

Structuration in Religious Education: The Ideological Burdens of Islamic Education in Indonesian Schools

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This paper discusses one of the central issues of religious education in Indonesia, namely its perceived ineffectiveness in imbuing adolescents and youths with proper morals, as seen in their increase perpetration of crimes in recent years. Unlike previous studies, which have evaluated the effectiveness of religious education in terms of curricula, teaching competencies, and infrastructure, this study highlights the structural positioning of schools as the main reason for their inability to realise their mandate. Being extensions of the Indonesian State or of particular organisations, schools serve to advance particular ideologies, and as such lack to authority to develop a contextual religious education curriculum that meets students' needs. This study shows that, when positioned subordinately, schools are incapable of identifying students' interests or of providing contextual lessons that meet students' needs or prepare them for their everyday realities. The education system has positioned students as objects, and it is because of this objectification—through the dual processes of discipline and indoctrination—that the system has failed to produce moral graduates. Islamic education would be better able to imbue students with morality if its curricula were free of State/institutional ideologies.

Key words: *Structuration, Religious Education, Ideological Burdens, Youth Morality, Indonesian Schools.*

Introduction

Islamic education—beginning at the elementary school level—is an important part of education in Indonesia, which is 87 percent Muslim. At the same time, however, its effectiveness is questioned, given the prevalence of juvenile delinquency, violence, and vice (Santoso and Silalahi, 2000; Asni M, Rahma, 2013; Irmawaty, 2013; Setiawan, 2016;



Ungsianik and Yuliati, 2017). Citing a report from the Child Protection Committee of Indonesia (Komite Perlindungan Anak Indonesia, KPAI), Setyawan shows that 9,266 youths have been involved in legal and criminal affairs between 2011 and 2017 (Setyawan, 2017). This amount has increased over time; for example, there was a 15 percent increase in 2016 (Hamdi, 2016). It has thus been argued that religious education has failed to produce moral human beings that reflect the national character and religious doctrine (Farida, 2016).

Studies of religious education have tended to take one of three perspectives. First, religious education has been seen from a moralistic perspective, being framed as shaping the morality of the youth (Haningsih, 2008; Lesilolo, 2012; Baharun, 2016; Ananda, 2017). Second, religious education has been seen as an instrument for creating a national character—one that is expected to be moral (Ibrahim, 2008; Ibrahim et al., 2008; Nurmadiyah, 2016; Islam, 2017; Telaumbanua, 2018). Third, evaluative studies have been seen from an evaluative perspective, with academics attempting to improve the quality of teachers, curricula, and infrastructure—all of which are necessary to promote proper education (Ekosiswoyo, 2007; Suti, 2011; Laelasari, 2013; Darmawan, 2014). None of these three approaches, however, consider the structurally subordinative positions of schools and its effect on the education process. The religious education provided by schools cannot be separated from the interests of the State and of State-affiliated religious institutions. Directly or indirectly, schools are extensions of the state and thus serve to advance their missions and policies.

This study is intended to complement previous studies of religious education by understanding schools' position as agents that implement a specific vision and mission. It focuses on the influence of schools' structural dependence on their ability to provide appropriate religious education. To realise this goal, the study asks three questions: (a) how does schools' structural dependence influence the Islamic education they provide; (b) how can students' need for religious education be fulfilled; and (c) how does education's position within the power structure influence the quality of religious education. These three questions will be answered in the subsequent sections of this paper.

This paper departs from the argument that, owing to the state's involvement in education and schools' subordinate position, religious education necessarily incorporates political decisions and factors. Educational institutions experience a process of instrumentalization, acting as agents that advance State interests (Mavelli, 2014). As such, educational institutions are incapable of ascertaining students' interests and providing contextually appropriate materials that reflect their everyday experiences. Structural forces define education through a specific hierarchy, in which students are positioned as objects of education (Abdullah et al., 2019). The objectification process occurs as students are disciplined and indoctrinated in dominant values that are derived from the national ideology.

