A Discourse of Transformative Islam within Curriculum Transformation at State Institute for Islamic Studies of Purwokerto (IAIN Purwokerto)

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Abstract

This research is aimed to trace the thoughts and actions as efforts to achieve vision and mission of state institute for Islamic studies of Purwokerto (IAIN). The study is directed to answer following questions. Firstly, why transformative Islam becomes a discourse on curriculum development. Secondly, how a discourse of transformative Islam implicates in curriculum development at state institute for Islamic studies of Purwokerto (IAIN). Then, the findings show that a discourse of Islam transformative in curriculum development at state institute for Islamic studies of Purwokerto (IAIN) emerges as a result of an incapability of traditional and modern Islam perspective to resolve people’s problem due to lack of critical understanding of the meaning and message of the Qur’an and Hadith. Then, implication of Islamic transformative discourse in curriculum development at state institute for Islamic studies of Purwokerto can be seen in its intra curricular activities, co-curricular, and extra curricular activities. Through intra-curricular activities, transformative Islam is embodied in Islamic building lectures. In co-curricular program, Islam is indigenized through activity of knowledge and practice of worship (nationally abbreviated PPI), while within extra-curricular activities transformative Islamic values come into student activities which are strongly supported by policies of university leaders.

Keywords: Transformative Islam, Islamic Building, Knowledge and Practice of Worship

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menelusuri pemikiran dan aksi dari upaya pencapaian visi dan misi IAIN Purwokerto. Petanyaan penelitiannya adalah pertama mengapa Islam transformatif menjadi wacana dalam pengembangan kurikulum. Kedua, bagaimana implikasi wacana Islam transformatif dalam pengembangan
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Introduction

In the era of reform, quality of Islamic education progresses increasingly, so does its quantity. On the other hand, it faces several problems at once. Among a number of problems, the rise of strict Islam community which understands religion rigidly takes more attention. This is due to religious understanding which takes dominantly normative aspect of religion, lack of understanding about the essence of Islamic teachings, and ignoring socio-cultural context of society. In other words, the teaching of Islam is understood textually without considering historical and social context.

This group propagates their religious understanding (da’wah) in various colleges especially public secular universities in which most students there generally have less understanding about Islam. The pattern of propagation (da’wah) which gives certainty of doctrine obtains many responses from students which are lack of knowledge about Islam so that they have limited information to make comparison. Then, it shows an indication that such an Islamic propagation lately begins to emerge in Islamic universities such as UIN (Islamic State Universities), IAIN (State Institutes for Islamic Studies), and STAIN (State Islamic Colleges). Ironically, while being proud of their own instant Islamic understanding, they sometimes openly oppose Muslim figures who are considered as having different Islamic understanding or doctrine from theirs. They position themselves as adherents of puritanical Islam and regard Islamic group which is accommodating local
culture as impure Islam which has already changed from the original. Such a perspective eventually leads to exclusivist attitude toward other religions and complete disregard for multiculturalism and pluralism.

Such an exclusive Islamic movement seemingly gets stronger in the global era. In the era where many people become confused due to information overload, this group more freely uses information technology as a means to carry out Islamic propagation instead. This strategy is never thought before by both traditional or moderate Islamic groups. Moderate Islamic group that supports pluralism and multiculturalism responds calmly to any criticism and insult against Islam due to lack of information about media attack.

However, instead of viewing the changing world as threat of religion deviation, it should be understood as a trigger to give intensely creative response. Towards the world progress, religion should not be introvert or passive but massively dynamic.

A cultural Islamic discourse actually has already grown since the early of Islam until medieval era. In Indonesia, such a discourse begins to arise when Walisongo (nine revered saints of Islam who spread Islam in Indonesia) such as Sunan Kalijaga, as many Indonesian Muslim figures told, propagates the teachings of Islam in the island of Java. Recently, it becomes major topic brought by Nahdhatul Ulama (abbreviated NU), one of Islamic organizations in Indonesia, in Conference 33th at Jombang 1-5 August 2015 which is then well known as “Islam Nusantara”. In fact, it is rarely adopted officially by educational institution as its characteristic. However, the meaning of term “Cultural Islam” or Transformative Islam” or “Islam Nusantara” itself still becomes a long discussion topic and leads to a vigorous public debate.

In order to preserve and develop the teachings of Islam delivered by Prophet Muhammad and then continued by Walisongo in Indonesia, the involvement of Islamic educational institution is required. In this context, it needs the institution which has an inclusively dynamic progressive perspectives.

