

Concept and Making of *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor

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Abstract: *This research aims to discover the concept and making of the Aqidah Learning Curriculum at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The primary data source of this research was obtained through direct observation at the research site and interviews with key informants from the leadership of Pondok Modern Gontor. This team compiled the Aqidah Learning Curriculum and Gontor alums. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from indirect sources such as documents, books, magazines, journals, and other documentation. The study results show that the learning of Aqidah in Gontor is developing in line with the challenges faced at the time. In the early days of Gontor's establishment, Aqidah Learning used Aqidah books, which only existed in two classes, namely in grade 1 and grade 2. Around the 1990s, books for grades 5 and 6 were added. Then, the next one is added again for grade 4. As for grade 3, there are still no books. When this research was carried out, the Pondok Modern Gontor Aqidah Learning Curriculum team planned to compile a book that would be used for Aqidah Learning in grade 3. So far, the material for grade 3 is Islamic Taqiyah material, not Aqidah material.*

Introduction

Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Sisdiknas), Article 3 states that the purpose of national education is to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and fear *God Almighty*, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. With the goal of national education, according to Husaini (2020), the Indonesian nation, especially Muslims, has a strong enough foundation to realize education for the birth of civilized humans. This statement is in line with the view of Al-Attas (1995), who emphasized that education aims to instill adab as the core of the formation of a complete human personality. Therefore, good national education must be directed to form human beings who have faith and piety. This process can only be achieved by referring to religious teachings. For Muslims, *Islamic* teachings provide clear guidelines in shaping good human character, by imitating the figure of the Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ as the main example.

This is where the importance of *Islamic* education plays an important role in shaping the personality, morals, and understanding of the *Aqidah* of the *Muslim* generation. One of the educational institutions that has a reputation for teaching *Aqidah* is Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in Ponorogo, East Java. This can be seen from the work of its alumni in various fields, both in education, culture, economy, and politics. As an educational institution established in 1926, Gontor is not only known as a pesantren-based education center, but also as an institution that continues to adapt to the changing times without leaving the basic *Islamic* values (Zarkasyi, 2005). One of the important aspects taught at Gontor is the learning of *Aqidah*, which is the foundation for the formation of morals and students' perspective on world life (worldview).

According to Al-Attas (1999), *Aqidah* plays an important role in shaping the behavior and ethics of a *Muslim*. With a strong foundation of *Aqidah*, individuals have a good moral compass,

which makes them more honest, trustworthy, and disciplined. Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali (2011) stated that a good creed is the foundation for a person to have noble character. Not only that, *Islamic Aqidab* helps students become more independent and resilient in facing the challenges of the modern world. A correct *Aqidab* will give students confidence and form a strong mentality to live a life in accordance with *Islamic* values (Azra, 2013).

As a modern *Islamic* Boarding School, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor provides a comprehensive education to its students. Education is provided 24 hours a day and seven days a week. This means that the life of students for 24 hours is regulated and programmed with productive and conducive activities for the achievement of educational goals more optimally (Zarkasyi, 2005). Therefore, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has a curriculum that combines *Islamic* religious education, general education, and life skills. *Islamic* religious education includes the *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, *Tafsir*, *Fiqh*, *Aqidab*, *Morals*, and *Islamic* History. Meanwhile, general education includes Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Geography, and History, so students continue to receive primary and secondary education equivalent to national education. Not only that, students are also encouraged to master Arabic and English, because these languages are used in daily communication at the cottage and as the language of instruction for most lessons. In addition, life skills and extracurricular activities include leadership training, organization, art, sports, and scouting (Zarkasyi, 2011). Gontor also provides traditional education through the study of the yellow book to deepen the understanding of *Islam* from classical texts.