The Structure of Religious Education in Indonesia

The Importance of Education

Education is a social phenomenon and part of social reality. Society plays an important part in education, having the ability to determine its goals and measure its achievements. Through education, older generations prepare younger generations to deal with social life, helping them improve their knowledge of the physical, intellectual, and moral standards of their society. Education constantly organises and reconstructs students' experiences, preparing them to deal with the physical realities of life and giving them the practical knowledge that they need to integrate into society. At the same time, one's position in society is positively correlated with one's level of education (Kimonen, 2015).

As lifelong learning has become a central tenet of education, the concept of a learning community has emerged. Communities have worked to improve their collective abilities and to organize themselves to advance their collective level of education, obtain new knowledge, and implement new information. Communities themselves are learning entities, always seeking new ways to advance themselves and to improve their collective welfare. In such learning communities, new techniques are developed to improve the intellectual capacity of the workforce, which is understood as necessary both for advancing the interest of the workers and the broader community (Sandmann et al., 2016).

In learning communities, religious education has a strategic position. It not only influences the cognitive processes (i.e. by transforming knowledge and assumptions about religious values, principles, and norms) but also shapes affective–motivational processes (by promoting religious practices and advocating for obedience to religious norms) as well as behavioural ones (by providing members with unique skills) (Manea, 2014).

Religious Education

Religious education has long been identified as a central and necessary part of improving public religiosity (Kuenzi, 2018: 255). Such education is intended to improve students' cognitive skills, develop their critical thinking abilities, and emphasise individual autonomy and diverse religious values. In many countries, religious education is understood as an instrument for accommodating multiculturalism and social pluralism in public education. Today, religious and ethical education holds that students have the right to learn the tenets of their respective religions and religious traditions (Ubani et al. 2019: 10). In England and Wales, at least through the 1950s, religious, moral, and civil education were seen as closely related. Religious education was equated with Christian education, as a means of advancing a particular moral and civil agenda. After the Second World War, as moral and social reform swept Great Britain, the government began promoting a 'non-denominational' religious



education as a means of improving citizenship and morality (Jackson, 2013: 5). The question of curriculum thus became critical. Without a national curriculum for religious education, schools often created their own. Religious education classes were given diverse names, such as "Beliefs and Values", "Religion and Belief", and "Religion, Philosophy, and Ethics" (Bråten & Everington, 2018: 7–8); these titles often emphasized inclusivity.

Religious education is an interesting social issue to be examined. Religion offers a model, a comprehensive and universal plan for guiding human behaviour. It contributes to culture, science, economics, and community life, always with the intent of improving human life and existence (Purrostami, 2012). It is this potential that makes religious education necessary (Mocan & Pogorelova, 2017). Religious education has the potential to contribute to pluralism, which is necessary to create and guarantee harmony (Zembylas et al., 2019). This can only be guaranteed, however, with the involvement of various stakeholders—such as the state—that seek to create social harmony (Niño, 2016, Marshall, 2018; Méon & Tojerow 2018). In other words, religious education can only contribute to prosperity and harmony when various stakeholders work collaboratively to support this goal.

Innovations in Islamic Education

At its core, Islamic education provides students with a theological and normative system that not only determines the relationship between humanity and God but also between individual human beings and between humans and their environments. Formal Islamic education is intended to give students the capacity, knowledge, and understanding they need to interact with their environments and avoid causing harm. Students are taught how to interact with their natural and social environments, as well as the importance of conservation, including the importance of avoiding excessive explosive activities that may cause harm.