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Furthermore, these perspectives are accommodated to paradigm of “Cultural Islam” which is integrated into education curriculum and applied in learning activity in class. To make education curriculum relevant in a changing world, it needs some particular strategies to develop it without diminishing the essence of the present paradigm.

In order to develop curriculum, an educational institution should possess obvious principles and implement them since such principles are functioned as an underlying basis for its development. These principles that come as basic tenet for curriculum development include religious, philosophical, psychological, and sociological concepts. Therefore, in national education curriculum, values of pluralism and multiculturalism should be found within all of subject matters that they are integrated into including Islamic education course. Moreover, it is still found in reality the use of religion to justify violence, separation of culture and religion, and labelling “kafir” (a term used to call those who reject the Islamic faith) by particular group to others who have different religious understanding.

State institute for Islamic studies of Purwokerto (IAIN) is an educational institution which tries to implement transformative Islamic concept. This institution seemingly is consistent in integrate local wisdom into educational system as an answer for mindset of Islamic education containing biases of Arabism and ignoring local culture.

This condition is reflected on vision statement of the institution which is to be an “excellent, Islamic, and civilized” institution. Regarding its mission statement “to inculcate transformative Islamic values”, state institution for Islamic studies of Purwokerto (IAIN) surely owns special agenda related to its education curriculum.

Therefore, a discourse of transformative Islam certainly enriches Islamic education curriculum in this institution and, in turn, makes all programs of learning activities lead to the increase of student’s faith and religious understanding that regards local elements as heretical as well as

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compatible with religion. In this respect, religion can integrate into local cultures in which it spreads God’s mercy (rahmatallilalamin).

Considering such a background, the study of transformative Islamic discourse within education curriculum at state institution for Islamic studies of Purwokerto (IAIN) urgently needs to conduct. Moreover, it is considered as new institution which previously becomes a part of IAIN Walisongo (State Institution for Islamic Studies of Walisongo, Semarang) and IAIN Sunan Kalijaga (State Institution for Islamic Studies of Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta).

The problems of study in which the researcher tries to find out the answers are as follows: firstly, why transformative Islamic discourse becomes a basic principle for Islamic education curriculum development at State Institution for Islamic Studies of Purwokerto? Secondly, how a discourse of transformative Islam which develops in State Institution for Islamic Studies of Purwokerto implicates on its education curriculum?

**Transformative Islam**

In New Order era, transformative Islam is one of some contemporary theological discourses in Indonesia. In sociology, the term “transformative” is defined a thorough change in the form, appearance, character, etc within mutual relation between human either as an individual or group. Some factors which may be involved in a social transformation process are the role of education, technology, cultural value, and social movement.5

According to Moeslim Abdurrahman, transformative Islam is distinct “Islam” in which modernism process is intended to connect theological reflection to constructive reading of society to drive social transformation movement. This is because during process of modernism lots of people become more indifferent with problems yielded by social transformation process which increasingly marginalizes those who have no access to development.6 Through the idea of transformative Islam it shows that Muslim people have commitment to seek liberation for the oppressed.7 Islam should

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5 Encyclopedia of Indonesia (Jakarta: PT Cipta Adi Pustaka, 1991), h. 422.
6 Moeslim Abdurrahman, Islam Sebagai Kritik Sosial (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2003), h. 186.
read such a social inequality and give solution. However, critical theological concept is provided as an approach to understand relation between religion and power, modernism and social justice as well. Religion itself is not an identity of a group of people but it is revealed to liberate mankind from all forms of servitude which are against humanity values.

In Moeslim Abdurrahman’s view, religiosity is a process of being religious for those who claim to be religious. Such a process is certainly influenced by tradition, social environment, and all of its alteration as well. Therefore, as a part of human consciousness, religion actually does not come from such a consciousness of human which determines “their being” but “their social being” that exactly forms their consciousness.  

A Discourse of Transformative Islam within Curriculum Development

In response to enactment of national qualification framework-based curriculum (nationally known KKNI or Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia) for universities, IAIN Purwokerto makes some efforts to anticipate in preparing new relevant curriculum mapping. Such a process is carried out by the KKNI-based curriculum team applied to all of study programs.

