The Strategy of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in Building the Character of Female Students

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ABSTRACT	Published Online: September 18, 2025

This article examines how the values of Islamic modern boarding schools are integrated into the curriculum of *Kulliyyatu-l-Mu'allimāt al-Islāmiyah* (KMI) for female students at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri, as well as how these strategies shape the character of students. Values such as sincerity, simplicity, independence, Islamic *ukhuwah*, and freedom are used as the foundation of education that is integrated in the formal learning process and the life of a 24-hour Islamic boarding school. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on literature studies and data validation through source triangulation.

The results of the study show that the KMI curriculum for female students at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri is designed as an integrated curriculum that proportionately combines religious and general lessons, and is implemented through active learning strategies, direct methods, strict supervision, and character strengthening via teacher examples.

The integration of modern boarding school values is not only part of the academic structure but also transforms into a character education system that shapes students into tough, intelligent, and noble individuals.

KEYWORDS: Islamic modern boarding schools, KMI curriculum, character education, Gontor, female students.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the world of education has been faced with increasingly real concerns about the fading of character values among students (Aryani & Yuliarti, 2023). The phenomenon of increasing adolescent violence, academic dishonesty, low social ethics, and weak personal responsibility is an indication that character education has not been fully integrated into the formal learning system (Ab. Musyafa Fathoni dkk., 2024). In many educational institutions, the learning process is still dominated by cognitive targets and academic achievement (Peng & Kievit, 2020). At the same time, the formation of noble personalities is often marginalized as a secondary or informal aspect.

In this context, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) emerged as an alternative education system that offers integration between knowledge, values, and character formation (Farida Laila et al., 2022, p. 91). Islamic boarding schools not only place character as an educational goal, but as a struct daily process through curriculum, nurturing, and communal life (Putro dkk., 2019). One of the outstanding Islamic boarding schools in this regard is Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is one of the Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, known not only for its discipline and traditions, but also for its distinctive and visionary educational philosophy (Anwar & Zumaroh, 2018). Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor comprises separate facilities for male students and female students. This shows that there is no difference in education between male and female students. Pondok Modern Darussalam Putra (for male students) and Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri (for female students) develop the values of modern boarding schools—sincerity, simplicity, Islamic ukhuwah, freedom, and independence—as the primary foundation of education (Rofiq et.al., 2020). These values are not only taught verbally or through nurturing, but are also systematically integrated into the *Kulliyyat al-Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* (KMI) curriculum. (Anam et al., 2023, p. 238)

However, studies that explicitly examine how the values of modern boarding schools are integrated into the KMI curriculum are still relatively limited. Many previous studies have only highlighted aspects of nurturing, independence, leadership, or institutional management of Islamic boarding schools, without delving deeper into the relationship between subjects and the formation of student character. This is where an essential academic gap lies to be bridged: how the typical ideological values of Islamic boarding schools, such as Gontor, truly live on in formal lesson classes. In addition, although Pondok Gontor Putra and Pondok Gontor Putri share a common curriculum source, there are some differences in their implementation, due to the distinct character traits of male and female students.

This article aims to examine how the integration of Islamic modern boarding school values is applied in KMI lessons at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri (for female students), as well as how these strategies contribute to the formation of the character of the female students. Through a qualitative descriptive approach and analysis, this article aims to explain that the curriculum is not only a forum for delivering material, but also an arena for the formation of students' overall character and soul.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research design. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the process of integrating the values of modern boarding schools into the KMI curriculum, as well as the learning strategies applied in shaping the character of students in the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri environment.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: direct observation in the field, in-depth interviews with Mr./Mrs. Teachers and KMI Staff, as well as documentation of curriculum documents, syllabus, lesson schedules, and KMI teaching materials. To maintain the validity of the data, the source triangulation technique is employed, which involves comparing data from multiple sources to obtain accurate and reliable information.