In addition to academics, Gontor also emphasizes character education through discipline, independence, and the development of a leadership spirit. Character education is also strengthened through learning *Aqidab* which is very important for students because it forms a solid foundation of faith and faith as a Muslim. Learning *Aqidab* builds a solid foundation of faith, making students more stable in their belief in Allah, the Messenger, and the teachings of *Islam* as a whole. With a strong foundation of faith, students can live their lives with full spiritual and moral awareness. A deep understanding of the creed makes students more resistant to negative influences and deviant teachings because they have a clear basis of knowledge in distinguishing between right and wrong according to *Islam*. Scholars such as Ibn Taimiyah (2005) in the book *Al-'Aqidab Al-Wasitiyyah* affirm that true *Aqidab* is the basis of a solid faith. Without a strong creed, faith can become fragile and easily shaken by temptation or doubt. Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali emphasized in *Ihya Ulumuddin* that understanding the creed is an important condition for a *Muslim* to be able to maintain faith from negative influences.

However, even though Pondok Modern Gontor has long been known for its educational excellence, an in-depth study of the concept and preparation of the *Aqidab* Learning Curriculum in this pesantren is still very limited. No one has even done it yet. Therefore, this research is important to explore further how the curriculum concept is designed, adjusted, and implemented by the needs of students and the development of the times. By understanding this, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of the *Aqidab* Learning Curriculum in other *Islamic* Educational Institutions.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The primary data source of this research was obtained through direct observation at the research site and interviews with key informants from the leadership of Pondok Modern Gontor, the team that compiled the *Aqidab* learning curriculum, and Gontor alumni. The interview with the *Kyai* of the Pondok leader was conducted in 2023, precisely in the month of Ramadan 1444 Hijriyah. Similarly, an interview with the *Aqidab* Learning Curriculum Preparation Team was conducted in the same month. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from indirect sources such as documents, books, magazines, journals, and other documentation. Meanwhile, descriptive qualitative data analysis is carried out in the

following stages: data organization, data reading and assessment, coding, code grouping and category formation, thematic analysis, narrative or description preparation, triangulation, and data interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

Result and Discussion

Brief Profile of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor was founded on Monday, 12 Rabi'ul Awwal 1345 or September 20, 1926, by three brothers who were still teenagers at that time, namely: KH Ahmad Sahal, KH Zainuddin Fanani, and KH Imam Zarkasyi (Zarkasyi, 2005). Later they were known as "Trimurti". After KH Imam Zarkasyi passed away at the end of April 1985, the leadership relay of Pondok Gontor shifted to the second generation. Based on the decision of the Waqf Board Session at that time, the relay of the leadership of the Pondok was handed over to KH Shoiman Lukmanul Hakim, KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasvi, MA and KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal. When in 1999 KH Shoiman Lukmanul Hakim died, the Waqf Board appointed KH Imam Badri as the new leader of the Pondok together with KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, MA and KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal.

The three *Kyai* continued the leadership of Pondok Modern Gontor. When KH Imam Badri died on June 8, 2006, the Waqf Board appointed KH Syamsul Hadi Abdan as his successor. So since then, Pondok Modern Gontor has been led by three *Kyai*, namely Dr. KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasvi, MA, KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal, and KH Syamsul Hadi Abdan. On October 21, 2020, Dr. KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi passed away following KH Syamsul Hadi Abdan who died on May 18, 2020. To replace the two, on October 23, 2020, the Waqf Board appointed Prof. Dr. KH Amal Fathullah Zarkasyi and Drs. KH Akrim Mariyat, Dipl.A.Ed., as the leaders of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (Gontor Magazine, 2020). These three *Kyai* are the ones who lead Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor to this day.

Zarkasyi (2005) said that Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is a continuation of Pondok Tegalsari. Tegalsari is the name of a remote village, located 10 km south of the center of the Wengker kingdom in Ponorogo, East Java. This *Islamic* Boarding School has given birth to *Kyai*, ulama, leaders, and community leaders who take part in building the nation and state. The Tegalsari *Islamic* Boarding School was founded in the 18th century AD by *Kyai* Ageng Muhammad Besari (Bashori). In 1742 Pondok Tegalsari was led by *Kyai* Ageng Hasan Besari, the grandson of *Kyai* Ageng Muhammad Besari from *Kyai* Ilyas' son who was also the son-in-law of Sultan Pakubuwono II (1710-1749).

