesantrens* [47]. In addition to being forced to implement standardised competency benchmarks and accreditation mechanisms due to increasing reliance upon formally recognised credentials for social mobility, traditional *pesantrens* have come under pressure.

Institutional accountability and compliance with external quality standards is not limited to the traditional *pesantren* sector. Other segments of the Islamic education system exhibit similar patterns. However, institutions do not necessarily abandon their religious objectives when they adopt accreditation standards and service-quality improvements, business process efficiencies, and professional competence [48], as private Islamic universities of higher learning have done in defining their own institutional distinctiveness solely in terms of their Islamic character. Institutional reform in traditional *pesantren* governance now incorporates professional management practices, quality assurance frameworks, vocational competences, formal accreditation, and international benchmarking in preparation for graduation in a rapidly evolving global economy [49].

Quality documentation in Islamic vocational schools exists through national standards of performance, graduate competences, recognised diplomas, and vocational certifications which directly increase access to employment [50]. In addition to adopting national accreditation systems and ISO 21001:2001, many Islamic schools are also adopting international management standards. While converting educational quality into a series of standard processes, many Islamic schools continue to argue that intellectual and moral competence remain interdependent outcomes [51].

The findings show limitations in how formally accredited programs and recognised degrees can be considered legitimate education. Ma'had Aly's accreditation focuses on management, curriculum, documentation, and compliance with data collection, however, public trust remains stronger in *sanad*, *kiai* authority, and a reputation based upon academic excellence [52]. These differences illustrate the coexistence of two separate systems of values that validate education. One system uses evidence-based validation for its measurable institutional performance and the other uses scholarly lineage, authority related to ethics, social relations and the development of a religious identity through forms of spiritual personhood. *Pesantren mu'allim* respond to this tension by creating a hybridised curriculum for their students, culturally filtering information and engaging in adaptive institutional work. Through adaptive institutional work, these teachers create formal alignments with regulatory requirements without losing their pedagogical authenticity [14].

Through these processes the research identified a difference between education as being and education as having. Education as being refers to the process of developing learners into people who have gained knowledge,

developed themselves ethically, spiritually, socially and professionally and who are capable of an ongoing transformation of their self. Education as having refers to the accumulation of certificates, competences, recognised outcomes and measurable institutional value. While it was found that the distinction did not indicate that accreditation, certification, employment opportunities or quality assurance were necessarily contrary to Islamic education since many institutions effectively combined the attainment of formal qualifications with both personal characteristics and spiritual commitments.

However, it is at the point where tools that facilitate learning stop functioning as tools and start functioning as primary evaluative criteria for determining what makes education valuable, teachers valuable, students valuable and institutions valuable that we see a crisis of understanding regarding the meaning of education. In this context pragmatic considerations of education do not solely represent adaptations for survival purposes but rather represents a new ordering of value such that what can be documented, quantified, compared and traded becomes more important than what can be fostered through ethics, intellectuality, spirituality and relationality.

Towards a Postmodern Reconstruction of Islamic Education

The postmodern critique does not offer an entire philosophy of education on its own. However, it offers the opportunity to critically examine the dominant assumptions in education. In addition, the poststructuralist critiques of the established power/knowledge relations and dichotomies also open up opportunities for new representations of educational purpose. These openings are particularly significant when curricula represent dominant narratives while suppressing marginalised knowledge [53] and expose forms of educational exclusion based upon identity, community and institutional authority [54].

The act of deconstructing does not lead to epistemological relativism. Rather, deconstruction leads to a greater acknowledgment of diversity or plurality. Therefore, educational methods that recognise multiple epistemologies have the ability to challenge the perceived neutrality of dominant systems of thought and establish a more equitable relationship between religious/secular world views [55]. Convioy and dis-enclosure concepts of decolonisation allow for the dissolution of rigid boundaries of knowledge and encourage relational experiences across differences [56].

In general terms, postmodern educational models often favor flexible curricula, active participation, collaborative activity, and contextualised construction of curriculum content over the authoritative nature of pre-defined curricular structures [57], [58]. Critical literacy reinforces this openness by synthesising poststructural critique with pedagogic strategies capable of questioning historical constructed curricula and binary modes of learning [59].

The outcomes of applying these principles will likely include a reconceptualisation of the ways in which teachers relate to their students and develop student capacities to critically reflect upon social structures [60]. Liberative Islamic pedagogy utilises a dialogical form of learning and Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical method to bridge the gap between contemporary experience and the self-critical development of Islamic educational principles [61], [40].

Therefore, the positive relationship between critical and Islamic pedagogy should not demand the absorption of one tradition into the other; rather they can operate within an 'unfinished in-between' space, where distinct epistemological commitments continue to engage each other [62]. Islamic intellectual traditions, thus, provide the constructive guidance that postmodern critique alone cannot provide. Fazlur Rahman's double movement provides a connection between the historical interpretations of revelations with the reconstruction of their ethical implications in present day situations [61]. The dialogical potential of his methodology has the possibility of being developed further via ongoing interactions among text, interpreter, historical context, and emergent societal realities [63].