Islamic education employs a transformational principle, one that sees human beings as integral parts of their environments. It seeks to bring human beings out of the darkness of ignorance and illiteracy and into the light of knowledge and literacy. Islam teaches its followers to worship and observe their religious teachings throughout their lives. This principle, however, contrasts with the tradition of top-down education, in which teachers have absolute authority and control of students' knowledge and values (Ilyas et al., 2019), and in which educational institutions are subordinate to religious foundations (Abdullah et al., 2019). At the same time, the organisations that manage schools are subordinated to the state, being unable to reject the laws and policies through which states assert their own ideologies. Ideological production cannot be separated from the production of social practice. It not only occurs in social practices but manifests as a social practice. Althusser (2008) describes ideology as something eternal, something that has always existed and will always exist, and as manifested through social practices and institutions. Ideology is produced and reproduced

by specific social groups, serving to unite and integrate them into a single collective (in Gunder, 2010). Ideological discourse offers a symbolic means of asserting culture as a symbol of identity, yet at the same time, is shaped through social processes (Susen, 2014). For Foucault, ideology is neither positive nor negative; instead, it exists in conjunction with the practice of knowledge (Sholle, 1988). According to Foucault (1980), every society has its own regime of truth, specific discourses that are accepted and function as accurate. It is used to measure the truth of a matter and determines 'how we regulate ourselves and others' (McCarthy, 1990: 443). An ideology is a belief system that is shared amongst the members of a collective, and functions to legitimise the core values that guarantee social stability. When it is fully institutionalized, an ideology provides a sophisticated social belief system (Ardalan, 2018).

Ideology is closely linked to the state, as every state has a particular ideology that provides its foundational orientation. Every state, defined as a set of political institutions with a shared authority, can reconstruct society through its ideology (Ardalan, 2018). Through their ideological choices, states determine how their citizens orient themselves in their everyday lives, including in education. States use ideology, not as a mere political ideal, but rather to understand matters of security, nation-building, and power (Staniland, 2015). In Indonesia, Islamic education is shaped by the national ideology, and knowledge is produced hegemonically both to advance particular values and to promote obedience (Gramsci, 2006).

Research Method

In its approach, this paper employs Giddens' concept of structuration, understanding religious education in Indonesia as being provided by non-government organizations (i.e. Islamic organizations) within the state structure (Giddens, 1983).

Religious education has been selected for this study as it is becoming ever more critical as humanity deals with increasingly complex problems. This study is intended to help solve the complex issues plaguing Islamic education, particularly those caused by the structural positioning of educational institutions as structurally subservient to the state. Even when education is privatized, the State continues to influence the process, as educational institutions are required to follow applicable laws and policies. This paper focuses on religious education, particularly how government policies influence this education.

For this paper, the religious textbooks used at the elementary and secondary level were consulted. Said textbooks are assumed to serve as the basis of the learning process and as reflecting the complex social processes that inform the social practice of religion. Data were collected from various works that discuss education, particularly Islamic education. These data were complemented by field observations in religious educational institutions in Java,

Sumatra, and Sulawesi, thereby enabling the researchers to obtain an understanding of Islamic education across much of the Indonesian archipelago. Data were analysed through content analysis and interpretation.

Findings

The Subordination of Islamic Education

Formal religious education is compulsory in Indonesia. From an early age, Muslims are enrolled in religious education centres (*tempat pendidikan agama*, TPA). At the same time, families and communities are expected to provide informal religious education. However, such informal education has become increasingly uncommon, despite its importance (Inawati, 2017).

Indonesia has two types of schools, state schools (which must follow the national administrative and financial system) and private schools (which are administered by non-government agencies and institutions). Although private schools are relatively independent in their decision-making, they do not have complete freedom; they must still comply with state-issued administrative guidelines and policies. The Law on the National Education System, for example, requires all Indonesian schools—both private and public—to follow a specific administrative system. Schools of all religious and organisational affiliations are thus cannot exist separately from the ideology and values of the state. At the same time, private schools must promote specific organizational interests, be they religious (Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist), cultural, or global. School institutions and foundations have their value and policy orientations, which serve to structure the education they provide—including religious education.