After ten years of Pondok Gontor (new) being established, precisely on the anniversary of the gratitude of the decade of Pondok Gon, December 19, 1936, the use of the term "modern" for Pondok Gontor (Zarkasyi, 2005) was inaugurated. Before that, the name of the Pondok was Pondok Darussalam Gontor. The word 'modern' is only mentioned by people outside the Pondok. After the legalization of the use of the 'modern' label, the full name of Pondok Gontor became Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. In the future, the name "Modern Pond" was actually better known by the public than "Pondok Darussalam." On the centennial anniversary, the establishment of a new education system was also inaugurated, namely *Kulliyat al-Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (KMI) which is a nursery for religious (*Islamic*) teachers. The KMI system was introduced as a replacement for the *Tarbiyat al-Atfal* and *Sullam al-Muta'allimin* systems. As a new education system, KMI is not immediately accepted by the community. In fact, they doubt the existence of a system that is different and 'contradicts' the traditional education system that generally applies in other Islamic boarding schools.

It is in the hands of this second generation that Gontor has grown rapidly until now. This development was marked by the opening of branch huts in various regions in Indonesia, among others. Until 2024, Pondok Modern Gontor has 19 branch cottages: 11 boys' *pondok* (*Islamic* Boarding School) and 8 girls' *pondok*. Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG) Campus 2

was established in 1996 in Madusari Village, Siman District, Ponorogo Regency. After that, several men's branch huts were also established in various regions in Indonesia. The huts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Address of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor and Putra Branch

No.	Pondok Name	Pondok Address
1	PMDG Kampus Pusat	Ds. Gontor, Kec. Mlarak, Kab. Ponorogo, Prov. Jawa Timur, 63472
2	PMDG Kampus 2	Jl. Raya Pacitan-Ponorogo, Ds. Madusari, Kec. Siman, Kab. Ponorogo, Prov. Jawa Timur, 63471
3	PMDG Kampus 3 Darul Ma'rifat	Ds. Sumbercangkring, Kec. Gurah, Kab. Kediri, Prov. Jawa Timur, 64181
4	PMDG Kampus 4 Darul Muttaqin	Jl. Bomo, Ds. Kaligung, Kec. Blimbingsari, Kab. Banyuwangi, Prov. Jawa Timur, 68462
5	PMDG Kampus 5 Darul Qiyam	Ds. Mangunsari, Kec. Sawangan, Kab. Magelang, Prov. Jawa Tengah, 56481
6	PMDG Kampus 6 Riyadhatul Mujahidin	Jl. Mowila-Baito, Ds. Pudahoa, Kec. Mowila, Kab. Konawe Selatan, Prov. Sulawesi Tenggara
7	PMDG Kampus 7	Ds. Tajimalela, Kec. Kalianda, Kab. Lampung Selatan, Prov. Lampung, 35551
8	PMDG Kampus 8 Darul Amin	Jl. Raya Banda Aceh-Medan, Ds Meunasah Baro, Kec. Seulimeum, Kab. Aceh Besar, Prov. Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam
9	PMDG Kampus 9	Ds. Sulit Air, Kec. X Koto Diatas, Kab. Solok, Prov. Sumatera Barat, 27355
10	PMDG Kampus 10	Ds. Parit Culum 1, Kec. Muara Sabak Barat, Kab. Tanjung Jabung Timur, Prov. Jambi
11	PMDG Kampus 11 Ittihadul Ummah	Jl. Trans Sulawesi, Ds. Tokorondo, Kec. Poso Pesisir, Kab. Poso, Prov. Sulawesi Tengah
12	PMDG Kampus 12	Ds. Lubuk Jering, Kec. Sungai Mandau, Kab. Siak, Prov. Riau, 28671

Source: Gontor Magazine: Ummah Adhesive Media. Edition 3 Year XXII Dzulhijjah 1445 H - Muharram 1446 H, July 2024.

