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TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES TOWARDS FACILITIES AND INNOVATION AT *PONDOK* LEARNING INSTITUTION IN KELANTAN

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Abstract

Nowadays, *Pondok* as an Islamic Learning Institution is rapidly growing especially in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pulau Pinang, Perak and Kedah. Earlier, Islamic education in Malaysia started as an informal institution because of nature development during those times, where several places such madrasah, mosque, and *surau* became center for teaching and learning. Even so, especially in Kelantan the informal system are still lasted even until today in line with formal educational system. In this research, the goal is to identify the transformation strategies towards facilities and innovation at *Pondok* learning institution in Kelantan. This research employed a qualitative approach by visual observation and in-depth interviews with *Pondok* Mudir, management staffs, religious teacher and students. The objectives are to identify current facilities, to propose new transformation strategies in terms of facilities, and innovation at *Pondok* institutions, and lastly to recommend the transformation of *Pondok* as an Islamic Learning institutions into Community Centre. The findings of this research were find out what are the current situation at *Pondok* in Kelantan. This is because for generations, facilities in *Pondok* institutions has contributed to intellectual activities. *Pondok* generally well-received by many Malay Muslim either young, adults, pension people, or elderlies. Hence, the current trends shows that apart from being a place for seeking education, *Pondok* has been developed to be a place for community to seek continual education indirectly place for them to earn money as well as new settlement that suits their need within a sociable and supportive environment.

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Keywords: Community centre, education, facilities, innovation, learning institution, *pondok*..



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1. Introduction

In the early 19th century until around 1945, it is recognized by education researchers that Islamic Education had started where public schools were recognized. These schools teaching Arabic and other Islamic education introduced by presenting subjects related to religion in their schools (Noor, 2005). In Kelantan, There are two types of Islamic Education system up until now and they can attracted many students to pursue studies on Islamic way. First, in traditional way where there are more independent and called in in informal system. The second one is Modern way where it is funded by state government or from federal. The *Pondok* words is originally from Arabic word (Al- Funduq) meaning 'a residential house'. It is also means a residential arrangement in the form of small house fixed for 3 to 4 students. In the meantime, according to Kamus Dewan, *Pondok* means 'Madrasah' where it is a place for teaching and learning in religious studies. Religious studies situation at Kota Bharu became an attraction to students from Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sumatera, and other states from Malay Peninsular to come studied in Kelantan. Indirectly Kelantan became famous with the nickname that they called Mecca Verandah (Nor, 2012).

Other than that, *Pondok* known as they have new concept of accommodation where they provides in house religious education and become popular for certain groups of ages in Malaysia. This has been identifies as one of the method in Islamic Education that has linked to Islamic movement (Sufian, 2013).

2. Problem Statement

At the moment, *Pondok* institution were organized in everywhere and become a popular Islamic learning and teaching for education in Malaysia. Some of *Pondok* started in a small Mosque and within five to six years they developed became a huge *Pondok* institution. Individual, NGO, private company and Majlis Agama Islam plays a big role and influenced in the development of the *Pondok* institution. They need to provide support in term of zakat, sadaqah, and waqf. Based on Duani (n.d.) from Indonesia, small *Pondok* institution was sponsored by the generous Malaysian Companies who willing to give fund from the collection of waqf and zakat. The same scenario happened in Malaysia that the Muslim started to give attention to *Pondok* education especially the Malaysian Private Companies and NGOs who actively contribute the waqf and zakat to contribute in development of *Pondok*. In order to be well developed, *Pondok* institution needs to transform from the traditional system of *Pondok* management system into a new standard and guideline of management. That is compulsory in order to achieve effective result that will measure the sustainability and survivability of *Pondok* institution in Kelantan. However, these institutions face many challenges in surviving in the world of modern education, even the immense value of their contributions to Islamic knowledge cannot be avoid. Support, commitment, and ideas in realizing these institutions are required to strengthening these institutions so that they are still relevant into current education (Sufian, 2013). Different plans have been implemented with the support of the government to ensure this traditional Islamic education institution continues to stand in contemporary Islamic education. Many factor where finance, social system, good facilities, infrastructure, management, and ideas have helped *Pondok* institutions to impose developments and improvements that will ensure the institution meet the needs of current Islamic knowledge (Nor, 2012). Even so, systematic planning and innovation are important to ensure that these institutions remain as a center of Islamic education in Malaysia especially in

Kelantan. This is because it is needed by *Pondok* practitioners, religious teacher, students, family, communities, and society so that they continue to sustain in today's challenging era.

