

THE ROLES OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF MUSLIM SCHOLAR CANDIDATE (PTKU) IN PRODUCING ISLAMIC SCHOLARS IN NORTH SUMATRA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the roles of Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate (PTKU) of the Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council (MUI) in producing Muslim scholar candidates in North Sumatra. This study was a qualitative descriptive research. The result of this study showed that the roles of Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate (PTKU) of the Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council (MUI) of North Sumatra was critical to enhance the number of Muslim scholars, and the need of equal distribution of Muslim scholars in North Sumatra in terms of quantity and quality. PTKU is funded by the North Sumatra Provincial Government grant and donations from Muslim community. PTKU also continues to develop and progress significantly, until now it has adequate facilities, lecturers, curriculum and buildings.

Keywords: Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate (PTKU); Muslim Scholar Council; North Sumatra Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The position of the *ulama* (Muslim scholars) was very noble in the eyes of Allah and before His Messenger. It must be known that producing *ulama* is not an easy job. An organized effort is needed to produce *ulama* who will educate people to understand the Islamic teachings as a whole. It is feared that one day two kinds of *ulama* will emerge, namely *ulama* who teaches and delivers humans to the path of Allah, but at the same time will also emerge *ulama* or people who are knowledgeable but lead to the wrong path (*ulama as-Sū'*) because of their arrogance. Therefore, righteous *ulama* are needed so that they become gurus for people to ask questions, guides for those who are desperate to learn on and also comforters for those who are emotionally disturbed.

The Higher Education of Muslim Scholar (PTKU) which is under the auspices of the Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council (MUI) of North Sumatra Province has existed since 1983 and made a real contribution to the development of Islamic *da'wah* (Islamic preaching) especially in remote areas. PTKU has entered its 14th cohort of students. *Ulama* in North Sumatra province feel that it is critical to provide a new generation of future Islamic scholars because the old generation of *ulama* is diminishing. As the English proverb says "*Broken does not grow, lost does not change*". In the military world, this expression may seem excessive, or even contradictory at all. However, this expression is very relevant in the world of *ulama*. If a general has retired, then behind him there are many new generals who are ready, even they are prepared to replace him. However, when a scholar dies, it will take a long time to have a new scholar because it is not easy to nurture a knowledgeable person with wisdom. Because the death of a scholar is a sign of that Allah has taken away the scholar and it is difficult to find a

replacement. This is the reason Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council of North Sumatra Province has taken an effort to establish a Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate institution.

Higher Islamic Education in North Sumatra

So far in Indonesia, there are only three institutions of PTKU, two of which are in North Sumatra and another in Banten. PTKU in MUI North Sumatra is very unique. Some of its uniqueness is as follows:

1. PTKU MUI of North Sumatra is an informal higher education institution so that it does not have its own diploma;
2. PTKU MUI of North Sumatra does not have legality from the state;
3. PTKU MUI of North Sumatra is a higher education institution but only has one study program;
4. The teachers are very professional even though the study program is only at the Diploma level (D3), but more than 17% of the lecturers are Professors, more than 56% of the lecturer are Doctoral holders, 8.6% have completed their Doctoral work, and only 4 lecturer are still at postgraduate holders (S2) and 3 of them graduates from the Middle East;
5. The length of study at PTKU of the Indonesia Muslim Scholar Council North Sumatra is only three years, so it is only at diploma level;
6. Enrollment in PTKU MUI North Sumatra is not open every year, it only accepts new students when the current class is graduated. Thus, the admission of new students only once in three years, except in 2018 because *Baitul Mal* Bank Mu'amalah Indonesia funded one cohort to graduate within 3 years;
7. PTKU MUI North Sumatra program is not intervened by anyone and any party, neither by donors nor the government;
8. All students get full scholarships (tuition free and stipends);
9. All students are boarded for free.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The researcher wanted to know the extent to which the preparation, implementation, evaluation, and results of PTKU MUI North Sumatra carried out by MUI North Sumatra since 1983. The graduates from this institution are expected to be *ulama* (scholar) who are knowledgeable and possess wisdom. They must be able to memorize the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad and be able to understand and explain them to the people. They must be able to solve the problems being faced by the people. They also must have stable emotions, and a very deep and broad understanding of religion. The point is that prospective scholars are those who have an established IQ, EQ and SQ. Based on this background, the researcher was interested in conducting research that was focused on the management in PTKU MUI North Sumatra. In this study, the researcher would analyze the roles of PTKU MUI North Sumatra, and contribution of PTKU MUI North Sumatra.