Data analysis is carried out interactively through three main stages: data reduction, namely the selection and simplification of relevant data; presentation of data, in the form of thematic narratives; and drawing conclusions or verification, to find patterns, meanings, and relationships between facts in the field. The results of the research are presented in a qualitative descriptive form.

III. RESULTS

A. Integration of Modern Boarding School Values in the KMI Curriculum

Curriculum is one of the most decisive components of the success of the teaching and learning process (Rajurkar dkk., 2018). The curriculum is the "spirit" of education that must be evaluated innovatively, dynamically, and periodically in accordance with the times, public interests and the needs of graduates (Halim dkk., 2023). The curriculum in terms comes from the Latin word, namely *currere*, which means a running arena (Dulo, 2021). Curriculum design refers to how we position the curriculum components. The curriculum is designed to address four curriculum components: why we initiate instruction, what we aim to teach to realise our set aims and objectives, how we can interconnect target learning experiences, and what we have realised and what actions we should take accordingly in relation to the instructional program, learners, and teachers (Mohanasundaram, 2018).

The implementation of the curriculum at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri is an alignment of Pondok Modern Gontor Putra, namely *Kulliyyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (KMI)(Zarkasyi, 2005a). However, because it is intended for female students, the name was adjusted to *Kulliyyatul Mu'allimāt al-Islāmiyah,* which means "Educational Institution for Women Islamic Teachers". Philosophically, KMI is not just interpreted as a formal educational institution, but as a forum for the development and mobilization of prospective Islamic women educators who are tough, dedicated, and ready to serve the ummah. KMI is a centre for the regeneration of Muslim women teachers, educators, and activists who are equipped with moral integrity, a broad knowledge base, and the spirit of struggle to serve their community.

The KMI curriculum (*Kulliyyatul-Mu'allimat al-Islamiyah*) at Pondok Gontor Putri is an integrated curriculum, which integrates 100% general lessons and 100% religious lessons in a proportional and integrated manner. The system of 100% religious lessons and 100% general lessons is not because of the material (Hartono, 2022). Still, because of the treatment of the material, that is, religion is explained with general lessons, and general knowledge is supplemented with religious lessons. This combines religious education and general education. This means that general science is actually a part of spiritual science, and vice versa and is equally important.

The curriculum is designed within the framework of holistic education, which not only emphasizes cognitive, but also affective and psychomotor aspects. The education process spans 24 hours comprehensively, encompassing intracurricular, extracurricular, and co-curricular activities, so that every aspect of a student's life becomes part of the educational process. Intracurricular learning under the auspices of KMI staff and extracurricular and co-curricular education under the auspices of student care staff.

As a result of the documentation study, the material taught at Pondok Gontor Putri primarily focuses on the development of students' character. The subject books used are not the same as the subject books in general that are used in foreign schools. The majority of class I subject books still use Indonesian, but when they are in grades II – VI, the majority,

and almost all, use Arabic, except for general subjects. Some of the subjects in which there is character education are: *Tafsir, Hadith, Muthala'ah, Mahfudzat, Tarbiyah,* including *Nisa'iyah* and others.

These materials are not only designed to instil cognitive aspects and religious knowledge, but also to shape the character of students according to the values of modern boarding schools, such as sincerity, simplicity, honesty, freedom of thought, and Islamic ukhuwah. It is clear in several subjects, such as *Mahfudzat, Muthala'ah, Hadith, Tafsir,* and stories for you, among others, that these subjects contain material with moral and spiritual messages that help form a sense of value in students. For example, in *the Mahfudzat* lesson, the students memorized the expressions of wisdom in Arabic that contained the values of patience, sincerity, and simplicity, while in *Muthala'ah*, they were trained to understand texts that talked a lot about morals, responsibility, and honesty in life.

In the learning process in the classroom, there are limited movements for male teaching staff, both those who are already married and those who are not married. The policy for male teaching staff is to restrict movement to the back row and hallways between students; all of this is done as an effort to maintain an educational environment that aligns with the values of the Pondok Modern Gontor Putri.

