

# THE ROLE OF KYAI'S LEADERSHIP IN PREPARING QUALITY SANTRI (CASE STUDY OF DARUSSALAM GONTOR MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL)

<sup>1)</sup>Yayat Suharya, <sup>2)</sup>Agustinah, dan <sup>3)</sup>Diyah Yuli Sugiarti

<sup>1,2,3)</sup>Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi

Email: yayat\_suharyat@unismabekasi.ac.id

## Abstract

*Islamic boarding is the oldest educational institution in Indonesia which has a role in character education. The main purpose of this study was to understand the role of kyai's leadership in preparing quality santri. This paper aims at exploring the values which become the basis for leadership practice at Gontor. However, Gontor exists and gradually develops with its own unique management and leadership system. The study suggests that Gontor has its own standards which are mainly based on Islamic values. Indeed, there are a lot of values, but basically they can be simplified into the five spirits of Pondok Pesantren namely sincerity, simplicity, self reliance, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom. Each one of these spirits becomes a standard of excellence for Gontor leadership. In other words, Gontor will always exist, continue to flourish, create quality santri and prosper if it maintains these spirits and will deteriorate by the erosion of them.*

**Keywords:** *The role, Leadership, Quality, Kyai, Santri*

## PREFACE

Leaders are who have the ability to influence, give examples, direct other people or a group to achieve goals, both formal and informal (Wahab, 2006). The leadership pattern of a leader in an organization is a determinant of productivity and effectiveness, and the success of the institution as a whole. This is the difference between leaders and leadership. Leaders refer to the criteria of personal (individual management) that are feasible so that they are called leaders. While leadership is a series of organized individuals, both through coordination, corporation, and consultations carried out

collectively (collective management) (Zarkasyi, 2005).

In Islamic education, leadership also plays a very important role. This leadership is considered as a trigger for changes in the development of the quality and achievements of Islamic education. This also applies in the Islamic boarding world, where the leadership style of a kyai will greatly influence the performance of the Islamic boarding as a whole.

Islamic boarding school institutions are Islamic educational institutions that integrate all centers of education, which are comprehensive and total, covering all areas of skills of students; both spiritual (spiritual quotient),

intellectual (intellectual quotient), and moral-emotional (emotional quotient) (Zarkasyi, 2003).

Therefore, the boarding school environment must be designed in such a way as to the interests of education, so that everything that is heard, seen, felt, done, and experienced by the santri, even all boarding school residents to achieve educational goals. In this way the Islamic boarding school has embodied a learning society, in its implementation it will not run optimally without the management of good Islamic boarding school.

K.H. Imam Zarkasyi defines a boarding school as an Islamic religious education institution with a dormitory or cottage system, where kyai as its central figure, a mosque as a center of activity that animates it, and Islamic teaching under the guidance of kyai which is followed by santri as its main activity (Zarkasyi, 2005).

### **A Brief about Gontor**

The three brothers Ahmad Sahal (1901-1977), Zainuddin Fannani (1905-1968) and Imam Zarkasyi (1910-1985) who are well known as Trimurti established Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School (famous with Gontor) on September 20, 1926. The establishment was driven by various factors that occurred in Indonesia and the world. One factor inspiring the establishment was, in 1926

Ahmad Sahal the elder brother of the other two founders attended the congress of Indonesian Islamic Ummah held at Surabaya in 1926. The interesting condition is the difficulty of the the congress to send a representative of Indonesian Muslim to attend the World Conference at Hijaz because no one can fit the requirement of speaking both Arabic and English fluently. Finally, there were two representatives elected to go to Mekkah, one who was fluent in Arabic and other in English. This event had inspired young Ahmad Sahal and been agreed on by his two brothers, that Muslim should have scholars who are mastering both Arabic and English. In other words, muslim ummah is challenged to produce scholars who are learning Islamic and general sciences in an integrated system (Umam, 2013).

The establishment and development of Gontor were not so systematic where one step was followed by another. Started from elementary school known by Tarbiyatul Athfal in 1926, *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* (KMI) was established on December 1936 with six years program of study which equaled the senior high school program of study.