EPISTEMOLOGY OF ULAMA

Ulama that can be understood by the public are those who have extensive knowledge in the field of Islamic religious teachings. They should deliver Islamic teachings and be able to answer questions related to Islamic teachings. The scholars are as a reference and also guidance for the people to learn and practice Islamic teachings. Therefore, it is natural in the Indonesian

Language Dictionary to explain that the word *ulama* is the people who are experts in matters or knowledge of the Islamic religion (Depdiknas, 2005). They have a broad knowledge about the Islamic teachings. The word *ulama* is derived from Arabic and it is a plural form of '*alīm*' (At-Tabari, 2000). In singular form the word '*alim*' means a person who knowledgeable about Islam (Gulayayni, 1987). He has knowledge and wisdom. Their knowledge is so extensive that is not bound by time. They are able to give verdicts on Islamic issue based on their knowledge. According to Imam Asfahānī, '*alīm*' is the nature of Allah. However, it can be used to humans who are knowledgeable (Al-Asfahani, 2002). Thus, on '*alīm*' is a person who has knowledge of the Islamic teachings.

In the *Qur'anic Encyclopedia Study of Vocabulary Studies* it is explained that the word *ulama* is the plural form of the word '*alim*'. This word comes from the root word '*alima-ya-lamu-ilman*'. This word is mentioned 863 times in the *Qur'an* with various forms, namely in the form of *fi'il māḍi* (past verb) 69 times, *fi'il muḍāri* (present verb) 338 times, *fi'il amar* (command verb) 27 times and the rest 429 times in *isim* form (noun form) with various forms (Shihab, 2007: 1017). Hence, the word *ulama* is frequently mentioned in the *Qur'an*. According to Ibn Faris as quoted by Quraish Shihab (2007) in the book *Mu'jam Maqayisil Lughah* stated that the combination of the letters *ain*, *lam* and *mim* basically has a meaning that shows signs or traces on something which can distinguished it from others. From the origin of this word, then the following words emerge; *al-'allāmah ai al makrufah*, the sign that is known; *al-a'lām* which means a flag or banner, and *al-'ilm* means knowing which is the opposite of the word *al-jahl* or ignorance. The word *ulama* cannot be separated from the word 'science. According to Rāghib al-Asfahānī (2002: 581) in his book *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb Al-qur'ān* says that *al-'ilm* is knowledge about nature of things. He wrote the following:

العلم ادراك الشيء بحقيقته وذلك ضربان احدهما ادراك ذات الشيء والثاني الحكم على الشيء بوجود شيء هو موجود له
اونفي شيء هومنفي عنه

Meaning: Knowledge is knowing something by its nature. It is divided into two, the first is knowing the substance of something and the second is law for something exists or does not exist.

In the *Qur'an* the word '*ulamā*' is only mentioned twice, namely in *Qur'an* Surah Fathir / 35: 28, and as-Syu'ara / 26: 197. In Q.S. al-Fathir / 35: 28, the word *ulamā* is mentioned in the context of the *Qur'an's* call for human to observe God's creations such as sky, diverse fruits, mountains, and animals. It is to instill in humans the Greatness of Allah. Allah swt says in *Quran*: *Verily, these who fear of Allah among His servants are only ulama*. They are people who have knowledge about the verses of Allah that are *kauniyyah* (cosmos). Whereas in as-Syu'ara / 26: 197, the term *ulama* is in the context of discussing the truth of the content of the *Qur'an*. This verse gives an explanation that '*ulamā*' are people who have knowledge of the verses of the *qur'aniyyah*. Therefore, the *ulama* are defined as those who understand the verses of *kauniyah* and the content of the revelation—the *Quran*. Based on these verses, it can be concluded that '*ulamā*' in the terminology of the *Qur'an* are the people who have knowledge of the verses of Allah, both *kauniyyah* and *qauliyyah* which can lead them to be obedient to Allah. They have extensive knowledge and understand the nature of the knowledge they have.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

