

Ahmad Sukarti's Education Thinking

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ABSTRACT

The role and contribution of Sheikh Ahmad Surkati in the renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia in the 20th century. This article discusses the background of Islamic education in Indonesia, the role of Islamic education reform figures such as Sheikh Ahmad Surkati, research methodology, discussion of the integration of religious teachings in the curriculum, the curriculum concept used by Surkati, the use of a psychological approach in education, and Surkati's works in the form of treatises, articles, and books. The background of Islamic education in Indonesia includes the intellectual challenges faced, the importance of the role of Islamic education in improving the quality of human resources (HR), and the role of Islamic education reform figures such as Sheikh Ahmad Surkati in leading the reform movement. The research methodology used in this article is not clearly stated, but the discussion is carried out through analysis and exploration of Surkati's contribution to the field of Islamic education. Thus, this article provides an in-depth understanding of the role and contribution of Sheikh Ahmad Surkati in the renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia, as well as the methodology, discussion, and analysis related to the topic.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Thought, Syekh Ahmad Surkati

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is recognized as a joint effort of the family, society, and government, both through formal and informal instruction, which takes place throughout life, with the aim of preparing individuals to play an effective role in various life situations in the future. In the context of the formulation of Islamic education, consideration of the nation's philosophy and theological aspects of Muslims are important. However, currently, Islamic Education faces significant intellectual challenges. There is a lack of innovation, learning that is too traditional, a lack of creative approaches, and an unbalanced focus between spiritual aspects and the development of human character as agents of change. Nevertheless, Islamic Education plays a crucial role in preparing Muslims to face the challenges of globalization. However, there needs to be

improvement in the development of human resources so that Indonesia is not left behind in the era of global change.

Islamic education plays an important role in efforts to improve the quality of human resources (HR) so that Muslims can play an active role and survive in the era of globalization. Although Indonesia has an abundant number of HR and the majority are Muslim, this country is still considered lagging behind in developing the quality of its people. The complexity of education problems and the need to improve the quality of HR make the issue of education still relevant to discuss. It is hoped that this discussion can produce new solutions in improving the quality of HR through Islamic education.

During the movement in Indonesia, many figures emerged as pioneers of the Islamic education movement. The increasing spirit of Islam was influenced by Middle Eastern Pan-Islamism, especially after many pilgrims returned from Mecca and young Muslims who studied there. Examples are KH. Hasjim Asy'ari (founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, NU), KH. Muhammad Dahlan (founder of Muhammadiyah), Sheikh Achmad Chatib from Minangkabau, and Sheikh al-Banjari from Banjarmasin. The influence of Arab Hadrami was also very significant, especially in the fields of education and da'wah, such as Jamiatul Khayr and al-Irsyad by Ahmad Surkati. From here, Islamic organizations emerged that not only focused on education, but also da'wah, social, economic, and health.

Sheikh Ahmad Surkati, a religious scholar from Sudan, is known as the pioneer of the al-Irsyad movement that played a crucial role in religious and educational transformation in Indonesia. For him, education is not only the key to cultural development, but also the foundation of human civilization. By referring to the principles of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, he initiated a scientific culture among Indonesian Muslims, which aims to form thoughts rooted in Islamic values. Through education that emphasizes the aspect of rationality in interpreting religious teachings, Surkati succeeded in raising the awareness of Indonesian Muslims from the pressures of colonialism, as well as strengthening an understanding that can be accepted by the two Islamic communities, both in Indonesia and in Arabia. This understanding emphasizes universal Islamic values such as equality and justice in religious practices.

Ahmad Surkati's struggle through scientific-based education and cultural promotion efforts in the 20th century remains relevant today. Amidst the diverse challenges of globalization, Indonesian society still needs guidance to be actively involved in the dynamics of world progress, while still paying attention to Indonesian religious and cultural values. Surkati's contribution to the development of Islam and

Islamic education, as well as the impact of the education he pursued on national awareness, is enormous.

2. METHODS

This paper is a descriptive qualitative research. Data obtained through reading, literature is analyzed and compromised critically to be further described narratively. Because qualitative research requires guidance direction for the preparation of substantive theories derived from data (Moleong 2007, p. 10). This research is a type of qualitative research with a library research model. In this writing, the data is collected through library research and documentation studies. The main data source in this study is words and the rest are documents and others (Moleong 2007, p. 157). Literature studies include data collection by studying, reviewing related books, scientific works, articles, both from mass and electronic media and others. Documentation is textual, reports, magazines and other sources related to the object of study.