According to Rector of State Institution for Islamic Studies of Purwokerto (IAIN), Dr. A. Luthfi Hamidi M.Ag., despite curriculum changes, it is still in line with vision and mission of IAIN Purwokerto. To spread transformative Islam especially in campus environment and generally in Purwokerto, Islamic Building (IB), one of courses which reflects a jargon of transformative Islam, is still maintained.

Islamic Building (IB) is a particular course in which the early idea comes from encouragement to provide basic foundation for Islamic understanding which later makes students possess attitude, values, knowledge & skill about the principal building of religion, trilogy of human relation, and fundamental Islamic concepts.

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9 Based on interview with A. Luthfi Hamidi, Rector of IAIN Purwokerto, September 2016.
As Munawir, one of Islamic Building lecturers, stated that the main core of Islamic Building course is to equip students with universal Islamic values. Before students take other courses, they firstly should be equipped with universal values. Such values of this Islamic university are then delivered through Islamic Building course. Therefore, whatever the fields of work they focus later, when equipped with universal Islamic values, students will have religious stance which avoids them to get drifted in formal Islam.\(^{11}\)

However, Islamic Building course is extremely in line with vision statement of IAIN Purwokerto “Excellent, Islamic, and Civilized” and missions carried especially on section (1) to become the centre of inclusively integrative Islamic studies, and section (4) to inculcate transformative Islamic values, as well as the goals to reach of IAIN Purwokerto in section (4) to propagate messages of Islam as “rahmatan lil alamin”, and section (6) to make Islam as a civilization spirit of the nation.

In Luthfi A. Hamidi’s perspective, through long discussion and careful consideration, such a new course which is then named “Islamic Building” is decided. He admits that there have already been some courses such as Tafsir Qur’an, Hadith, Fiqh, and so on. Yet, the orientation of these courses has not yet touched the essence of institutional concepts as explicitly stated in vision, mission, and purpose of IAIN Purwokerto.

Indeed, regard to mission statement “to inculcate transformative Islamic values”, IAIN Purwokerto directly or indirectly is demanded to be able to manifest the so-called values into its academic or non-academic activities. In addition, its alternative ideas are highly required to resolve any problems of life. However, due to such thinking, Islam is often regarded as liberal. This is because transformative Islam tries to reask the existing mainstream paradigm as well as the ideology hidden within; and provides new understanding which is expectedly able to change social structure and superstructure which oppressed society so that it enables society to realize their human potentials as well. The alternative understanding offered encourages people to bear consciousness which enables them to control social change.

\(^{11}\) Based on interview with Munawir, a lecturer of Islamic Building course in IAIN Purwokerto, September 2016.
The Implication of Transformative Islamic Discourse in Curriculum

In IAIN Purwokerto, the implication of transformative Islamic discourse in education curriculum includes those two aspects. In this respect, IAIN Purwokerto in order to reach vision, mission and purpose of institution relies not only on a number of courses studied in classroom but also several activities conducted outside. Furthermore, there are three programs as supporting aspects to reach vision and mission; intra-curricular, extracurricular, and co-curricular.

In order to embody vision of being excellent institution in developing knowledge, religion, and culture to realize civilized society, and mission to inculcate transformative Islamic values, these three activities are accommodated within Islamic Building lecturing which is conducted in classroom; any activities of knowledge and practice of worship (PPI) in traditional Islamic boarding school (well known as pondok pesantren) that IAIN Purwokerto collaborates with; rector’s policies for underprivileged students; and activities in campus and outside pesantren conducted by students under lecturer supervision through student activity council (nationally abbreviated LKM) and student activity unit (well known as UKM).

Firstly, through Islamic Building course, as Rector stated, students are equipped with alternative thinking as a result of transformative Islam inculcation process. Through lecturing class, lecturers help students to build foundation of innovatively critical thinking which is based on Islamic values as an introduction to next courses.12

“What I expect from Islamic Building course is; firstly, It could be a foundation of knowledge building in IAIN Purwokerto. Secondly, Islamic Building course is expected to be a medium for brainwash of students’ understanding towards Islam all this time. Why should it be basic foundation? This is because something that becomes the object, is

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12 A. Luthfi Hamidi, “Cited from Semester Learning Plan (Known as RPS) of Islamic Building Course Developed,” n.d.
taught, and punished is human himself but is there any foundation that has been given to IAIN?"³

What Rector of IAIN Purwokerto said is in line with the learning goals which could expectedly be realized through Islamic Building lecturing in class, as follows:

1. Students are able to become proficient in theoretical concepts of principal building of religion, Islam sources, trilogy of human relation, and Islamic fundamental concepts (Dimension of Knowledge)
2. Students are able to implement the principal building of religion, trilogy of human relation, and fundamental Islamic concepts which is categorized as prophetic spirit (Dimension of Skill)
3. Students are able to explore, internalize, and implement values which are based on principal building of religion, trilogy of human relation, and Islamic fundamental concepts (Dimensions of Attitude and Values)⁴

In order to achieve learning goals or Islamic Building lecturing, a set of lecture topics are designed in several class meetings, as following table:⁵

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³ Based on interview with A. Luthfi Hamidi, Rector of IAIN Purwokerto, November 2016.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ This table is processed from RPS (semester learning plan) of Islamic Building course which is prepared by Dr. HA. Luthfi Hamidi, M.Ag.
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Table 1.
Lecture Topics of Islamic Building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Topic/ Sub Topic</th>
<th>Material details</th>
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| 1     | Trilogy of Religion: Iman (faith) | a. The use of word “IMAN” and its meaning in Qur’an and Hadith  
b. Definition of word “IMAN” according to Ulama and figures  
c. Redefinition of word “IMAN” |
|       | Trilogy of Religion: Islam | a. The use of word “Islam” and its meaning within Qur’an and Hadith  
b. Definition of word “Islam” according to Ulama and figures  
c. Redefinition of word “Islam” |
|       | Trilogy of Religion: Ihsan (Excellence in faith) | a. The use of word “Ihsan” and its meaning within Qur’an and Hadith  
b. Definition of word “Ihsan” according to Ulama and figures  
c. Redefinition of “IHSAN” |
| 2     | Islam Sources | a. Kalamullah / Qur’an (verses of Qauliyyah)  
b. Sunnatullah/the rules of the universe Allah governs (verses of Kauniyyah, Insaniyyah, and tarikhiyyah). |
| 3     | Conceptions of Allah | a. Allah as The Ultimate Reality  
b. The Name of Allah  
c. the Worldview of Allah |
| 4     | Concepts of mankind and Muslim People | a. The creation of man  
b. Physical and spiritual elements of man  
c. Nubuwwah (Prophethood) and risalah (Message)  
d. Mankind as abdullah (servant of Allah) as well as khalifatullah fi al-Ardl (vicegerent of Allah in the universe)  
e. Concepts of dunia/universe (khalifah) and akhirat (abdullah) |
| 5     | Concepts of Muslim People | a. Concepts of Ummah (community)  
b. Concepts of Imamah (Leadership)  
c. Raison d’etre of Muslim People |
| 6     | Concepts of Nature | a. The creation of nature  
b. Realm of Dunia (The universe) and realm of akhirat (the afterlife)  
c. Exploration, exploitation, responsibility of human towards preservation of the universe  
d. The survival of the universe |
| 7     | Islamic Prophetic Spirit | a. Commpassionate & Merciful (rahman rahim) &  
b. ukhuwwah Islamiyyah (Brotherhood between Muslims) |
| 8     | Islamic Prophetic Spirit | Harmony of Iman (faith) & Amal (practice) |
| 9     | Islamic Prophetic Spirit | Mujahadah (striving), Ijtihad (effort), and Jihad (struggle) |
| 10    | Islamic Prophetic Spirit | Uswh Hasanah (Role Model) and Musabaqah fi al-Khairat (competition in doing goodness) |
To deliver the foundation of thought as well as brainwashing within Islamic Building lecturing, as Luthfi Hamidi told, usually it begins by giving students questions related to consciousness. Such conscious questions are pertinent to established Islamic doctrine which during this time has been discussed by a lot of educators in informal, nonformal, or even formal institution such as school and university.

Secondly, inculcation of transformative Islamic values is manifested through activities of knowledge and practice of worship (PPI). Program of PPI is established since Luthfi Hamidi becomes a rector of State Islamic Colleges of Purwokerto (STAIN). PPI is an effort to deliver knowledge and practice of worship to new students. To realize such a program, IAIN Purwokerto collaborates with several Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) around campus.