Higher education in Indonesia has experienced significant changes over the past decade. The intended changes include changes in vision, mission and goals, as well as the management aspect of the institution. This paradigm shift is caused by the rapid development of information technology, so that the use of the digital technology in learning is ubiquitous. The changes affect most higher education providers, both the government and the private sector. Higher

education is not only as a center of knowledge or as a place of research and community service, but also a corporate entity, producing knowledge that is required by the industry (Indrajit & Djokopranoto, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate management of PTKU in terms of knowledge acquisition, research, and community service. Management of a higher educational institution requires specific knowledge and skills. A Higher Education of Muslim Scholar (PTKU) requires effective educational management in order to achieve its goals. In fact, the management is increasingly required to implement a holistic approach so as to achieve optimal performance, which prioritizes the quality, environment and organizational stakeholders. In every organization, integrity and commitment of members of their organizations must be continuously improved (Syafaruddin & Anzizhan, 2017).

There are many aspects that must be considered in the development of higher education. As written by Bush and Bell (2002) in their book *The Principles and Practice of Educational Management*, they wrote that there are several aspects to be considered in the development of higher education, namely: One of the first and most widely respected discussions of this concept provides the following definition of those elements that might be delegated to autonomous schools: (1) knowledge (decision relating to curriculum, including decisions relating to the goals or ends of schooling), (2) technology (decisions relating to the means of teaching and learning), (3) power (authority to make decisions), (4) material (decisions relating to the use of facilities, supplies and equipment), (5) people (decisions relating to the allocation of people in matters relating to teaching and learning, and the support of teaching and learning), (6) time (decisions relating to the allocation of time), and (7) finance (decisions related to the allocation of money).

In terms of PTKU, various improvement efforts need to be done. The issues put forward by Bush and Bell (2002) about higher education are very complex. In the context of higher Islamic education in Indonesia, the researcher was attempted to apply the model proposed Bush and Bell (2002) to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of educational orientation through school-based management. School-based management will succeed if all components (curriculum, teachers, education staff, students, finance, and infrastructures) in the school are considered in its development. Management will be applicable to every component in the school. In this study, the researcher would assess if the critical elements in Bush and Bell (2002) model are present in PTKU. According to Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation Number 60 Year 1999, Higher Education aims to:

- (a) Prepare students to be part of community members who have academic and professional abilities that can apply, develop and enrich the treasury of science, technology and art.
- (b) Develop and disseminate knowledge, technology, and art and make every effort to use them to improve people's lives and enrich the nation's culture (Indrajit & Djokopranoto, 2006).

Besides that, the curriculum, staff, finance, and facilities are also important at a tertiary institution. The literature about higher education also discusses the critical issues of school-based management, for example financial problems, students, education personnel, facilities and infrastructure, and public relations.

METHODOLOGY

This research was qualitative in nature that utilized review of literature as it research design. If it was seen from the purpose of the study, this research could be categorized into descriptive exploratory. The researcher conducted this study on the role of The Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate (PTKU) of Muslim Scholar Council (MUI) of North Sumatra

Province in producing a cadre of *ulama* in North Sumatra. The purpose of this research was to examine the roles of higher education of Muslim scholar candidate (PTKU) in producing Islamic scholars in North Sumatra.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The History of Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidates

The Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidates of Muslim Scholar Council of North Sumatra Province (PTKU MUI SUMUT) has been formed by the Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council of North Sumatra Province since 1983. The implementation of every program in PTKU is three years for each cohort started since the begging and up to now PTKU has received the 14th cohort of students. The rational for the establishment of PTKU MUI SUMUT is that *ulama* of North Sumatra province felt the need for a new cadre of the younger generation so that they would be willing to become *ulama* in the community. This is very important because the situation and conditions that have occurred in North Sumatra is similar to the proverb that says "*Broken does not grow, lost does not change*". This motto applies to *ulama*, because when an *alim* died, it is not easy to find a new successor that is equivalent to the *alim*. Based on this awareness, the Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council of North Sumatra formed and implemented PTKU MUI SUMUT.

