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The Contribution of Syekh Abdul Karim Amrullah'S Thoughts in Islamic Education and Its Relevance to Current Issues

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Abstrak: *This paper aims at describing the educational system established by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah and its relevance in the present day. This is a library research using a biographical research method. Sources of data are documents related to the roles of Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah in Islamic education. In addition, the researcher also conducted interviews and observation in Madrasah Thawalib Padang Panjang. The result shows that the Madrasah still maintains the main purpose of education proposed by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah as the founding father. Moreover the Madrasah, beside implementing the old curriculum, has adjusted to the national education standard by incorporating general learning materials in today's teaching.*

Key words : *Islamic education system, national education standard, and Madrasah Thawalib*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of human effort to develop all the potentials both physically and spiritually to become balanced persons. The essence of education is not just an effort to build and pass on the values that will be the helpers and guides of mankind in living the life, but also to improve their fate and civilization.

Education is one of human resource investments that is expected to change the life of a nation to a better direction. As a social investment that is aimed to improve human resources, of course, education in Indonesia is not only successful in transferring knowledge and values to the next generation, but also can improve the fate and the quality of civilization of its people (Syamsul Kurniawan and Erwin Mahrus, 2011: 5).

Islamic education can be grouped into formal, informal and non-formal

education. Formal education is an education held in schools, and madrasahs in general. This educational path has a clear level of education, ranging from primary education, secondary education, to higher education. Informal education is a path of family and environmental education in the form of self-learning activities that are conducted consciously and responsibly. Nonformal education is most prevalent in early childhood, as well as basic education, housed as in Mosques, *Surau* and *TPA*, or *Taman Pendidikan Al Quran*, and so forth.

In West Sumatra, at the beginning of 20th century, there were non-formal education institutions such as *suraus*. In these *suraus* in West Sumatra region learned these Islamic figures, among others Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah who initially studied in *surau* with the method of learning of *halaqah*.

Sheikh Abdul Karim Abdullah was born on 17th Shafar 1296 H or February 10,

1879 AD in *Jorong Batuang Panjang Nagari* Sungai Batang Maninjau, in Luhak Agam, West Sumatera. When born, he was named Muhammad Rasul by his parents. His father was Sheikh Muhammad Amrullah titled Tuanku Kisai, a great Minangkabau scholar at that time, while his mother was named Tarwasah (Hamka, 1982: 17). When he was 10 years old, he studied the Qur'an to Muhammad Salih in Tarusan, Pesisir Selatan. After completing the Qur'an, he studied various religious sciences, *nahwu* and *saraf* according to the old system to his own father Sheikh Amrullah. Then, he studied *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and Tafsir Jalalain to Tuanku Sultan Muhammad Yusuf in Sungai Rotan, Pariaman. In 1894, when he was 15 years old, he left for Mecca to perform a hajji and settled there for 7 years to study to the Mecca scholars, among them were Sheikh Ahmad Katib, Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin, Sheikh Usman Sarawak, and others (Mahmud Yunus, 1996: 149).

On his return to his hometown in 1901, his name was changed to 'Abdul Karim Amrullah and called Tuanku Sheikh Nan Mudo in recognition of his knowledge. In 1904, he returned to Mecca, and based on the suggestion of his teacher Sheikh Ahmad Khatib, he began giving instruction to his students, including Ibrahim Musa from Parabek Bukittinggi.

He returned to his hometown in 1906. Since then, he began to teach, but he did not confine himself to particular villages or cities. Besides teaching in his *surau* in Sungai Batang, he also actively visited Padang Panjang, Matur, and Padang and villages located between Maninjau and Padang Panjang (Deliar Noer, 1982: 45).