3. Research Questions

- What are the current facilities provided at *Pondok* institution in Kelantan?
- What are the new transformation strategies that should be taken in terms of facilities and innovation at *Pondok* Institution in Kelantan?
- What are the recommendations to transform *Pondok* Institution as an Islamic Learning Institution into Community Centre?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research on *Pondok* supposed to give new knowledge of real privilege, especially *Pondok* facilities system, strategies, vision and mission, social system, and to transform the *Pondok* people to be a precious and effective man towards community and Ummah. Hence, understanding of current *Pondok* facilities can enhance credibility and trust others citizen skills is important before overcome any problem including poverty issues. As we all know, Islam provided great impetus for human to chase the knowledge. Our prophet Nabi Muhammad (S.A.W) commanded that the knowledge upon all Muslims, and urged them to seek knowledge as far as they could reach and at all times. As per Ali Ibn Abu Talib, 4th Caliph (may Allah be pleased with him), once said, 'I would like to be the salve of a person who teaches me a letter' express how importance the knowledge. So, Muslim rules insisted that we need to acquire learning and give considerable support to institutions and learning in many ways (Hashim, 2011). Besides, this research also comes out with new strategies and innovation to help local people gain knowledge as much as possible through activities and programs involving *Pondok* communities, and publics.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Research Design

This research employed a qualitative approach by visual observations and in-depth interviews. This method was selected based on this research requires details explanations and understanding within the context strategies in terms of facilities, and innovation at *Pondok* institutions in Kelantan. Furthermore, to obtain the required information from the data collection need to recommend to enhance the *Pondok* image as Islamic Institutions and then translated the data well.

5.2. Location of the study

Site visit to conduct visual documentation are at two selected *Pondok* where located in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. There are Madrasah Muhammadiyah Beta Hilir and Madrasah Diniyah Bakriah *Pondok* Pasir Tumboh. These two *Pondok* was chosen due to the location where it is located near to Kota Bharu city and also in a district with the largest number of potential community that can contribute into various expertise and financial resources. Besides, there are among the largest *Pondok* in the state of Kelantan and have the highest number of students in about 200-600 students.

5.3. Research Instruments

Basically, the researcher must assure that the instruments chosen is still valid and reliable. It is rely on a large extent on suitability of the instruments. This research will be using semi-structured interviews and all the documents such as *Pondok* data information, profile, schedule, work programs, activities and events of two selected *Pondok* as an instrument (Efendi, 2017).

5.4. Data Collection

The interview session has been done to gather primary data in this research. Face-to-face interviews have a distinct advantage of enabling the researcher to establish research with potential respondents and therefore gain their commitment and cooperation. The researcher needs to record all potentially useful data accurately, thoroughly, and systematically, using field notes, photographs, and other notes. The qualitative methods are commonly used in which are an observation methods, semi-structured interview, and documentation. The procedures and steps are getting permission from the faculty, contact Madrasah mudir, submit the letter to management, interview session, data analysis (Table 01), and lastly result. Before the interview sessions, the researcher will prepare a thorough and structured list of questions. To obtain more information related to research all the question asked are well designed in line with the aim and objectives of this research. It has separated into three sections. There are section A for facilities, section B about the maintenance aspects which are concern more on building performance condition and section C about the innovation and social system related to *Pondok*. The interview is conducted in face to face and telephone interview to collect the data. During the interview session at Madrasah Diniyah Bakriah *Pondok* Pasir Tumbuh researcher able to meet with their *Pondok* Mudir, 3 management staffs and 13% out of total students. Meanwhile at Madrasah Muhammadiyah Beta Hilir researcher able to interview 2 management staffs, 2 religious teachers and 10% out of total students.