In the first phase, from batches I to V and batches XII to XIV were held for three years or six semesters, while batches VI to XI due to the budget constraints were only carried out for six months. Then, in 2003 to 2004 PTKU MUI SUMUT could not be held, due to financial reasons. The education period of PTKU MUI SUMUT is for three years or six semesters, namely odd semester and even semester. Odd semester is calculated from July to December, while even semester is from January to June. Since the first cohort until the last cohort in 2015, PTKU MUI SUMUT has produced 198 alumni. They are scattered in various regions in Indonesia and take part in various careers and fields, such as becoming *ustadz* (teacher) / *ulama* (scholar) in their place, becoming chairman of the MUI in the district / city level, lecturers in public and private universities, religious judges, politicians, businessman, and others. Considered from the point of view of Management Board, PTKU MUI North Sumatra has experienced four changes, namely:

1. The management was in the Islamic Center and under the auspices of MUI North Sumatra, namely since the time of the cleric Hamdan Abbas;
2. There was a change in policy at the Islamic Center, in which the Islamic Center has begun to manage official education, namely *Ibtidaiyyah* or integrated Islamic Elementary Schools, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (Islamic Junior High School), and *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic Senior High School);
3. Furthermore, the education was managed directly by MUI North Sumatra and in collaboration with State Islamic Institute of North Sumatra. The students lived in State Islamic Institute of North Sumatra Dormitory on Jalan Komplek Sutomo, but the learning process was carried out in MUI North Sumatra building;
4. Since 2016 until now PTKU MUI is already under MUI North Sumatra, namely under Education Institute of the Muslim Scholar Candidate which is led by a director who is appointed by MUI North Sumatra.

There is a significant difference between when the management was under the Islamic Center Foundation of North Sumatra and when the management was under MUI North Sumatra. While PTKU was managed by the Islamic Center Foundation, it was named Muslim

Scholar Candidate of Education (PKU) led by the Director, namely *Ustadz* Hamdan Abbas, while the vice director was *Ustadz* Drs. H.M. Jalil and the secretary was *Ustadz* Sahil Al-Quddus. The Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate (PTKU) which was originally named Muslim Scholar Candidate of Education (PKU) while it was under the Islamic Center Foundation since the beginning until the third generation, each of which consisted of twenty-four (24) students, while for the fourth until fifth cohort has already under MUI North Sumatra Province and in collaboration with the Regional Government of North Sumatra Province. Under the Islamic Center Foundation of North Sumatra, PKU was funded by a Muslim businessman, Mr. H. Probosutedjo.

During PKU period under the Islamic Center Foundation, the students were nurtured to be able to read the works and legacies of previous scholars (the book of *turas* or the Islamic classic manuscript). The lecturers have a target that the students will become *ulama* who will guide the people in the community. The graduates are expected to guide the people, not to become bureaucrats, so they are always prohibited by the director to become a civil servant (PNS). In addition, during the PKU period, the facilities were quite flexible; it has facilities for sports, such as a football and volleyball court. During break times, the students could exercise freely because the institution has the sport facilities. The freshman of the first batch in this period studied in a second-floor storey / shop house building located at Jalan Patimpus, then in the second semester to the sixth semester, they studied at the al-Kautsar Islamic Boarding School at Jalan Pelajar Ujung. One privilege of the first, second and third batches of the students as compared to the other batches was that the earlier batches of students received an allowance every month.

Vision and Mission

PTKU MUI North Sumatra has a clear vision, namely to produce experts in the field of religion, religious practitioners and religious fighters. Thus, it can be understood that PTKU MUI North Sumatra is not only aspired to produce knowledgeable *ulama*, but also *ulama* who do good deeds and strive for Islam and Muslims. PTKU missions are:

1. To produce the students who have noble characters;
2. To produce broad-minded students;
3. To produce the students who love science and truth;
4. To produce the students to become experts in the Islamic religion;
5. To produce the students to become practitioners of Islam;
6. To produce students to become defenders of Islamic religion.

Facilities and Infrastructure of Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate

Basically, the available facilities at PTKU MUI of North Sumatra Province are adequate for educating the future *ulama*. The existing facilities are supportive to produce *ulama* needed by the people of North Sumatra. All existing facilities are provided free to the students including both teaching and learning facilities, and accommodation for the students. Nowadays, PTKU MUI of North Sumatra Province has these facilities in the form of:

1. A 3-storey building, with 18 bedrooms for 48 people;
2. Comfortable study room equipped with AC and multimedia equipment;
3. Mosque as a place for worship and learning.