According to Article 36 of Law No. 20 of 2003 regarding the National Education System, "Curriculum development is conducted concerning national education standards to realize the goal of national education. ... Every curriculum must meet the educational needs of students at that level, within the framework of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia." Schools serve as educational instruments and must follow the educational decisions and designs of the government. Schools are not free; their curricula, including their religious education curricula, are influenced by the state ideology in their design and their rituals. Students are required to make lines, act with discipline, and use specific books and materials. Academic matters are made administrative.

For example, school curricula identify eighteen key character traits, and these traits are taught to students through top-down processes (Abdullah et al., 2019). Education is not egalitarian and open, but rather structured within a specific hierarchy, with the government having the authority to control and monitor education. The government provides itself with this



exclusive authority through its laws. As stated in Article 50, Paragraphs 1 and 2, of the National Education System Law: "The administration of the national education system is the responsibility of the Ministry. ... To guarantee the quality of education, the government sets national education policy and standards". From this discussion, it is evident that the government ignores the authority of non-government agencies as well as the for diversity in education.

Owing to the dominance of the state, religious education is coopted by those in power, who convey values of discipline, obeisance, and patriotism. Most of the textbooks used in Islamic education emphasize that students must become disciplined and productive members of society, which are necessary for those in power to maintain control of the state and society. Students are also taught that defending their homeland is a religious duty, and as such, they are conditioned to accept and legitimise the patriotism demanded by the State (Table 1). This cooption shows that education necessarily incorporates particular values and paradigms, as the knowledge it conveys is created through a process that is dominated by the state. Religious education does not advance purely religious interests; it is used to promote State interests, shaping students by teaching them that specific ideals and practices are part of their religious doctrine.

Table 1: Objectification of Students in Islamic Textbooks

Source	Objectification of Students in Islamic Textbooks
IX: 20	As a Muslim girl, Hidayati dresses neatly and covers her <i>awrah</i> . She always wears Muslim clothing when she leaves the house. Furthermore, Hidayati is usually accompanied by a family member when travelling. She does this to avoid slander and sin. She also avoids leaving the house at night, unless she has a very important business. Even then, she must be accompanied by a family member. This she does to maintain her honour and her dignity. Furthermore, she knows shame and fears Allah SWT. Not only that, Hidayati is also very careful when uploading pictures of herself to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. She only uploads photographs in which she has covered her <i>awrah</i> .
X: 127	Students must reflect their teachers in character, knowledge, expertise, dignity, etiquette, and concern for others. Students must honour their teachers and believe that their knowledge is perfect. Even those who become excellent academics may never stop respecting their teachers.
X: 25	As the faithful, we must be able to use any means of bringing ourselves closer to Allah SWT. The closeness between a servant and his God will certainly facilitate his life, bringing him unparalleled joy and pleasure.
IX: 118	A child must love, honor, and obey both parents. Many of the verses of the Quran, as well as the hadiths of the Prophet, state this obligation to obey and listen to both parents. Obeying both parents is a form of worship that is glorified by Allah SWT, while disobeying both parents is a great sin in the eyes of Allah SWT.
VI: 61	Children must fear only Allah SWT. We must do all that Allah SWT commands and avoid all that Allah SWT prohibits. Thus, the teachings of Islam that were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW must we believe and practice. For Allah SWT has perfected them and blessed them, giving Islam as the religion of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his followers. Furthermore, we must be grateful for all of the blessings that Allah SWT has bestowed upon us.

Such a depiction of religious education cannot be separated from the fact that the State and its ideology strongly influences the process. Religious education is used in the objectification of students, who are expected to accept the values that have been chosen by others (Table 1). The values of the students themselves, which may differ depending on the students' class or religious background, are not appreciated in formal education. Students are objects, expected to simply accept their elders' definitions of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate.