Besides this systemic and curricular reform, the founders took another further step by reforming organization system. In 1958, the three founders

declared that pondok Darussalam that had been operated with new system of education for about three decades was endowed to the muslim ummah by forming a Waqf Board. The founder handed over their lands and all properties of the pondok to fifteen appointed members of Waqf Board. One of the most important mandates in the declaration for the Waqf Board is: “..... *it must be further developed into an Islamic university..... and become a major center for Arabic and Islamic studies...*” (Amal Fathullah Zarkasyi et. al, 2011).

The whole activities of Gontor’s education system are guided by the spirits of pondok which according to Imam Zarkasyi can be classified into five spirits namely sincerity, simplicity, self sufficient, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom. *Sincerity* means a quality of being sincere (*sepi ing pamrih*). This implies that all activities must not be based on getting profit from them. All acts should be devoted for the sake of Allah, *lillah*. KH. Imam Zarkasyi in several occasion states that sincerity is the spirit of work.

*Simplicity* is a way of behaving proper and appropriate to the need of individual in his or her life. This implies that one should live based on his or her needs and not on his or her wants. In other words one should live in a simple life and not in luxury one. However, it does not

mean a passive state and submitting to the fate, also not poor and miserable. It has the meaning of strength, courage, determination, and struggle in facing the life. By this spirit, one can be militant and struggling without any pessimistic life.

*Self sufficient* is an important spirit for individual as well as institution. All teachers, students of pondok do not depend on others. In this new system individual teachers and students manage their extramural activities independently. Moreover, they are given total responsibility to manage all their activities in the boarding system. As an education institution, the pondok itself is self reliant. It does not depend on the help of others. People may give financial support but pondok never depends on others’ financial support in developing itself. The motto that Imam Zarkasyi always repeated was that, pondok is supported because of its progresses, and on the contrary it is not developed because of the support of others (pondok dibantu karena maju dan bukan maju karena dibantu).

*Islamic brotherhood* is a principle of life together which makes a milieu of strong friendship. To inculcate this spirit, students who came from all parts of Indonesia and abroad are obliged to learn how to respect each other. Arguments, fights, quarrels, or other types of disputes

among students are regarded as a crime and they could be expelled from the pondok. Another step in promoting the spirit of brotherhood is through discouraging the use of vernacular and encouraging the use of Arabich and English language. In short, all activities should support the inculcation the spirit of Islamic brotherhood.

The last spirit inculcated in the pondok system is *freedom*. It means the freedom in choosing and selecting the way of life and place for struggle as vicegerent of Allah (*khalifatullah*). It is a mental attitude in which one should be free from group fanaticism. Moreover, pondok as a private institution also should be free from colonialism or oppression by a group or religious organization and the like.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A leader in a modern institution can be defined as: *first*, manager. Leaders in institutions act as plan makers, activity coordinators, task distributors, activists of teachers and staff, coaches and directors, and administrators. *Second*, administrator. Leaders can also act as controllers of curriculum, personnel, student affairs, finance, facilities and facilities, and administration in general. *Third*, leader. The task of a leader is to motivate, foster, direct, move, and be convincing. *Fourth*, supervisor. He is sensitive in terms of

observing, evaluating, analyzing, and being able to provide solutions. *Fifth*, innovator. He is expected to be able to take steps to move forward. *Sixth*, motivator. He can reach meaningful inputs for teachers, staff, and administrators of institutional units, santri, society, even the government. *Seventh*, evaluator. The leadership is also able to control activities, both those carried out by individuals and groups (Zarkasyi, 2005).

So in order to achieve the maximum goals of Islamic boarding school education, Islamic boarding school leaders must understand the roles and functions of leaders as leaders, managers, administrators, supervisors, mativators, innovators and evaluators because the chief of the board is the kyai who regulates, controls and moves the overall totality of the good inside and outside and exercise control in the order of life of boarding schools neatly and tidy.

In this case, Dr. KH. Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi M.A, laid down standards and basics of leadership through long experience with certain qualifications covering prowess and skills. There are 14 qualifications that cadres must have as a provision for leadership (Zarkasyi, 2011). These qualifications include: *firts*, sincere. Sincerity makes a leader be firm, tough, strong and principled. Sincere soul will

always have patience and high optimism. Reflection of sincere energy towards the soul of a leader is bound to God, has high pride, is not afraid to be criticized, has high patience, always optimistic in everything. This sincere is active, dynamic and productive by manifesting various movements and activities in life, which are motivated with sincerity, hard work, thinking hard, patiently hard and praying hard.