B. Learning Strategies Used in KMI Lessons to Form the Character of Students in Pondok Modern Gontor Putri

The discussion in this component includes the learning system, methods, rules, implementation stages, as well as the evaluation and supervision mechanism of teaching. The *Kulliyyatul-Mu'allimat al-Islamiyah* (KMI) learning system at Pondok Modern Gontor Putri does not use traditional teaching systems such as *wetonan* (one-way classical recitation) and *sorogan* (individual learning). The students are educated and taught in stages from grade I to grade VI at the level of junior high school and high school. The materials provided are also formal, including Arabic, English, religious, and general lessons. All subjects at Pondok Gontor Putra (for Male students), but at Pondok Gontor Putri, there are *Nisaiyah* subjects (Syarifah Ema Rahmaniyah, 2022).

Nisaiyah comes from *nisa'*, which means woman. *Nisaiyah* is a lesson about women's empowerment. At the beginning of its implementation, *Nisaiyah* subjects were only in the form of skeletons and chapters; it took many years to formulate the Nisaiyah book as one of the primary teaching materials at Pondok Gontor Putri. The boarding school must see the process of growth and development of students from the feminine side from time to time. Everything is adjusted to the age and psychology of the students based on abstract movements of the times, so that this book is not boring because it is outdated or out of date. As time goes by, now the book of *Nisaiyah* is in accordance with expectations.

KMI is not rigid and gives teachers complete freedom to determine the learning methods that will be used in delivering and explaining the subject matter. The methods used by KMI teachers are quite varied; there are lecture methods, discussions, groups, demonstrations, exercises, questions and answers, assignments, and so on.

However, Kyai Zarkasyi emphasised that the core of the learning method of academic materials at Pondok Modern Gontor must form a rational-creative way of thinking for students, by involving students to think and actively reason on their own, which is always escorted or supervised by the teacher of the material concerned. The material teachers are still overseen by a team that specializes in handling this curriculum system.

This learning model is commonly called the Direct Method. Kyai Zarkasyi emphasized the use of this method in Arabic and English materials as well as KMI materials related to language, such as *al-Muthala'ah*, Reading, *Nahwu, Sharaf*, and so on.(Zarkasyi, 2005b) As with *al-Muthala'ah* material, the purpose of this material is not only to understand the content of the story in the book, but also to help students master all the words and arrangements in the book, without always being guided. This is in line with the learning philosophy at Pondok Modern Gontor that "The hut only gives hooks, not fish".

To ensure the proper running of the learning system and improve academic quality, KMI has certain parts like: Teaching and Learning Process (PBM) Section, Curriculum Research and Development (R&D) Section, Teacher Career Development Section, Library, Laboratory, Administration and Data Collection Section, Diploma Section, and Facilities and Infrastructure Section. Regarding improving academic quality and some of its programs, KMI has a motto that is always echoed, namely, "Even the best can be improved".

The teaching and learning process at Pondok Gontor Putri is expected to be conducted effectively. KMI, as an institution that takes care of the academics of students, must have an activity that starts from planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation. Some of the activities at KMI include daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly activities.

Daily activities include: 1) *Tabkir*, which is the movement to enter class on time. This activity can be done by KMI staff travelling to dormitories, bathrooms, kitchens, and other places so that students can join class immediately. 2) *Taftisy i'dad,* which is an examination of the teacher's teaching preparation in the book of *i'dad.* If a teacher has not written a teaching preparation, then he is not allowed to teach until he has finished making *i'dad.* 3) *Naqd al-tadris,* i.e. the evaluation (criticism) of teaching. In this activity, senior teachers are given the mandate to evaluate their colleagues, assessing them on their methods, materials, and performance. 4) Classroom control, this activity is to ensure the implementation of the teaching and learning process in the classroom, such as ensuring the presence of teachers, student

attendance, and others. 5) *Al-Ta'allum al-Muwajjah,* which is a night study activity guided by the teachers. The material they learned was the same as that given by the teachers in the morning. KMI has conditioned the study place.