Decontextualization of Religious Education Curricula

Religious education is likewise inexorably linked with the normative values through which the State defines religious education. Educational curricula are used by the State to translate its desired messages and norms, including nationalism and national defence. Religion is positioned as subservient to the State; at the same time, students are positioned as objects of the State's power over its citizens. There is a tendency to translate and apply the State's desired values through various means (Table 1). Religious education is incorporated into the formal power structure and framed within a specific ideology. As such, it is a means of spreading particular ideological interests.

Religion not only conveys particular ideological interests but also represents a specific normative system. Students study religion to fulfil their everyday needs and guide their everyday lives, enabling them to recognise particular phenomena, understand said phenomena, and use them to improve themselves. Religion, thus, must be transferred to a different level, wherein religious understanding is obtained through contrastive discourse that is oriented towards ascertaining the truth. Religious teachings and practices should be discussed actively, rather than imparted (as is currently the case in Indonesian schools); only then can collaborative worship and proselytization occur. From the range of offline and online *dawah* movements in Indonesia, it can be seen that today's youths are interested in religion. However, the current educational framework fails to accommodate their powerful interests and their desire for new approaches.

The religious world is separate from the real world; the religious world is textual and scriptural, while the needs it addresses are contextual and practical. The texts used in religious education are not contextual, and as such, they cannot readily impart the knowledge that students need. As stated by Shen (2012), texts are produced and interpreted to linguistically and communicatively create context. Text and context are two essential elements of human communication, with the latter simultaneously shaping and limiting religious knowledge (House, 2006). Linguistic facts, thus, gain more meaning when they are positioned within a specific context, becoming a social reality that must be understood through a reconstructive approach. Table 2 shows that the religious education textbooks used in Indonesia define religion normatively, and as such, create an artificial distance between students and their empirical reality.

Table 2: Normative Values in Islamic Textbooks

Source	Normative Values in Islamic Textbooks
XII: 65	Difference and diversity are the commands of Allah SWT and the desire of Allah SWT. For through them, Allah SWT tests His faithful.
XI: 206	Islam teaches that humans should only worship Allah SWT, not position any other as His equal, and all other human beings as their peers.
VI: 26	Come now, children, let us repeat the text and meaning of as-Samad until we've memorized it! Repeating <i>al-Asmā' al-Husnā</i> is a noble act. Repeating <i>al-Asmā' al-Husnā</i> is worship. After all, does as-Samad not mean The Eternal Refuge?
VI: 28	All of Allah SWT's Creation will end. Nothing is forever, except for Allah SWT. Allah SWT is the Eternal, the one whom we must worship and of whom our lips must sing the praises.
VI: 46	Let us emulate how the Prophet Muhammad practised honesty in his everyday life. For example, if our parents ask us to buy soap, and there is change left over, we must return this money to our parents. Know that honest children are beloved of their friends, teachers, and parents.
VI: 47	As with the Prophet Muhammad SAW, we must honour and practice his teachings. For example, we must honour those who are older than us and care for those who are younger. We must be polite in our words and deeds when dealing with our parents, teachers, and communities. We must also care for our environment. As they say, "Cleanliness is part of faith".
IX: 4	Let us contemplate the essence of this fleeting life on earth. Nobody will live here forever, right? It would be a shame if we were to waste our precious time and fail to prepare ourselves for the afterlife.
XII: 25	One pillar of faith is Qada' and Qadar. As such, we must understand that Qada' and Qadar are compulsory. We must believe, with all of heart, that everything that happens to us—be it for good or for bad—is God's will. As people of faith, we must submit ourselves to God's will for us.
IX: 118	Be joyous, you who still have both of your parents, for the door to success and prosperity is open wide. You may serve both of them, and use the remainder of their time here on earth to love them, honour them, and bless them.
XII: 25	The Word of Allah SWT is the <i>iradah</i> (will) of Allah SWT. As such, our fate is not always what we desire. When our fate does reflect our desires, we should be grateful, for this is a blessing and pleasure granted to us by Allah SWT. When our fate brings us pain, gives us sadness, then we must accept it with patience. We must believe that, behind every disaster, there is a blessing that we cannot see. Allah SWT is All Knowing in what He does.