5.5. Literature Review

Citizen Islamic School formed one of the important Islamic education centers in Kelantan. The purpose of establishing religious schools is to educate and produce legal officers, imams and learned scholars as well as disseminating Islamic teachings as well (Azha, 2012). In the Malaysian context and in the part of the Islamic culture, Islamic studies becoming more and more important because of the religion Islam itself, as expressed in the Constitution, in the religion of the Federation. Even Highness Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia has declared that Malaysia is an Islamic country, thus the purpose of establishment of Islamic studies is to sharpen the leadership skills through religious studies and to strengthened relationship between fellow students and lecturers of conventional and Islamic in Malaysia (Mydin, 2014). In Financially aspects, *Pondok* depends on public contribution and donation, student's registration fees and also the administrator's efficiency in financial management. Some of the teachers at *Pondok* teach voluntarily without taking any pay or salary (Abidin, 2017). The survival of *Pondok* very much depends on support from the community. The students were not charged with any fees but contributions from students just in a form of service to help the teacher by cleaning up the environment at the school, work in the fields, and collect firewood and so on. As a result of financial shortage, the facility at *Pondok* institutions is not conducive for teaching and learning. Although teachers and students do not

mind living and studying in such conditions, there should be attempts to make them better. The government authority or Muslim organization must play their role to help to make *Pondok* institution more lively and attractive. There should also be a monitoring body by the state or federal government to support enough funds and to ensure that the administrations at the *Pondok* or madrasah are well organized and coordinated. As most funds come from the public donation, auditing by firms is necessary to ensure that the money is well spent and managed (Muhamad, 2000). Thus one of the examples is Pusat Pembangunan *Pondok* (PPPB, 2008, 2009), where an association of *Pondok* was created to administer the welfare of its members. It is registered under the Companies Act. Membership includes the Tuan Guru, teachers, students and those affiliated in *Pondok* development. It was recognized by the state of Kelantan to represent *Pondok* in the state. (Amin, 2015).

According reports from Islamic Religious Officer in each state, the problem faced by *Pondok* institution still ongoing and each state responsible for monitoring their establishment, travel and management of the *Pondok* itself. This situation put *Pondok* institution in dilemma of either continuing or closing it after the death of its founder. The challenges faced by the *Pondok* institution were divided into three where there are in curriculum, management system and educational direction. Although the *Pondok* institution system has its shortcomings, it is undeniable that the institution plays a role in shaping the students' Muslim identity and personality. Even more interesting and noteworthy is that the cafeteria has become a place for students with disabilities and parents have high expectations for their children to be well educated. It is hoped that the cottage education system will be recognized as a formal institution capable of standing in line with the mainstream education system (Jaafar, 2017). In Addition, facilities management also plays an important role in surviving the *Pondok* institution. It concludes environment, safety, security, maintenance, inspection, building maintenance, cleaning, operation, business continuity planning, space allocation and changes also consideration of business compliance (Wikipedia, 2018).

6. Findings

Table 01. Data analysis at selected *Pondok* located in Kota Bharu, Madrasah Muhammadiyah Beta Hilir and Madrasah Diniyah Bakriah *Pondok* Pasir Tumboh.

Elements	Madrasah Muhammadiyah Beta Hilir, Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Madrasah Diniyah Bakriah <i>Pondok</i> , Pasir Tumboh, Kota Bharu, Kelantan
Building	 <p>Figure 01. View at Madrasah Muhammadiyah Beta Hilir</p>	 <p>Figure 02. View at Madrasah Diniyah Bakriah</p>
Year of establishment	1980	1959

Total of students/staffs and teachers	200-220 students including full time, part time, adult and elderly. 9 staffs and 13 religious teachers.	500-600 students including full time, part time, adult and elderly. 12 staffs and 28 religious teachers.
Facilities provided	5 classroom, toilet, kitchen, hostel for male and female students, mosque, madrasah, dining hall, offices, , parking for motorcycle and car, vending machines, signage, staircases, gazebo, rooms for elderly, laundry area, rest area,	Hall, kitchen, toilet, 6 classroom, hostel for male and female students, mosque, madrasah, canteen, offices, guard house, parking for motorcycle and car, vending machines, signage, staircases, retail shop, homestay, guest house.
Recommendation of new Facilities	Café, 5 classroom, football field, multipurpose hall, guard house, retail shop, parking lots for motorcycle and car, signage,	Café, 10 classroom, community centre, multipurpose hall, parking lot for motorcycle and bicycle,
Maintenance management	Once a week on Saturday, in-house cleaning team beautify with community and neighbourhood to do great clean up.	Depending on circumstance, in-house cleaning team beautify with community and neighbourhood to do great clean up.
Financial resources	Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kelantan (MAIK), student fees, donation from NGO and publics.	Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kelantan (MAIK), student fees, donation from NGO and public, in-house sales, event and programmes revenue.

