



ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS AS PILLARS OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION TOWARDS A GOLDEN INDONESIA

Ahmad Rausyan Fikri¹, Sugiono²

ahmadrausyanfikri@gmail.com¹, sugiono@unuja.ac.id²

^{1,2} Universitas Nurul Jadid, East Java, Indonesia

Abstract

Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and have made a significant contribution to shaping the nation's character, morality, and intellect. Amidst globalization and technological advancements, pesantren face significant challenges in transforming themselves without abandoning their traditional values. This article aims to analyze the role of pesantren as pillars of transformative education in supporting the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045, which focuses on developing superior and character-based human resources. The writing method used is a literature review and conceptual analysis of various literature on pesantren education, transformative education theory, and national education policy. The study results indicate that pesantren possess cultural, spiritual, and social strengths capable of addressing the needs of 21st-century education through the integration of Islamic values, technological innovation, and economic empowerment.

Keywords: *Pesantren, Transformative Education, Golden Indonesia, Character, Innovation*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary foundation for building a sovereign and civilized nation. In the Indonesian context, Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have played a crucial role from pre-independence times to the modern era (Bukhori & Zahro, 2025). Pesantren are not only places for religious learning but also platforms for the character and moral development of the nation's next generation. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag, 2023), there are more than 40,000 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) spread throughout Indonesia, with a total of 5 million students. This demonstrates that pesantren have significant potential for developing national human resources (Maulana et al., 2025).

The vision of Indonesia Emas 2045, namely an advanced, just, prosperous, and globally competitive Indonesia, places human quality at the center of development. In this vision, education plays a strategic role in shaping a superior generation with strong character, broad knowledge, and the ability to adapt to changing times. Pesantren, with an educational system rooted in Islamic values and independence, are highly relevant to this ideal (Thohir, 2024).

However, in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the transition to Society 5.0, national education faces major challenges in the form of technological disruption, moral degradation, and a crisis of human values. In this situation, Islamic boarding schools have the potential to become models of transformative education, namely education that not only transfers knowledge

but also shapes critical awareness, social character, and spirituality in students, enabling them to live meaningfully amidst global change.

Theoretical Foundation: Transformative Education and Islamic Boarding Schools

The concept of transformative education was first popularized by Paulo Freire (1970) in his work, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." Freire viewed education as a process of liberating humans from oppression through the development of critical consciousness. Transformative education emphasizes that students are not objects, but active subjects in the learning process, capable of reflecting on and transforming their social reality.

From an Islamic perspective, education has a similar goal: to form the perfect human being a complete human being who is knowledgeable, faithful, and has noble morals. The concepts of tarbiyah, ta'lim, and ta'dib, as explained by al-Attas (1993), describe education as an integrated process of physical, spiritual, intellectual, and moral development (Ishomuddin et al., 2023).

Since their inception, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have implemented transformative educational principles in practice. The relationship between kiai (Islamic cleric) and santri (students) is not merely a teacher-student relationship, but a spiritual one that shapes personality and a scholarly ethos. Values such as sincerity, simplicity, discipline, responsibility, and togetherness are integral parts of the pesantren educational system. Thus, pesantren can be considered a uniquely Indonesian form of transformative educational practice.

Islamic Boarding Schools in the Context of History and Modernity

The history of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia can be traced back to the 18th century, beginning with the halaqah system in prayer houses (surau) and mosques. Islamic boarding schools served as centers for the spread of Islam and as a bulwark against colonialism for local culture. Great figures such as KH Hasyim Asy'ari, KH Ahmad Dahlan, and KH Wahid Hasyim emerged from the pesantren tradition and made significant contributions to the formation of national values.

However, modern developments have brought new challenges for Islamic boarding schools. Globalization and technological advancements demand a more adaptive and inclusive education system. Many Islamic boarding schools now integrate formal education, such as madrasahs, with public schools, and even offer skills and entrepreneurship programs. Modern Islamic boarding schools such as Gontor, Tebuireng, and Daarut Tauhiid have become models of institutional transformation by combining religious values with educational innovation.

Furthermore, the digitalization of education presents both opportunities and challenges for Islamic boarding schools. According to research by Asrori (2022), Islamic boarding schools that implement digital learning are able to improve students' literacy and access to knowledge without abandoning the tradition of studying the yellow texts. This digital transformation is a concrete form of Islamic boarding schools' adaptation to changing times.

Islamic Boarding Schools as a Model of Transformative Education

Islamic boarding schools can be called a transformative educational model because they contain three main pillars: spirituality, intellectuality, and

sociality.

a. Spiritual and Moral Dimension

Islamic boarding schools instill the values of monotheism, sincerity, and morality. Education in Islamic boarding schools aims not only to develop intellectual intelligence, but also to purify the heart and build spiritual awareness. From Freire's perspective, this is a form of inner transformation that fosters self-awareness and social empathy.

b. Intellectual and Scientific Dimension

Islamic boarding schools no longer focus solely on religious knowledge, but are also open to science and technology. Many Islamic boarding schools have established universities, research centers, and digital laboratories. The integration of religious and general knowledge produces a generation of students who are able to think critically and contribute to the professional world.

c. Social and Leadership Dimension

Student students are trained to become community leaders (agents of change). Through da'wah activities, community service, and student organizations, they learn leadership, social responsibility, and cooperation. The lifestyle in Islamic boarding schools also instills a spirit of solidarity and mutual cooperation, which are important values in building an inclusive Indonesian society

Islamic Boarding Schools and the Golden Indonesia 2045 Agenda

The Golden Indonesia 2045 vision aims to achieve Indonesia as a developed and prosperous nation by the 100th anniversary of independence. One of its main pillars is the development of superior human resources who are globally competitive and imbued with the Pancasila character. In this context, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a strategic role by integrating intellectual, spiritual, and social aspects into education.