Since 1911, he settled in Padang Panjang to teach at the Surau Jembatan Besi. For his efforts, *pengajian* (Islamic teaching) in Surau Jembatan Besi is growing day by day. His students are not only from Padang Panjang, but also from various regions in

Minangkabau, some even from outside Minangkabau. In the beginning, the system he used in giving lessons was still an old system, the *halaqah* system. Yet, Sheikh Abdul Karim developed it towards freedom of thought. He gave his disciples opportunity to discuss religious issues, but every opinion conveyed must be accompanied by his reasons and propositions. In the process of traveling, Surau Jembatan Besi was developed into a modern educational institution of Sumatra Thawalib Padang Panjang in 1918.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the curriculum was still traditional, consisting of materials about the Qur'an and hadith and examined the books covering the sciences of *nahwu*, *saraf*, *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and others which focused only on one book, therefore, as revealed by Rahmayulis and Syamsul Nizar in his book *Ensiklopedi Islam* (2010: 223 - 229). Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah hold a renewal of Islamic educational curriculum. He developed an educational curriculum by incorporating religious and linguistic sciences into 12 different subjects with a variety of reference books, no longer focused on a single book. The curriculum was organized on a level or grade basis. The students were divided into specific classes, according to their level of education. This system is known by the name of the classical system, in contrast to previous circumstances that did not distinguish between higher level and lower-level students.

In addition, Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah also improved the system and learning methods, using the discussion and question and answer methods. He instilled a passion for discussion and free thinking to his students. His students not only memorized, but also must understand the discussed materials.

From the facts presented above, the author feels compelled to raise the gait of a

figure in West Sumatra who played a role in the field of Islamic education in the form of research with the title: "Contribution of Thought of Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah in the Field of Islamic Education and Its Relevance to the Present Day".

What the author will point out in this paper is how the education system was established by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah and its relevance to the present day, starting from the curriculum he composed, the learning system he was implementing and the method of learning he used.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this paper is to know and describe the educational system established by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah and its relevance to the present day, starting from the curriculum he composed, the learning system he is implementing and the method of learning he uses.

Its significance is the contribution of thought from the author about the establishment of education system conducted by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah in the field of Islamic education and its relevance to the present day.

BIOGRAPHY OF SHEIKH ABDUL KARIM AMRULLAH

Sheikh Abdul Karim Abdullah was born on 17th Shafar 1296 H or 10 February 1879 AD in *Jorong Batuang Panjang, Nagari Sungai Batang Maninjau*, in *Luhak Agam*, West Sumatra. When born, he was named by his parents Muhammad Rasul. His father was Sheikh Muhammad Amrullah titled Tuanku Kisai, a great Minangkabau scholar at that time, while his mother was named Tarwasah (Hamka, 1982: 17).

When he was 10 years old, he studied the Qur'an to Muhammad Salih in

Tarusan, Pesisir Selatan. After completing the Qur'an, he studied various religious sciences, *nahwu* and *saraf* according to the old system to his own father Sheikh Amrullah. Then, he studied jurisprudence and Tafsir Jalalain to Tuanku Sultan Muhammad Yusuf in Pariaman Rattan River. In 1894, when he was 15 years old, he left for Mecca to perform a hajji and settled there for 7 years to continue his studies at the Mecca cleric, among them Syekh Ahmad Katib, Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin, Sheikh Usman Sarawak, and others (Mahmud Yunus, 1996: 149).

On his return to his hometown in 1901, his name was changed to 'Abdul Karim Amrullah and called Tuanku Shaykh Nan Mudo in recognition of his knowledge.

In 1904, he returned to Mecca accompanied by his wife and three siblings who also wanted to explore the science of religion. During his second stay in Mecca, at the suggestion of his teacher Sheikh Ahmad Khatib, he began teaching his disciples, including Ibrahim Musa from Parabek Bukittinggi.

But a disaster happened. His wife died shortly after giving birth to his second child, and the baby then died, too. Therefore, he returned home to his village in 1906. Since then, he began to teach, but he did not confine himself to a particular village or city. Besides teaching in his *surau* in Sungai Batang, he also actively visited Padang Panjang, Matur, and Padang and villages located between Maninjau and Padang Panjang (Deliar Noer, 1982: 45).