Based on the interview that has been done, the majority of the respondents from the two case studies *Pondok* have similar opinions on the current facilities, strategies and the innovation about *Pondok* management and development. As a summary, the analyses of finding from the research methods that have been done are:

- Main facilities provided at the *Pondok* are hostel, office, *surau*, washroom, hall, classroom, staircase, parking, landscape, signage, security, staircase and mechanical/electrical.
- The facilities provided are inadequate to accommodate the total of the students. For example, classroom, hostel and dining hall. Currently, approximately one classroom 200sqft accommodates 40-50 students at one time.
- The schedule of the use and function of the hall is not properly arranged.
- The maintenance of the facilities did not have the schedule and there are so many abandoned and damaged things.
- The maintenance process is only following the necessity and not in the schedule.
- The management uses in-house staffs to do the maintenance to save the budget.
- The respondents strongly agree that *Pondok* management/students/society need to do new improvements to sustain the *Pondok* image and availability.
- Currently, these two selected *Pondok* are located within the local population area where it is an opportunity to do any community culture activities. For example selling local products including foods, painting batik, weaving, wood working, and many more. This can be highlight to the outside market indirectly introduce the communities and *Pondok* members activities.
- The respondents suggested doing a programs and activities that can generate income to the *Pondok* itself to overcome any financial problem in management and academic.
- The management of *Pondok* is suggesting that they can do an Islamic academic program especially to educate community and public whereby they can use their teacher and student skills

to teach. For example, Tajwid, Tarannum, Fiqh and Tafaquh classes, then provide practical to students such as funeral courses and others.

6.1. Recommendation

As for the recommendation, using existing *Pondok* facilities it can be rented to the public to organize any program. For example Tarannum Workshop and Muslim funeral Rites Course. To help the communities, *Pondok* management can collaborate with public or NGO's to create an event or learning to do craft products, foods, and activities related to Kelantan's tradition where can help publics to generate income. Other activities can involve pension people where they can contribute to any program that will occur in *Pondok*. Hence, the *Pondok* management and students can earn money by selling products involving community like Muslimah clothing and sunnah foods, for example, dates, raisins, and honey. This can be highlight to the outside market indirectly introduce the communities and *Pondok* members activities. Other than that, the *Pondok* management itself should introduce the students with technology and the internet as one of the methods in delivery dakwah and knowledge. This *Pondok* can be considered as Islamic institutions that may serve as an effective instrument in the quest for peace, national unity, and development, improve financial thereby reducing the issue of poverty and also enhance our culture and quality of life, especially in Kelantan.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, previously we have also seen the history of the development *Pondok* institution system which initially received the response but further reduced its demand following the existence of secular schools and religious schools. The people in society also plays an important role where the *Pondok* as an Islamic studies institution, humanitarian institution, produce Muslim spiritual Malay and also contribute to the modern education system (Rawi, 2015).

Although the institution is experiencing tides, the teachers have never turned away from their hopes instead of continuing to work on the legacy of the Prophet S.A.W. this is. This is evident when the *Pondok* institution reached its glorious era in the 20th century. The color of the institution of excellence is beautifully beautiful and visible when it produces many well-known intellectuals in the region. Although the modern education system grows as mushrooms that grow after rain, this does not necessarily impede the *Pondok* institution as a whole. Although teachers and students largely do not mind living and studying in such conditions, there should be attempts to make them better (Ahmad, 2017).

In future, *Pondok* management should be open up and not only think of its inner circle and need to be out form current comfort zone. The institution itself must be well prepared to face and accept changes any positive developments as well as the effects. For example, developments in technology, and modern system management (Zakaria, 2010).

The government authority or Muslim organization must play their role to help to make *Pondok* institution more lively and attractive. There should also be a monitoring body by the state or federal government to support enough funds and to ensure that the administrations at the *Pondok* or madrasah are well organized and coordinated. As most funds come from the public donation, auditing by firms is necessary to ensure that the money is well spent and managed. On top of that, it is not wrong if *Pondok*

Institution as an Islamic Learning Institution can transform into Community Centre if it is approved by various parties (Yasid, 2012).

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