In addition to male students, Gontor also established several huts for female students. Initially, this women's pondok was built in Sambirejo Village, Mantingan District, Ngawi Regency in 1990. After that, several women's pondok were built in various regions in the archipelago to accommodate the interest of female students to study at Pondok Gontor. The existence of the princess huts is presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Address Pondok Modern Gontor Putri

No.	Pondok Name	Pondok Address
1	PMDG Putri Kampus 1	Ds. Sambirejo, Kec. Mantingan, Kab. Ngawi, Prov. Jawa Timur, 63257
2	PMDG Putri Kampus 2	Ds. Sambirejo, Kec. Mantingan, Kab. Ngawi, Prov. Jawa Timur, 63257
3	PMDG Putri Kampus 3	Ds. Karangbanyu, Kec. Widodaren, Kab. Ngawi, Prov. Jawa Timur, 63257
4	PMDG Putri Kampus 4	Ds. Kemiri, Kec. Kandangan, Kab. Kediri, Prov. Jawa Timur, 64294
5	PMDG Putri Kampus 5	Ds. Lamomea, Kec. Konda, Kab. Konawe Selatan, Prov. Sulawesi Tenggara, 93871
6	PMDG Putri Kampus 6	Jl. Trans Sulawesi, Ds. Tokorondo, Kec. Poso Pesisir, Kab. Poso,

Prov. Sulawesi Tengah		
7	PMDG Putri Kampus 7	Jl. Raya Pekanbaru, Bangkinang KM 21, Ds. Rimbo Panjang, Kec. Tambang, Kab. Kampar, Prov. Riau
8	PMDG Putri Kampus 8	Jl. A. Rahman, Ds. Labuhan Ratu VI, Kec. Labuhan Ratu, Kab. Lampung Timur, Prov. Lampung

Source: Gontor Magazine: Ummah Adhesive Media. Edition 3 Year XXII Dzulhijjah 1445 H - Muharram 1446 H, July 2024.

The number of students at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor fluctuates every year. This happened because of the addition of new students and students who graduated. Likewise, the number of teachers is constantly fluctuating due to new teachers and teachers who have left the Pondok because their service period is over. The number of students and teachers in 2023 at Pondok Gontor Central and Branch is as follows in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of Students and Teachers of Pondok Modern Gontor Central and Branch

No.	Campus Name	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
1	PMDG Kampus Pusat, Ponorogo	3352	657
2	PMDG Kampus 2, Ponorogo	1306	237
3	PMDG Kampus 3, Kediri	1612	303
4	PMDG Kampus 4, Banyuwangi	1573	241
5	PMDG Kampus 5, Magelang	1146	215
6	PMDG Kampus 6, Konawe Selatan	411	97
7	PMDG Kampus 7, Lampung Selatan	790	195
8	PMDG Kampus 8, Aceh Besar	265	60
9	PMDG Kampus 9, Sulit Air Solok	242	106
10	PMDG Kampus 10, Tanjung Jabung Timur, Jambi	221	63
11	PMDG Kampus 11, Poso	223	54
12	PMDG Kampus 12, Siak, Riau	300	89
13	PMDG Putri Kampus 1, Mantingan, Ngawi	3388	524
14	PMDG Putri Kampus 2, Mantingan, Ngawi	1997	292
15	PMDG Putri Kampus 3, Widodaren, Ngawi	2225	349
16	PMDG Putri Kampus 4, Kediri	1623	242
17	PMDG Putri Kampus 5, Konawe Selatan	314	86
18	PMDG Putri Kampus 6, Poso	158	55
19	PMDG Putri Kampus 7, Kampar, Riau	809	161
20	PMDG Putri Kampus 8, Lampung Timur	440	106
	Sum	22395	4132

Source: Wardun, Warta Dunia Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. Vol. 77 Sha'ban 1445/2024.