He is famous for his stubborn attitude of *taqlid*, *bid'ah* and *khurafat* mixed with religious teachings. He is a master orator, who always gets a warm welcome from his audience. His speeches are loud, firm, straightforward and fiery, which inspire the spirit and awareness of society (Tim Writer, 2008: 178).

He is also an opponent of the teachings of the *tariqat*, although his father Tuanku Kisai is Khalifah Tariqat Naqsyabandiyah. In 1908, a few months after his father's death, he compiled the book *أظهار اساطير الملحدين في تشبههم بالمهتدين* (Revealing the Confessed Tweets of the Mulhidines as Muhtadins) to oppose the teachings of the Naqsyabandiyah Thariqat. In 1914, he compiled the book *المفسدين قاطع رقاب الملحدين في عقائد* (The Necks Cutters of the Mulhidins to explain 'Aqidah the Mufsidin) to oppose the teachings of the Shari'ah Thariqat.

Since 1911, he settled in Padang Panjang to teach at the Surau Jembatan Besi, replacing 'Abdullah Ahmad who had taught there since 1899, but later moved to Padang, because his uncle Sheikh Guguak - the founder of Masjid Gantiang, Padang- died. From his efforts, the Islamic teachings in in Surau Jembatan Besi were growing day by day. His students are not only from Padang Panjang, but also from various regions in Minangkabau, some even from outside Minangkabau. The system he uses in giving lessons is still a long system, the halaqah system. But Sheikh Abdul Karim has developed it towards freedom of thought. He gave his disciples the opportunity to discuss religious issues, but every opinion conveyed must be accompanied by his reasons and propositions.

Together with Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad, he published the first Islamic magazine in Indonesia, namely *Majalah al Munir*, modeling on *Al Imam* magazine that had previously published in Singapore. The first edition of *Majalah al Munir* was published on April 1, 1911 AD, then published once every two weeks on a regular basis. Therefore, Sheikh H. Abdul Karim spent his time a week in Padang Panjang and a week in Padang. However, the publication of this magazine was stopped in 1915 AD. Thus, he focused back to teach

at *Surau Jembatan Besi* Padang Panjang. He taught seriously, issued new *fatwas* and new streams in Islam (Deliar Noer, 1982: 45).

In its progress, *Surau Jembatan Besi* was developed into a modern educational institution of Sumatra Thawalib Padang Panjang in 1918. Then, it was followed by changes about Thawalib Sumatra lessons, namely by holding classes from class I to class VII. In 1918, he co-founded the Persatuan Guru-Guru Agama Islam (PGAI) or the Union of Islamic Religious Teachers of Sumatra, along with Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad, Sheikh Jamil Jambek, Zainuddin Labay el Yunusiy and others.

Haji Rasul often traveled out of the region, most importantly, among others, his departure to Java in 1917. In this visit, he was acquainted with H.O.S. Cokroaminoto, the figure of Syarikat Islam in Surabaya and K.H. Ahmad Dahlan founder of Muhammadiyah in Jogjakarta. In 1925, upon his return from his second visit to Java, he introduced the Muhammadiyah in Minangkabau, which soon spread rapidly.

In early of March in 1926, Sheikh Abdul Karim departed with Abdullah Ahmad as a representative of PGAI Sumatera attending the *Kongres Khilafat al Islamiyah* (the Khilafat al Islamiyah Congress) held in Cairo, Egypt. The presence of both of them turned out to get special attention from the congress. On the initiative of Sayyid 'Abd al' Aziz al Salabiy, a committee was formed to investigate their actions and struggles in their homeland. Finally, the Khilafat al Islamiyah Congress led by Sheikh Husayn al Waliy, a Professor of the University of al-Azh-har Egypt, agreed to award the title of Doctor Honoris Causa to them. After receiving the award and meeting with the famous Egyptian, Sa'ad Zaghlul Pasya, they returned to Indonesia in early June 1926.

They went home by ship. Arriving in Belawan Medan, then, they drove to Padang

Panjang. But when they were in Sibolga on Tuesday, June 29, 1926, they got news that on Monday yesterday, June 28, 1926, there had been a devastating earthquake that devastated Padang Panjang and surrounding areas, causing hundreds of deaths and thousands of buildings destroyed. Therefore, they immediately went to Padang Panjang.