Islamic boarding schools can contribute to the achievement of Golden Indonesia through; (1) Character education based on moderate Islamic values, which strengthens national morality and prevents radicalism. (2) Developing digital literacy and technological innovation, enabling students to compete in the era of Industry 4.0. (3) Economic independence through Islamic boarding school entrepreneurship, which supports the creative economy and social resilience. (4) Government-Islamic boarding school collaboration in strengthening regulations and community empowerment through Law No. 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools. Thus, Islamic boarding schools are not only religious educational institutions but also centers of social and economic empowerment that support sustainable development.

Challenges and Opportunities for Strengthening Islamic Boarding Schools

Despite their enormous potential, Islamic boarding schools also face several serious challenges:

Limited human resources: Many educators still lack modern pedagogical competencies. Limited access to technology and infrastructure, especially in small Islamic boarding schools and remote areas. A dual curriculum between formal and Islamic boarding schools that has not been fully integrated. Public perception still views Islamic boarding schools as traditional institutions and closed to progress. Namun, peluang besar juga terbuka lebar.

Government policy support through the 2019 Islamic Boarding School Law, which grants independence and formal recognition to the Islamic boarding school education system. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' digitalization program for Islamic boarding schools and collaboration with industry. The enormous potential of green Islamic boarding schools—an environmentally friendly education concept relevant to global climate change issues. By optimizing these opportunities, Islamic boarding schools can become the vanguard in developing a superior generation towards a Golden Indonesia 2045.

CONCLUSION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) hold a highly strategic position in the national education system. As educational institutions deeply rooted in spiritual and social values, they have proven capable of surviving and transforming amidst changing times. The transformative educational principles implemented by pesantren through character building, values-based learning, and community empowerment make them relevant to the demands of the 21st century.

To realize Golden Indonesia 2045, pesantren must continue to strengthen institutional innovation, improve the capacity of teachers and students, and develop curricula that are adaptive to global change. Collaboration between the government, society, and industry needs to be strengthened so that pesantren can function as centers of civilization and the formation of superior human beings.

With the spirit of "al-muhafazhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah" (the spirit of preserving good traditions and embracing better innovations), pesantren will remain the nation's moral and intellectual beacon, guiding Indonesia towards a golden future of justice, empowerment, and morality.

REFERENCES

- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *Islam and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.
- Asrori, A. (2022). Digitalisasi Pesantren di Era Revolusi Industri 4.0. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(2), 211–225.
- Basri, M. H. (2024, January). Winning Strategy: Continuous Evaluation As the Key To Success Madrasah Education Management. In *Proceeding of International Conference on Education, Society and Humanity* (Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 308-316).
- Bukhori, I., & Zahro, F. (2025). Enhancing Madrasa Teacher Mindfulness through Organizational Culture. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*, 6(2), 253–261.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Ishomuddin, K., Rizquha, A., & Mubaroq, M. S. (2023). Management Hifdzil Al-Qur'an In Improving Santri's Memorization In Islamic Boarding Schools. *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management*, 5(2 SE-Articles), 208–218. <https://doi.org/10.52627/managere.v5i1.214>
- Kementerian Agama RI. (2023). *Data Statistik Pendidikan Pesantren Nasional*. Jakarta: Pusdatin Kemenag.
- Kumala, A. M., Khoir, M. I., & Sahidah, A. (2024, December). Implementation of Islamic Education In Forming Karimah Imaces at Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. In *Proceeding of International Conference On*

- Education, Society And Humanity* (Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 98-106).
- Maulana, M. Z., Mannan, A. F., Shulhani, R., & Supardi, S. (2025). Integrating Technology-Based Public Relations to Improve Brand Identity in Islamic Boarding Schools. *Journal of Asian Islamic Educational Management (JAIEM)*, 3(1), 9–16.
- Mashoedi, M., Munif, M., & Suhermanto, S. (2025). Managing Character Education in Pluralistic Schools: A Model of Internalization of Interfaith Values. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 4(2), 792-803.
- Sutanto, S., & Suhermanto, S. (2024, January). Inspiration in learning: efforts to build learning enthusiasm in junior high school. In *proceeding of international conference on education, society and humanity* (Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 1380-1386).
- Tohet, M., & Maulidiya, W. (2025). Improving critical thinking capability through problem based learning models in islamic religious education subjects. *At-Ta'lim: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 11(2), 114-122.
- Tohet, M., Ramadani, A. M., & Mahbubi, M. (2025). Strategi Mengatasi Rendahnya Motivasi dan Partisipasi Belajar Siswa dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti. *Kartika: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 5(1), 556-569.
- Thohir, P. F. D. M. (2024). Strengthening the Reputation of Islamic Boarding Schools: The Role of Leadership, Educational Innovation, and Local Wisdom. *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management*, 6(3), 331–346.
- Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 tentang Pesantren
- Yaqin, A., & Rofiq, M. I. A. (2023). Saddu Dzari'ah: Islamic Marriage Guidance as a Prevention of Household Violence. *Risâlah Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam*, 9(2), 542-551.