3. DISCUSSION

Integrating religious teachings. Meanwhile, the second is education centered in Islamic boarding schools that only focus on religious education. In short, there are two different models of education: traditional which is emphasized in Islamic boarding schools and modern which is introduced through the establishment of schools by the Dutch government.

Then, the importance of the emergence of al-Irsyad and Tarbiyatul Islamiyah in the Islamic education renewal movement lies in the suitability of this organization with the modern spirit that began to develop in Islamic society at that time. Al-Irsyad, which originated from a splinter of Jamiat Khair, was born from an internal division regarding the privileges of the sayyid group. The main founder of al-Irsyad was al-'Allamah Sheikh Ahmad Surkati Al-Anshori, a famous cleric from Mecca who was of Sudanese blood. Sheikh Surkati's arrival in Indonesia was initially at the invitation of Jamiat Khair, an association whose members were mostly descendants of Arab sayyids, in 1905 (Supriatna et al., 2021).

The figure who played a central role in this incident was Sheikh Ahmad Surkati, who issued a fatwa regarding the validity of marriage in response to a question from Umar bin Said Sungkar, brother-in-law of Awad Sungkar Al-Urmei. The question was related to the permissibility of marriage between a "syarifah" and a "non Sayyid", even though both were Muslims and other conditions had been met. According to Ahmad Surkati, the concept of kafa'ah has been completely ignored in several Islamic countries such as Egypt, Sudan, in Hejaz, and other Islamic countries.

The ideas of Sheikh Ahmad Surkati have had a significant impact in changing the traditions of some Arab communities in Indonesia and have become a driving force for the birth of reform figures among the indigenous community. In fact, his influence was felt widely among his students, not limited to those of Arab or indigenous descent, but also reaching Dutch people such as Van der Plas, a government official. Surkati's ideas and thoughts were conveyed through writings published in Arabic, Malay, and Dutch, which were distributed through various mass media such as magazines and newspapers, including *Suluh Hindia* managed by HOS Tjokroaminoto and *Azzachratoel Islamiyah*. Thus, Surkati's thoughts became more widespread among the community through various information channels (Permana et al., 2023).

Ahmad Surkati adopted Muhammad Abduh's views in his struggle agenda, which included:

1. An effort to cleanse Islam of corrupting influences and practices.
2. Reform of the Islamic higher education system.
3. Protection of Islam from European influence and attacks from Christians.

According to Sheikh Ahmad Surkati, the concept of Islamic religious education that he implemented through Islamic Educational Institutions, such as *al-Irsyad*, includes several aspects. First, it is an effort to improve the religious and socio-economic conditions of Muslims through the establishment of madrasas, orphanages, orphanages, and hospitals. Second, it is the dissemination of Islamic reform through various means such as writings, publications, meetings, lectures, study groups, and special missions. In addition, he is also active in helping other organizations for the common good (Effendi, 2019).

The programs he implemented included purifying Islam from destructive influences and practices, restructuring higher education for Muslims, reformulating Islamic higher education, and defending against European influences and attacks from Christians.

Shaykh Ahmad Surkati is a role model for every *Al Irsyad* member, not only because of his role as founder, but also as a scholar and educator. One aspect of education that Ahmad Surkati really emphasizes is the understanding of monotheism which includes aspects such as *ijtihad* and *taqlid*, *sunnah* and *bid'ah*, as well as the practice of visiting graves and praying to the prophets and saints.

After establishing *Al-Irsyad*, Ahmad Surkati's thoughts began to develop, especially in the fields of education and religion. One of his important contributions was the transformation of traditional education into a modern one with the use of a new curriculum. In addition to including religious lessons, he also introduced general

lessons and encouraged his students to express their opinions. In addition, Ahmad Surkati is also recognized as a pioneer of education and a reformer with the introduction of an educational concept that had never existed before in Indonesia. He showed his serious commitment to expanding Islamic religious knowledge in Indonesia and played a pioneering role in the formation of an educational institutional system. His contribution was great in the development and improvement of the education system in Indonesia (Suryana, 2017) .