Arriving in Padang Panjang, they saw a very heartbreaking situation. His home and the Surau Jembatan Besi had been destroyed, like other buildings in the city. Therefore, on Wednesday afternoon of June 30, 1926, Dr. Sheik. Abdul Karim Amarullah returned to his village in Sungai Batang.

Since then, Dr. Sheik. Abdul Karim Amarullah settled in his village. He no longer founded a school, but rather focused on composing books and preaching around to the *nagaris* (villages) in West Sumatra. It was not until 1936 that he returned to teach in Padang Panjang. He taught at Kulliyatul Muballighin Muhammadiyah, Diniyah Puteri and Sumatera Thawalib which was revived by his student Abdul Hamid Tuanku Mudo.

On January 12, 1941, he was arrested by the Dutch, because his books and preaching were considered to be against Dutch colonialism. He was later exiled to Sukabumi in August 1941. Just a few months there, came Japan who managed to defeat the Netherlands, so he was free. He did not return to his hometown, but moved to Jakarta. In Jakarta he lived until he died on Saturday, Jumad al Akhir 21, 1364 H / June 2, 1945 M (Hamka, 1982: 151 - 213).

DISCUSSION

The figure that the researcher researches is Sheikh Abdul Karim, an early twentieth-century West Sumatra figure whose role in education is unquestionable. He has contributed enormously to the development of Islamic education in West

Sumatra in particular and Indonesia in general. He also founded Thawalib Padang Panjang education institution, which until now still grows and triumphs to become one of the Islamic educational institutions trying to print *da'wah* cadres who are not only rich in religious knowledge but also accompanied by general knowledge, who are not only useful in one field only, but master all fields of sciences, as long as the fields are supportive in the implementation of Islamic education itself.

Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah founded an Islamic educational institution called Madrasah Thawalib Padang Panjang in 1911 AD. This institution is a new breakthrough in the world of Islamic education at that time. He is a figure who has followed the education in Arabic and the knowledge he acquired was developed in the institution he founded. Now this educational institution that he founded still applies all forms of education system developed first, even enriched again with general knowledge that can support the ability of learners who learn there, and complemented by extracurricular activities. Even some of its alumni went abroad, for example to Cairo Egypt.

Thawalib educational institution is developing in accordance with ideas and thoughts that still continue to be implemented, ranging from the same educational goals presented by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah, and still using Arabic classic books as used by Sheikh Abdul Karim first, and this is the characteristic of the Thawalib Madrasah of Padang Panjang.

In terms of educators, the majority comes from the alumni of Thawalib madrasah of Padang Panjang, and they have been reliable in English and Arabic which are mandatory languages there. In terms of learners, after viewed from the table of development and the number of students

from year to year, it can be said that the number progressively increases. They are not only from Padang Panjang, but they come from several provinces in Indonesia. From this, it appears that Madrasah Tawalib has been known by various provinces in Indonesia, and its graduates have a selling point in the midst of society, thus making the parents santri dropped his heart to send his son here. The education institution of Madrasah Tawalib Padang Panjang currently consists of two locations, namely *Thawalib Putra* which is a main Madrasah, inhabited by the students with complete boarding students, and *Thawalib Putri* which is also completed with a dormitory inhabited by *santriwati* (female students).

Islamic education system at Thawalib Madrasah Institution Padang Panjang established by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah is related to:

1. Educational Objectives

The informant stated that the purpose of education is essentially the same as the educational objectives previously described by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah first, which is implied in the vision and mission that the school wants to achieve.

The mission of this Thawalib College is *'Izzul Islam wal Muslimin*, with the general purpose of total devotion to *rabbul' alamin*, while the specific goals of Thawalib education are:

- a. Creating scholars who have comprehensive knowledge (tafaquh fiddin), noble character (akhlakul karimah), free thinking (hurriyatul fikri), and are able to become a reformer (mujaddid) in society.
- b. Producing students who love science and diligently develop their knowledge so that they become intellectual human resources capable of mastering

the Islamic scientific tradition maximally and anticipative against the demands of future times.