These facilities consist of PTKU building which has four storeys. This building was funded by the Province of North Sumatra which consists of a main study room which is conducive to teaching-learning process, as well as each room providing Air Conditioning (AC) and multimedia facilities on the first floor. On the first floor there are also two offices and one secretariat room. The main building also provides guest rooms on the first, second, and third

floors, and also consists of eighteen rooms for 48 people equipped with AC and bathroom facilities, laundry room, the Ar Rahmah Mosque, and a library.

Curriculum of Higher Education of Muslim Scholar Candidate

Graduates from PTKU MUI of North Sumatra must have certain knowledge and competence. Table 1 shows the main competencies of the graduates of PTKU MUI of North Sumatra that they should possess conviction such as having deep faith and piety to Allah Almighty based the *aqidah* of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah*. They must have proper vision and good attitudes and knowledable in Islamic laws. As future *dai'e*, they should be able to understand the problems in the community and they should try to solve them gracefully. In addition, the graduates are expected to be proficient in Arabic literature and being able to be *imam* (leader of communal prayer) and leader.

Table 1. List of Graduate Main and Supportive Competences of PTKU MUI of North Sumatra

Main Competence	Support Competence
1. Having faith and piety to Allah Almighty based the <i>aqidah</i> of <i>ahlu sunnah wal jamaah</i>	1. Being able to read Arabic literature
2. Having good attitude	2. Being able to be <i>imam</i> (leader of communal prayer) and leader.
3. Having wide insight	
4. Having knowledge in Islamic laws	
5. Memorizing 30 chapters of <i>Qur'an</i>	
6. Being able to understand the problem in the community and solving it through good attitude	

Table 2 illustrates the courses that have been offered in PTKU MUI of North Sumatera. The Islamic core courses include ilmu kalam, fikih ibadah, fikih mawaris, fikih munakahat, ushul fiqh, and ulumul Quran. In addition, there are other supportive courses such as Islamic economy, politics, sociology, English, and psychology. Furthermore, the students also learn *Balaghah*, *Ilmu Ma'āni*, *Ilmu Falak*, *Tahsīn al-Qirā'ah*. In addition, they also learn methodology of Islamic teaching, history of Islamic education, educational administration, and writing methodology.

Table 2. The courses of PTKU MUI of North Sumatra

Courses			
1	<i>Ilmu Kalam</i>	13	Islamic Economy
2	<i>Fikih Ibadah</i>	14	Islamic politics
3	<i>Fikih Mawaris</i>	15	Islamic Sociology
4	<i>Fikih Munakahat</i>	16	English
5	<i>Qawaid Fiqhiyah</i>	17	<i>Akhlak Tasawuf</i>
6	<i>Ushul Fiqh</i>	18	Mass Psychology

7	<i>Ulumul Quran</i>	19	<i>Masail Fiqhiyah</i>
8	<i>Ulumul Hadis</i>	20	<i>Ilmu Falak</i>
9	Arabic Language	21	Nationality Insight
10	<i>Tarikh Hadarah Islamiyah</i>	22.	Culture
11	Methodology of Islamic Study		
12	Methodology of Islamic Preaching		

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of higher education of Muslim scholar candidate (PTKU) in producing Islamic scholars in North Sumatra. This study has presented about the effectiveness of the internal and external factors of the PTKU of Indonesia Muslim Scholar Council of North Sumatra. Internally, PTKU was born because of the MUI of North Sumatra needed to have adequate supply of scholars – the need for equal distribution of scholars throughout North Sumatra in terms of quantity and quality. Externally, the situation and condition of North Sumatra is in dire need of scholars to teach Islam to the people. However, programmatically, it was considered successful in the previous periods. PTKU MUI of North Sumatra is funded by North Sumatra Provincial Government grant and Muslim community's donation. The key result of the study shows that PTKU continues to gain significant development and progress, until now it has adequate facilities, as well as the lecturers, curriculum and physical buildings.

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