*Second*, always take the initiative. Initiative is an effort to think fast and hard to find many alternatives in managing and operating educational programs by adhering to values, systems and discipline, so that the activities of Islamic boarding schools are dynamic and growing. In many Islamic boarding schools education policies that must be decided both routine and futuristic are always make improvements and development in the future.

*Third*, able to create a network and use it. Creating a network for a leader is a requirement and must be able to use it which aims to facilitate the completion of many Islamic boarding school interests, expand the reach of thought, develop ideas to be transferred to many parties so that they want to help and fight for Islamic boarding school.

*Fourth*, trustworthy. Trust is the main capital for a leader in carrying out his

duties, so to be trusted, a leader must practice, including: pursue and complete tasks well (excellent), have achievements, maintain trust and be honest. These four things become conditions for a leader to be trusted by those he leads or the community.

*Fifth*, working hard and hardworking. Working hard is the form or evidence of a person having a strong ambition and willingness. For a leader, working hard and hardworking are the capital basic for achieving an ideal. A leader must have a high idealism of being the most beneficial person.

*Sixth*, mastering and solving problems. The ability to master problems is a skill that must be possessed by a leader. weak mastery of the problem will result in little courage and courage. There are many ways to master the problem, namely by preparing themselves to go directly to see, read, analyze, evaluate, and find solutions, so that a leader knows the problems that exist in the field in detail. Mastery of the problem is not only limited to routine activities, but must be more than that, both about the psychological teacher, students and the community.

*Seventh*, having high integrity. Integrity means uniting oneself with the values, systems and ideals of the institution as well as the sunnah and discipline of the Islamic boarding school. The spirit of

integrity in a leader will give birth to sincerity and hard work, even to the level of fighting for, defending wholeheartedly and will give birth to high loyalty, both loyalty to the values and orientation of the pesantren, loyalty to the system and loyalty to the leadership. The overall integrity and loyalty in boarding schools will give birth to the totality of the struggle.

*Eighth*, having high guts and daring to take risks. Guts or courage determine success in all life processes, because in terms of life must have courage regarding decisions and policies. To increase courage, must be able to master the problem, have strong abilities and work hard.

*Ninth*, honest and open. Honest means sincere self-recognition of what is thought, done, felt and believed. Honesty is a symbol of the greatness of the soul. While openness is the result of honesty. openness is very important to provide peace. Honesty is the most expensive asset. If it is lost from someone, then their self-esteem is lost, and there is also the loss of people's trust in him. So that an honest and open person is the right person, who will not be overwhelmed by worries or anxiety. Honesty is a teaching that is always emphasized in religion to achieve success in life both in the world and in the hereafter.

*Tenth*, ready to sacrifice. A leader must be prepared to sacrifice with all his energy, thoughts, assets and feelings. Everything struggles need sacrifice. The soul is ready to sacrifice for a leader to be trained because "*there are no rich people who are stingy and poor because they are generous*". Make sacrifices but don't be a victim.

*Eleventh*, assertive. The assertiveness here is firm in maintaining, carrying out and fighting for values, systems, idealism and orientation, so that the direction and goals remain what they are formulated. Just look at modern Islamic boarding school Darussalam Gontor, succeed and still exist because of the firmness of the founders and their leaders in maintaining the values stated in the waqf body charter that Gontor is a field of struggle and sacrifice and a cadre regeneration institution. Resolute is not mean rough or sporadic, not just banning this and angry with shouting without a solution, but firmly what is meant is to be firm in making decisions and policies, firm in working and thinking, firm in disciplining oneself, other people or society, firmly in giving clear instructions, firmly regulating order of life, firm in speaking and clear, even assertive towards his wife and family. Without firmness, it will be difficult to lead. To practice

firmness by doing lots of activities, having courage, mastering problems, and being disciplined strictly.

*Twelfth*, smart in seeing, hearing, evaluating, valuating, deciding and resolving. Intelligence is very necessary for a leader, because it is a very important element in the totality of life.

*Thirteenth*, able to communicate. Communication skills are one of the successes of a leader. This ability can be trained as long as there is a strong will, continuing to train ourselves so that our speech can be good, coherent, systematic, logically contained, easily digestible and accepted by others.

*Fourteenth*, having good muamalah. As a leader, it must be kind to everyone because with kindness that makes other people want to accept his presence, and do some approaches, including human approach, task approach and idealism approach which allows us to transfer ideas to others. Good in muamalah with humans and also God.