Curriculum Concept

Nondichotomous Curriculum

Shaykh Ahmad Surkati did not make any distinction or classification between the sciences. Perhaps he realized that all knowledge comes from Allah, so he did not separate between knowledge that specifically discusses religious matters and knowledge that focuses on worldly matters. This approach can also lead to an imbalance in knowledge, where one may be proficient in religious knowledge but lacking in general knowledge, and vice versa. Therefore, it is important to realize that in studying natural phenomena, religious values can also be found, helping humans recognize the greatness of creation. As Ibn Rushd said, it is important to consider the totality of creation rationally and to reflect on God's work. From an Islamic perspective, there is no essential separation between religious and profane knowledge. The various sciences and intellectual perspectives in Islam, although hierarchical, ultimately lead to knowledge of the One. In the Madrasah founded by Shaykh Ahmad Surkati, a modern curriculum is implemented, integrating religious knowledge with general knowledge according to the needs of the present. Knowledge, both natural and social, is viewed as neutral, without inherent moral value. Islam views science and knowledge as having no difference, because both are considered knowledge, without any difference between religious knowledge and science (Tiara, 2021) .

The curriculum implemented by Ahmad Surkati, especially in formal education, emphasizes more on education with religious content supported by teachers who are experts in their fields. The priority of learning science is clearly depicted in each level, as follows:

1. Madrasah Awwaliyah, which lasts for three years, has a curriculum that includes muhadatsah, Arabic literacy, as well as other subjects such as Indonesian, mathematics, and sports.

2. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, lasts for four years, with a curriculum that includes the Qur'an, fiqh, nahwu, sharaf, muthala'ah, and imla'. In addition, history, geography, Indonesian, mathematics, drawing, and sports are also taught.
3. Madrasah Tajhiziyah, two years long, focuses on learning fiqh, tauhid, tafsir, hadith, pedagogy, English, and Indonesian.
4. Madrasah Mu'allimin, which lasts for four years, teaches Arabic, tafsir, hadith, hadith science, pedagogy, English, and Indonesian.
5. Tahassus, lasting two years, focuses on religious aspects such as adab al-lughah al-Arabiyyah (Arabic literature), mantik (logic), balaghah (rhetoric), fiqh wa ushul fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and philosophy.

The curriculum is non-discriminatory between religious and general knowledge, and emphasizes the use of Arabic as a tool for understanding Islamic teachings.

Curriculum Using Psychological Approach

The approach applied by Sheikh Ahmad Surkati involves attention to the moral and intellectual aspects of students, as well as thoughts that are acceptable to them. He uses a rational approach in personal, psychological, and counseling learning to understand students' interests, talents, and abilities. In implementing his activities, the learning approach is carried out systematically, with a curriculum designed to provide opportunities for students to develop according to their abilities and talents. (MARSIS, 2018) .

In an effort to develop his students' thinking, Ahmad Surkati places more emphasis on critical skills than just rote memorization. This principle does not only apply in religious studies, but also in other subjects such as history, earth sciences, and others.

There are several methods in the learning process that have general principles and factors that influence them. One of the main principles is to pay attention to the individual tendencies of students, including their capacities, interests, talents, environment, and readiness. Ahmad Surkati also utilizes individual student activities and applies appropriate methods and approaches, such as habituation, psychological and counseling approaches, a democratic teaching and learning atmosphere, and discussion methods.

The approach and methods used were very well received and recognized by his students, as reflected in the experience of one of his students, H. Abdul Halim.

The goal is to achieve a clearer and more detailed understanding together about something, and to make and complete decisions together. This method reflects democratic values where students are encouraged to express their opinions, while still adhering to the rules set by the group. Through the discussion approach, students have greater freedom to explore their thoughts without fear or doubt. Thus, the individual character of students will be revealed without coercion, displaying personal uniqueness that must be respected in accordance with human values.

The curriculum is considered as something dynamic that must continue to develop to keep up with the changes and challenges of the times. However, these changes and developments must be carried out in a systematic and directed manner, with a clear vision of the direction of national education progress. The psychological aspect is an important factor in curriculum development, demanding attention to the characteristics and needs of students so that curriculum objectives can be achieved optimally.