As Luthfi Hamidi told, it is surprising that the idea he sparks leads to several positive impacts, as follows:

1. Students begin to like pondok pesantren
2. The presence of incredible competition between pesantren which I regard as a reward is unexpected thing that I never imagine before.
3. Pesantren which previously broke up now could operate again. It firstly starts with 5 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which I think enough at that time, but it is not in fact. This is because students who have stayed in pesantren then do not want to go out.
4. It is amazing that Pesantren then is not away from downtown but it gets closer since pesantren is considered as cultural heritage.
5. Lecturers who have talent to be kyai (an expert in Islam) could build pesantren although it firstly begins by renting house. It is really amazing thing which I never imagine before. They firstly rent house which grows and later becomes pesantren. There are around five traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) built by lecturers. This is truly because of program of PPI and really those who establish are lecturers of IAIN Purwokerto. When pesantren is located in
downtown, It is unimagined since it is cultural heritage. It is very exciting although it needs gradual steps to tighten up.16

Thirdly, through college’s policy which gives free education fee for the underprivileged students, the college mission “to inculcate transformative Islamic values” is embodied. The manifestation of transformative Islamic thinking by defending the underprivileged people is realized through the presence of Rector’s effort to get more quota of Bidik Misi scholarship program. As Rector said, IAIN Purwokerto gets 45 participants of Bidik Misi scholarship which come from several faculties. In addition, IAIN Purwokerto allocates budget for underprivileged students and gives zero payment (Rp-0) for UKT (single tuition) for students with similar criteria.

“As an affirmation for potential students from underprivileged family, we open wide opportunity for them. So, there is no reason not to go to university because of the cost”17

Fourthly, through student activities, IAIN manifests the mission statement “to inculcate transformative Islamic values”. In order to develop students’ critical thinking, IAIN encourages child assistance program carried out by students in Ndayak village (former bus station) which is categorized as a slum area.18

Besides, Rector does not restrict particular religious understanding which penetrates to campus. In this respect, in order to cultivate an inclusive attitude among students, Shia Islam (Syiah) is permitted to do scientific activities at campus as well as student organizations such as HTI and KAMMI. Since the orientation of these two organizations (HTI & KAMMI), according to Luthfi Hamidi, is different from the mainstream, both are relatively difficult to grow in IAIN Purwokerto.19

The explanation above proves that transformative Islam developed by IAIN Purwokerto differs from traditional Islam (salafi) or moderate Islam. The indigenization of transformative Islam is carried out by exploring issues happening among society which are not merely pertinent to country and

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Based on interview with A. Luthfi Hamidi, Rector of IAIN Purwokerto, Desember 2016.
19 Ibid.
religious interpretation. Also, social problems such as social inequality, poverty, injustice, global capitalism are tried to resolve. It is in accordance with what Ahmad Fuad Fanani states, as follows:

“In transformative Islam, if you want to help poor man or suffering people, you firstly do not ask what his religion and origin is, because essentially a poor man has equal right, must be protected by system and state.”

Ahmad Fuad Fanani explained that in the past the term mustad’afin only refers to poor people, the needy, and orphans, but now it includes the oppressed, for instance, someone who works as a prostitute to support her child, to pay the child’s school fee, and to meet daily needs, due to lacking of skills to get other jobs or other reasons needs to protect, be invited to communication, sponsor, and help what exactly the problem she faces.

In Fanani’s view, the idea of transformative Islam is extremely in line with the concept of diversity and taking sides is relevant with the condition of Indonesia now.

“The condition is very contextual. Now in Indonesia, we could find crisis, people who claims their community as the most right, who like to blame others, and do not recognize the differences. On the other hand, it is pathetic that poverty increases while the state continuously allows structural inequality, injustice. Poor people become a victim of globalization, state injustice, and global capitalism.

Conclusion

This study concludes that, firstly, a discourse of transformative Islam within curriculum development of IAIN Purwokerto is encouraged by college vision to be “Excellent, Islamic, and Civilized” as well as mission statement especially on section (1) to be a centre of inclusively integrative Islamic studies, and section (4) to inculcate transformative Islamic values. Also it is

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.

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invigorated by the purposes of IAIN Purwokerto on section (4) to propagate Islam as *rahmatan lil alamin*, and section (6) to make Islam as national civilization spirit. Therefore, the essence of Islamic Building (IB) course is extremely in line with those.

Secondly, the implication of transformative Islamic discourse in curriculum development of IAIN Purwokerto can be seen from activities of intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular. Transformative Islam is embodied through Islamic Building (IB) course which is categorized as intra-curricular activities while within co-curricular activities, it is manifested by Islamic indigenization through activities of knowledge and practice of worship (PPI). Besides, transformative Islamic values are accommodated in extra-curricular activities through student activities which are fully supported by rector’s policies.
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