By method, kyai transforms the values of leadership and builds a leader mentality in every santri or student through: direction, training, assignment, habituation, escort, exemplary or *uswah hasanah*, and approaches. Whereas in the aspect of media (material), kyai cadres santri as prospective leaders by applying several methods of

cadre leadership in extracurricular activities while in boarding school. Each activity is based on the Five Spirits, Philosophy, and Motto of Pondok, which is instilled in the life of the santri under the guidance of the clerics (Zarkasyi A.S., 2005). All activities are managed by santri in self-governance or self-management.

Grand headmasters (kyai) take care of the existence of values at Gontor. They, in many occasion formal or not formal, scheduled or not scheduled, preach regarding the values that should be the basis of life at Gontor. Hence, as the leaders, they should become the model for applying the values as well as motivator who motivate all society of Gontor to base their activities on values. In other words, the leadership is tending to hide behind the values; the leader should be the model of values and always use the values as the motivation basis. Interestingly, at Gontor there is a kind of duplication leader in different levels. All teachers and students are educated to become leaders as Gontor's vision is producing cadres of leaders, in that case, from the second line level like rectors, directors and so on, until chief of room, chief class learn to duplicate the kyai in term of becoming the role model of values as well as using values to motivate their members. Thus, it is usual view at Gontor, there are a lot of activities at the

same time, with the same location (Umam, 2013).

Becoming role model becomes the concern of education system of Gontor. Grand Headmasters (kyai), teachers, students are restricted by written rules as well as not written one. There is a famous question regarding conducting life at Gontor "ask your *dhamir* (conscience, heart, mind)". This *dhamir* relates with values, teachers and students always learn each other whether they have understood the values or not. As a consequence, there might be a clash among teachers and students, one insists on his view while other says the contrary. This is, indeed, the process of learning and instilling values.

In educating and building the character and morals of students, Gontor applies the following methods: *first*, giving example and figure. Moral education and teaching are not enough with words and suggestions, the most exemplary example. In this case the example in applying the five spirits of Gontor. *Second*, forming the milieu. ( كُلُّ مَا يَرَاهُ التَّلَامِيذُ وَمَا يَسْمَعُونَهُ مِنْ حَرَكَاتٍ ( وَأَصْوَاتٍ فِي هَذَا الْمَعْهَدِ يَكُونُ عَامِلًا مِنْ عَوَامِلِ التَّرْبِيَةِ ) becomes a reference for forming an Islamic boarding school environment. The totality education style: "The most important thing (for every teacher) is to always use every moment to instill noble character and good morals to students". *Third*, training and

habit. "All activities in this boarding school are education, training and discipline to live in the community later". *Fourth*, guidance in establishing of santri's character and morals, giving advice, direction, enthusiasm, and so on. The responsibility for coaching and parenting is emphasized, both outside and inside the classroom. *Fifth*, care and interest. With attention and careness, educators will fully understand the atmosphere and condition of their students, their strengths and weaknesses, so that students feel really guided by their educators, and this creates a harmonious relationship between the kyai and santri. Finally, *sixth*, punishment. Who does not obey the discipline, of course he must accept the consequences or punishment (Mu'minah, 2015).

According to Ihsan Dacholfany, kyai leadership style strategy is religio-paternalistic leadership style mean interaction force between kyai with the students or subordinates based on religious values are anchored in the leadership style of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and has a charismatic and always invoke the guidance instructions and Allah.

Leadership is a superior character that is related to the relational view between morals and people. The method of leadership transformation or cadre formation of leaders with direction,



training, assignment, habituation, escort, example or *uswah*, and approach, which is carried out in a stream of strict and mindful discipline. The result is a very prominent leadership character. The leadership philosophy that is applied: "*ready to lead and ready to be led, broken growing lost changing*" (Zarkasyi A. S., 2011). Gontor also colored the birth of the concept of leadership "*ing ngarso sung tulodho, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani*", through Ahmad Sahal (Zarkasyi A. S., 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The progress of education in these Islamic boarding schools will not be separated from the roles and functions of their leaders in the overall management of Islamic boarding schools which they manage. Islamic boarding school leaders are not bureaucrats, not administrative officials but must be educators and ushers and function as leaders and managers of education.

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