IV. DISCUSSION

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri is not only an Islamic educational institution based on Islamic boarding schools, but also a structured and consistent character education system. The integration of modern boarding school values in KMI lessons is proven to be not only symbolic, but also a framework for curriculum and educational practices that live in the daily lives of students. This is as explained in the following points:

1. KMI Curriculum as a Medium for Character Building

The curriculum system at Pondok Gontor Putri is designed to be integrative and holistic. The concept of the integration of 100% religious lessons and 100% general lessons is not only administratively meaningful, but also shows that Islamic values and the character of modern boarding schools are woven into all subjects proportionally. This is in line with the idea of an integrated curriculum developed by Beane (1997), which is a curriculum that unites cognitive competencies with life values (Wall, 2017).

Values such as sincerity, simplicity, and independence are grounded through a learning process that emphasizes discipline, responsibility, and active participation. For example, learning *Mahfudzat* is not just memorisation, but an invitation to reflect and live the meaning of words of wisdom in life behaviour. This reinforces the view that pesantren education forms character through repetition, example, and intense coexistence.

2. The Value of Modern Boarding School as an Educational Identity

The Motto and Panca Jiwa Pondok are not just slogans, but function as a basic philosophy that animates all educational practices. Virtuous values, for example, are reflected in the strict supervision of students' manners and morals in the classroom and dormitory. This reinforces the theory of affective learning, according to Krathwohl (1964), that learners' values and attitudes can be developed through emotional engagement and a consistent learning environment (Johns & Moyer, t.t.).

In addition, ukhuwah Islamiyah is applied through egalitarian coexistence in the cottage, which psychosocially forms a sense of solidarity, empathy, and the ability to interact in diversity. This phenomenon aligns with Durkheim's notion that effective education fosters social cohesion by transmitting collective values.

3. Character Building Strategies: Methods, Teachers, and Atmosphere

Gontor Putri emphasized the importance of learning methods that form active and reasoning ways. The emphasis on direct methods, discussion-based learning, and demonstrations shows that strengthening the character of students is not only through the content of the material, but also the approach and relationship between teachers and students.

Kyai Trimurti's philosophical quote that emphasizes that *"The spirit of the teacher is more important than the teacher himself"* shows that the character of the teacher is the primary determinant of the success of education. This supports a statement that "we teach who we are"—that the essence of education is not only in the content of the teaching, but also in the integrity and personality of the educator.

4. Pesantren as a Space for Value Internalisation

The female students of Gontor Putri underwent a process of character formation not only in the classroom, but throughout the entire system of pesantren life, spanning 24 hours. Activities such as *taftisy i'dad*, *naqd al-tadris*, and *al-ta'allum al-muwajjah* are tangible forms of character education processes that run simultaneously through a neat and humanist control system.

This educational model strengthens the position of Islamic Boarding Schools (*pesantren*) as an institution that can answer the challenges of character crisis in national education, not only because of its success in instilling values, but also because of its ability to integrate those values in formal and informal curricula.

V. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri has successfully integrated the values of modern boarding schools into the *Kulliyyatu-l-Mu'allimat al-Islamiyah* (KMI) curriculum systematically and comprehensively. Values such as sincerity, simplicity, independence, Islamic *ukhuwah*, and freedom are not only discourses, but also the framework of the curriculum, teaching methods, and the culture of cottage life that form the character of the students as a whole. Subjects such as *Hadith, Tafsir, Muthala'ah, Mahfudzat, Tarbiyah,* including *Nisa'iyah,* as well as nurturing and academic evaluation programs, play a crucial role in instilling these values in the daily lives of students.

Pondok Gontor Putri provides a real example of how educational institutions can balance the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects through a curriculum approach based on values and character. This strategy is not only effective in forming the personality of intellectually superior students, but also morally and socially strong, ready to become agents of change in society.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

VII. DISCLOSURE
The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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