- c. Establishing students with true *aqidah*, who orderly perform worship, who have good morality and become models in their family.

2. Curriculum

At the beginning of the 20th century, Islamic education system as proposed by Ramayulis and Syamsul Nizar (2010: 223) was still traditional. The curriculum of education was still traditional, which focused on only on the Qur'an and the study of the Book, which included the science of *nahwu, sharaf, fiqh, tafsir* and others which are focused only on one book.

Such an educational curriculum is deemed inadequate and incompatible with the development of the times, so that Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah and his colleagues agreed to reform the Islamic education curriculum. The revised curriculum was implemented at his school Thawalib Padang Panjang. The sciences included into the curriculum of education are more developed and the books used are also more various.

The religious and linguistic sciences that he put into the Islamic education curriculum were 12 subjects, namely *Nahwu, Sharaf, Fiqh, Ushul Fiqh, Tafsir, Tawheed Sciences, Hadith Science, Mushthalah Hadith Science, Manthiq (Logic), Ma'aniy Science, Bayan Science, and Badi 'Science*. The books used consist of various books in the disciplines.

He compiled the Islamic education curriculum on a level or class basis, in contrast to previous circumstances that did not distinguish the grade or level of students who were already high in their level of study with those who were still at the beginning. This condition, according to Sheikh Abdul

Karim, was not effective for learning. Therefore, he divided the students into certain classes, according to their level of education.

The arrangement of curriculum applied by Sheikh Abdul Karim involved the study of the Qur'an and the study of the book which were divided into three levels. The First Level Study of the Books only examined Nahwu, Sharaf and Fiqh by using the basic books such as Ajrumiyah, Matan Bina and Fat-al Qarib. The Second Level still examined Nahwu, Sharaf, Fiqh and supplemented with Tawheed. The books used were the books of composed by Sheikh Khalid, al Asymawiy, al Kahlaniy and al Sanusiy. The Third Level examined Nahwu, Sharaf, Fiqh, Tawheed and supplemented with Tafsir and so on. The book used was the advanced books such as Hashiyah Ibn 'Aqil, Umm al Barahin, Hashiyah al Mahalliy, Tafsir al Jalalayn, Tafsir al Baidhawiy and others. At this level were also taught Manthiq Science, Balaghah, Tashawwuf and so on, using the Books of Idalah al Mubham, Jawhar al Makmun, Ihya 'Ulum al Din and others.

In addition to these books, Sheikh Abdul Karim also used his own composed books or compiled by Zainuddin Labai el Yunusiy, who had helped him since the recitation of the Surau Jembatan Besi.

The curriculum used during the time of Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah is still used today, which is marked by the use of Arabic classic books until now. According to the key informant (the Head of Madrasah), studying Arabic classic books is the characteristic of learning in Madrasah Thawalib Padang Panjang, as well as a special pride for its *santri* (male students) and *santriwati* (female students), because they have special skills compared with other students.

Talking about the national curriculum, the Headmaster stated that the

prevailing general curriculum was also applied in the *madrasah* in addition to the old curriculum, because it was a must also for them to study the general curriculum so as not to lag behind other schools.

3. Learning Systems and Methods

In addition to updating the curriculum, Sheikh Abdul Karim also improved the systems and methods used in the lesson. He developed a classical system with a method of discussion and question and answer, different from the *halaqah* system used so far. In the *halaqah* system, the pupils are only passively receiving lessons from the teacher and then memorizing them. Students should not ask the teacher. They even should not oppose the teacher's opinion.

The method, according to Sheikh Abdul Karim, would not bring progress to the students. Using the method would make the students simply memorized and narrow-minded. As a result, they would not be able to solve the problems of their society. Therefore, Sheikh Abdul Karim sought to update learning methods, so that students were motivated to think freely, argued and discussed. Pupils were not only required to memorize the science given by the teacher, but also must be able to understand, contextualize and transform them further. This shows that Sheikh Abdul Karim has developed the scientific spirit in his learning process.