The psychology of learning plays a key role in how the curriculum is delivered to students and how students learn from it. Progressivism in education emphasizes the process of learning rather than the product, viewing subjects as tools for a larger educational process. Learning methods must be flexible, adapted to the conditions and learning environment of students so that they can interact directly with the material.

Educators must have the integrity to understand and direct students according to their abilities, interests, and talents, without forcing certain materials or information. The learning process must involve experiences and a conducive environment, with materials adapted to the situation and conditions. The integrity and consistency of educators in creating a supportive learning environment is key to student progress and overall educational development.

Books by Sheikh Ahmad Surkati

In addition to his role as an educator, cleric, teacher, and important figure in the Islamic movement, he is also known as a writer. Armed with the title of al-Allamah and his love for Islamic literature, he was able to produce works that cover various aspects of religion such as faith, morals, worship, and understanding of the Qur'an and Al-Hadith (Tiara, 2021).

The majority of his works aim to affirm beliefs that are in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the correct Sunnah. In addition, these works also serve as

responses to questions posed to him. Some of his works are in the form of books, treatises, or articles published in magazines and newspapers, both in the original Arabic and in translation.

Although some of the works have been published or translated, there are also some that are still in written form or notes kept by his students at Al-Irsyad. Here are some of the works of Sheikh Ahmad Surkati:

- a. The treatise of Surat al-Jawab was a response to HOS Tjokroaminoto's statement on kafa'ah (equality) in 1915, which stated that a syarifah could marry a Muslim sayid because in Islam there is no discrimination between sayid and non-sayid groups. The strong reaction to this treatise came mainly from the alawi group, and this fatwa is known as the "Solo Fatwa" which occurred in Solo in 1913.
- b. The treatise Tawjih al-Qur'an ila Adab al-Qur'an (1917) is a justification of the Treatise of Surat al-Jawab. Its contents emphasize that a person's closeness to the Prophet is not because of his descent, but because of his obedience to the sharia brought by the Prophet. A person's virtue in Islam is not seen from his descent, but from the quality of knowledge and religion, and includes criticism of deviations from the true religious teachings according to the Qur'an and Hadith.
- c. Al-Wasiyyat al-Amiriyah (1918) contains recommendations to implement amar ma'ruf nahi munkar in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith. This work begins with Ayyuhan al-Mu'min and is equated with Al-Ghazali's work entitled Ayyuha al-Walad by GF Pijper. Al-Wasiyyat al-Amiriyah was published in Surabaya in 1918.
- d. Al-Dhakhirah al-Islamiyah magazine (1923) was a driving force for Islamic renewal that discussed various questions about religious law and exposed false hadiths that were used to defend worship practices or transactions that contradicted the Qur'an and Hadith.
- e. Al-Masail al-Thalath (1925) was compiled to prepare for a debate proposed by the Islamic Union (Persis), although it failed due to differences in location. This work raises three issues: Ijtihad, Taqlid and bid'ah, pilgrimage and tawassul to the prophet and noble figures.
- f. Zeedeler Uit Den Qor'an (1932) is a Dutch translation of Risalah al-Adab al-Quraniyah. This book emphasizes that the Qur'an not only provides religious rules but also teaches morals. Shaykh Ahmad Surkati was assisted in the

translation by Ch. O. Van der Plas, who explained that this book was aimed at Western-educated Indonesians.

- g. Al-Khawatir al-Ihsan (1941) contains poems that are expressions of memories of Sheikh Ahmad Surkati with his colleagues. Although he experienced blindness at the end of his life, he continued to undergo various treatments to prevent it, and finally accepted the trial at the beginning of the month of Rajab 1359/1940 AD. Sheikh Ahmad Surkati spent his old age in Bogor.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the previous explanation, it can be concluded that Sheikh Ahmad Surkati developed Islamic Religious Education with a focus on restoring the religious and socio-economic conditions of Muslims. This approach involved the establishment of madrasahs, orphanages, orphanages, and hospitals, as well as the dissemination of Islamic reform through various means such as writings, publications, meetings, lectures, study groups, and special missions. He was also active in supporting other organizations that had a similar vision and mission. In addition, the strategies used by Sheikh Ahmad Surkati in the field of education, such as educational concepts, curriculum, methods and approaches, and educational media, are still relevant and continue to develop today.

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