Discussion: Religion is not Practical

Religion has a complex face, one that cannot be understood through simple dichotomies such as sacred–profane, life–afterlife, or good–bad. Religion is variative, contextual, and thus presenting it to students as nothing but a set of binary oppositions is absurd (Ayaß, 2017). The complexity of religion cannot be understood, let alone practised, through normative means. Understanding this complexity requires students to have the ability to reason and think logically while still adhering to important values. Indonesia's current religious education system has been plagued by three issues that have damaged its credibility (Beyer, 2008, 2013).

First, religion tends to be defined as a guideline for the afterlife, as dealing with heaven and hell. Life after death is prioritized, with humans' deeds during life being recorded and weighed before their eternal fate is determined (Ramos, van den Hoven and Miller, 2016). This tendency distances religion from lived reality, even though—as shown by Bakhtiar (2013)—religion and religious values help fulfil the basic needs of a human being. When religion is discussed solely within the context of preparing for the afterlife, its importance in everyday life is ignored. In Indonesia, Islamic education remains trapped by such discourse, and as such, it cannot impart students with the values that are necessary for their everyday lives.

Second, there is a tendency to position students as passive objects, as directly receiving and accepting the knowledge that is produced elsewhere. Students are not involved in the production of knowledge. Students' cultural values or specific religious teachings, which they receive from their parents and communities, as well as their own class burdens, are not appreciated by the education system. The values they embrace at home are never incorporated into the classroom, nor are they referenced as part of a participative and collaborative learning process. In the competency-based education system, the diverse cultures and experiences found within the classroom fail to contribute new perspectives. Students are objectified, while their abilities and skills are neglected.

Third, schools are positioned as subordinate to the State and as extensions of the government, thereby limiting religion's ability to help resolve everyday conflicts. Religious education, while claiming to guide students' behaviours, actually serves as a means of making them accept the State ideology. School curricula are state-driven, and as such serves to reinforce the State's control over citizens while simultaneously limiting educational institutions' authority. At the same time, the foundations and other institutions entrusted with the provision of education (including religious education), burden students with their own ideologies. These educational authorities, despite their approaches, cannot easily accommodate cultural diversity, local variances, and other ideologies.



Owing to these three tendencies—normativity in religious education curricula, objectification of students, and subordination of schools—religion is not present in students' everyday lives. Religious education is too abstract for students, with its lessons reaching beyond their experiences and cognitive abilities, and as such religion cannot be readily be practised in their everyday lives.

Conclusion

The belief that religious education can create change and shape future generations must be questioned. This study has shown that it lacks this particular capacity, as the government (in state schools) and religious foundations/institutions (in public schools) have used schools to implement specific ideologies and objectify students while ignoring their subjectivity. The cultural and historical experiences of students, including their diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, are not recognized. This process creates homogeneity in thought and deed, which is desired by the State.

By mapping the materials used in religious education to impart students with specific knowledge of desirable character traits, this paper has shown that religious education is highly textual, and as such fails to meet students' contextual needs or reflect their everyday realities. Students require guidance in their social lives, as well as the ability to interact with others, to express empathy, and to deal with complex situations; current curricula do not provide such guidance. Education has failed to provide students with a means of contextualizing religious teachings and dogmas, instead of trapping them in a hegemonic homogeneity. School walls not only surround students' bodies but create symbolic enclaves where students are socially isolated from the outside world.

This study of religious education has focused on textbooks, rather than the perspectives and interactions of teachers and students. It is necessary to accommodate students' views and understandings of religious education, given that they are the ones who experience these curricula directly. At the same time, it is necessary to accommodate teachers' abilities, as they are necessary for successful religious education. The authors thus recommend that subsequent research into religious education consider a range of perspectives, as such an endeavour would offer a targeted means of improving the credibility of Islamic education and of improving morality among Indonesia's youths.

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