Sheikh Abdul Karim also thought that the students should be gathered in an organization. This spirit began to emerge from Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah when he witnessed the Muhammadiyah organization in Yogyakarta. Therefore, he instructed his students to create an organization, so formed *Organisasi Persaiyoan* which became popular with the name of the *Perkumpulan Sabun* (meaning soap association), whose main purpose was

to facilitate students in getting their daily needs with loose payments (Ramayulis and Syamsul Nizar, 2010: 223-299).

4. Educators

In terms of educators, the informant explained that all teachers are professionals in their fields, and have expertise in Arabic and English. Most of them are alumni from Thawalib Madrasah itself. The male students were specifically taught by male teachers, while the female students were specifically taught by female teachers.

5. Learners

In terms of learners, after viewed from the table of development and the number of students from year to year, it can be said that the more days they grow increasingly. They not only come from Padang Panjang, but also come from several provinces in Indonesia. In Tawalib Padang Panjang, learners are placed in dormitories, ensuring safety, order, and discipline. In their daily life, learners are required to speak English, Arabic and *Bahasa Indonesia*. They are not allowed to use Minang language. The aim is to improve the students' Arabic and English speaking ability.

5. Institutions

Regarding the educational institution, Sheikh Abdul Karim initially gave a study at Surau Jembatan Besi Padang Panjang. He taught seriously, issued new *fatwas* and an new *stream* in Islam. In the process of traveling, Surau Jembatan Besi was developed into a modern educational institution of Sumatra Thawalib Padang Panjang in 1918. Then followed by changes about Thawalib Sumatra lessons, namely by holding classes from class I to class VII.

The informant explained that the school building inhabited today is not a building founded by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah first, because the building was

destroyed by the devastating earthquake of June 28, 1926. When the author asked about the location of the original building, the informant said that he did not know the exact location of the building, but as far as he knows, Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah initially taught his students at Surau Jembatan Besi.

Now the education institution of Thawalib Madrasah Padang Panjang consists of two locations. Them main Madrasah, inhabited by completely boarding male students, and the other one is inhabited by santriwati (female students).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research, it can be seen that the Islamic education system developed by Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah in general is still used until now, including:

- a. In the curriculum issue, he drafted the Islamic education curriculum on a level or class basis, in contrast to previous circumstances that did not distinguish the class or the level of pupils who had high levels of study with students who were still at the beginning. This condition, according to Sheikh Abdul Karim, was not effective for learning. Therefore, he divided the students into certain classes, according to their level of education. The arrangement of curriculum applied by Sheikh Abdul Karim involved the study of the Qur'an and the study of the book which was divided into three levels, namely *Pengajian Kitab Tingkat Pertama*, *Pengajian Kitab Tingkat Dua* and *Pengajian Kitab Tingkat Tiga*. Until now, the educational institution of Thawalib Madrasah Padang Panjang still uses the old curriculum without any reduction, but in accordance with the times, the

curriculum is supplemented with the National Education curriculum, by incorporating general learning subjects such as Natural and Social sciences, Mathematics, English, *Bahasa Indonesia* and others. Besides, there are also extra-curricular activities like sport, scouting and calligraphy art.

- b. Sheikh Abdul Karim tried to update the method of learning, which motivated students to think freely, argued and discussed. Pupils were not only required to memorize the lessons taught by the teacher, but also must be able to understand, contextualize and transform them further.
- c. Teachers who teach at Thawalib Padang Panjang are professionals in their fields, have expertise in Arabic and English, and most of them are alumni from Thawalib Madrasah.
- d. Thawalib Madrasah educational institution was originally the Surau Jembatan Besi, where Sheikh Abdul Karim gave *teaching* in Padang Panjang. In the process of traveling, Surau Jembatan Besi was developed into a modern educational institution of Sumatra Thawalib Padang Panjang in 1918, which is then followed by changes of the Thawalib Sumatera lessons, by holding classes from class I to class VII.

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