As such, transdisciplinary models linking spirituality, science, technology, humanity and social transformation in Islam today are developing an oppositional stance against fragmentation between religious and secular perspectives on how we think about the world [64]. Arkoun-inspired transdisciplinary models are similarly supporting curricula which combine theology, philosophy, history, sociology and cultivate both critical and dialogical openness [65], [61]. Thusly, the reconstructions resulting from these principles may be viewed as follows: deconstruction, plurality, dialogue, and reconstruction.

Reclaiming Educational Meaning—From Instrumental Rationality to Human Formation

Modern and traditional knowledge systems are fragmented from one another within separate models, not within a larger model of education, he said. The second area of research expands upon the issue of fragmentation. This study illustrates how a set of standards for evaluating performance—such as accreditation, competency, employability, efficiency and measurability — have become the standard measures by which successful schools/colleges/universities will be judged.

These types of evaluations are neutral; however, they create a high likelihood of devaluing the purposes of education beyond measurable achievement, productivity, or market relevance. Additionally, these types of evaluations likely reduce the role of spirituality and humanism in the educational experience. Thus, rather than examining if Pesantren and Madrasah are modern enough, we are now questioning whether the process of modernising has altered the purpose(s) of their educational mission.

Further, while administrative reform is necessary to address the present crisis in Islamic education, it is insufficient because there remains no consensus regarding either what constitutes valid knowledge or what methods should be employed to educate students [64]. Therefore, the recent crisis in Islamic education represents both a crisis in educational meaning.

Thus, the contemporary challenges faced by Islam within its educational structure represent a set of issues that transcend merely the design of curricula, teacher preparation, technology readiness, organisational structures/institutions, or levels of modernity. While all of these areas are relevant and critical, they fail to explain why religious education and institutional expectations appear to be mutually exclusive in today's world.

Education, in accordance with the previously stated dualistic paradigm, focuses on two different types of objectives: education as having, and education as becoming. Education as having pertains to the acquisition of credentials, certifications, skills, status, and job opportunities. On the other hand, education as becoming pertains to the development of humans through the dissemination of knowledge, ethics, spirituality, interpersonal relationships, individual and civic responsibilities and participation in civil society. Muslim educational traditions appear to provide substantial support for the traditional view of education. For example, Al-Attas's definition of "ta'dib" as well as definitions provided by other authors place the development of "adab," or good behavior, and the development of a "good man," at the forefront of education over mere acquisition of knowledge [66].

Additionally, tarbiyah defines education as a perpetual process of cultivating students' mental abilities, moral character, physical wellness and spiritual dimensions rather than simply transferring knowledge or granting certification [67]. Finally, the concept of Bildung also appears to reflect similar concerns. Bildung rejects the idea of strictly defining education based upon predetermined outcomes (i.e., learning objectives), instead emphasising the development of individuals and their ability to self-form [44]. Similar concerns can also be seen in critical and dialogical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy [60], [39] views learners as subjects that are under the influence of institutionalised power and thus require liberation. Dialogical pedagogy views learners as reflective subjects capable of engaging in dialogue and transforming themselves.

However, it does not logically follow that Islamic education must completely forego professionalisation, accreditation, technology, quality assurance and employability. As it is both historically improbable and counterproductive to conclude that Islamic education must do so. Modern examples from contemporary pesantren illustrate how institutions can utilise multiple methods (i.e., curricular hybridisation, cultural filtering, institutional adaptations etc.) to meet administrative requirements while preserving their religio-cultural uniqueness [14].

Likewise modern government can function efficiently and accountably while being guided by Islamic principles such as amanah (trust), justice and moral responsibility [29]. Technology can therefore be viewed as a tool for obtaining educational ends without necessarily becoming an end unto itself. There is therefore no reason why spiritual/charismatic authority structures should be incompatible with professionalisation.

The central issue presented here is one of telos. That is whether or not an institution has fulfilled particular criteria is indicated by accreditation. However accreditation cannot indicate what education is intended to serve. What a student is able to accomplish is described by competency. However competency cannot fully articulate what type of person a student develops into. While employability provides graduates with assistance in participating within society it cannot provide representation for all components of successful completion.

A reconceptualising beyond instrumental rationality will necessitate that modern educational systems submit to greater purposes for humanity which include: adab (character), responsible action, intellectual development, spiritual development and social interaction. Contemporary pesantren and madrasahs therefore face not a decision about choosing between tradition and modernity but rather ensuring that modernisation serves to enhance the educational purpose as opposed to replacing it. [58].

CONCLUSION

Although the current challenges that are facing contemporary Indonesian Pesantrens and Madrasahs can be viewed as being primarily based upon the operational challenges experienced by these schools; ultimately the most significant challenge is fundamentally about defining what it truly means to be educated. When we pursue the instrumental and pragmatic approach of improving the school system for its own sake, we run the risk of creating students who are merely being educated with the sole intent of providing them with a credential, making them competent employees, making them efficient workers, or making them employable. This also creates an

environment in which students are marginalised from developing themselves spiritually, ethically, intellectually, and relationally.

Therefore, using the concept of “to have” (the instrumentality of the knowledge) vs. “to become” (the formation of the person), we gain a new perspective from which to assess how we define the purpose of education. Ultimately therefore, while modernisation, accreditation, technology, and professionalisation will remain important components toward the continued success of Islamic education systems; these concepts should serve as tools to create opportunities for students to develop themselves formatively, hold themselves accountable for their actions and produce meaningful contributions to society.

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