Since its establishment until now, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has always been led by three *Kyai*. Trimurti gave an example of leadership in Gontor being collective. KH Ahmad Sahal, KH Zainuddin Fanani, and KH Imam Zarkasyi are always united in leading the Pondok. Although there are sometimes differences of opinion between the three, Trimurti can always summarize and unite his thoughts. KH Akrim Mariyat, one of the current leaders of Pondok Gontor, said that KH Ahmad Sahal and KH Imam Zarkasyi who were in the cottage sat at KH Imam Zarkasyi's house almost every day discussing the problems of the cottage, talking about various things they faced. Discussions that are not the same thoughts are frequent, but in the end, they become one again. This tradition continues to be continued by the leaders afterward. KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal, and KH Shoiman Luqmanul Hakim who carry out the leadership mandate are also united in their leadership. Likewise, when the boarding

school was led by KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal, and KH Imam Badri. The tradition of collective leadership continued when the Waqf Board appointed KH Syamsul Hadi Abdan as the successor to KH Imam Badri who died. At that time, KH Syamsul Hadi Abdan led Pondok Gontor with KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi and KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal. This collective leadership continues to this day. This collective leadership model continues to be maintained until now because it has proven effective for Pondok Modern Gontor. In other words, individual leadership or *a one-man show* is not effective for leadership in Gontor.

All *Kyai* have the same role. All *Kyai* are involved in decision-making. Even if there is a difference, it is only a matter of signatures for outbound (external) affairs. For the current leadership, the role is entrusted to KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal, the most senior *Kyai* among the current leaders. However, for matters related to the coaching and education of students, as well as other matters, all *Kyai* have the same role. After Trimurti no longer existed, the Waqf Board became the highest institution that determined the leadership in Gontor. Every five years, the Waqf Board elects the leader of Gontor. A *Kyai* or the leader of the boarding school can continue to be re-elected, without a time limit, as long as the boarding school is still needed, still can lead, or is still wanted by the students and the Waqf Board.

Baharuddin & Umiarso (2020) said that the typology of collective leadership means that leadership is not carried out by one person in any capacity or position. The characteristic of this leadership typology is togetherness, both in planning programs, carrying out activities, and in providing assessments of business results and supervision. Collective leadership is not the same as bureaucratic leadership which tends to be individual leaders. Collective leadership is more colored by the values of collectivity based on a sense of sincerity in being responsible for carrying out the mandate. In collective leadership, the spirit of deliberation is highly valued and has a place. In contrast, individual leadership is leadership that applies an instructive and instructive style with its indicators, as follows: 1) Acting as a ruler; 2) Responsible to superiors and non-subordinates; 3) Not always part of the group; 4) The power is based on the rules, 5) It is not elected, but appointed by the superior according to the specified requirements.

Pramitha (2020) said that leadership in modern *Islamic* Boarding Schools, including Gontor, adheres to a transformational leadership style and a democratic leadership style while adhering to the principle of *al-Mubafadzatu 'ala qadimi as-salib wa al-akbdu bi al-jadidi al-aslah*. Six indicators can be used as a measure in looking at the democratic leadership prototype. *First*, it puts human beings in an honorable, noble, and potential view. *Second*, always try to link the interests and goals of the organization with personal goals and interests. *Third*, open to criticism and suggestions from anyone. *Fourth*, strive to create a conducive climate and prioritize compact cooperation. *Fifth*, encourage subordinates to be free to take initiative, through dynamic creativity. *Sixth*, always build yourself to be able to develop as insightful, reliable, and authoritative leaders. Judging from the indicators of this democratic leadership prototype, this type of typology is considered the most appropriate and ideal to be developed in modern organizations. This type of leadership is based on the principles of prophetic *leadership*.

Meanwhile, the transformational leadership style can bring about changes in every individual involved in the organization to achieve higher performance. The assumption underlying transformational leadership is that every subordinate will follow a leader who can inspire with a clear vision, in a good way, and energy to achieve a great goal. Working with a transformational leader will be able to provide a valuable form of experience. In practice, the transformational leader will start everything with a vision, which is a vision and hope for the future that will be achieved together by combining all the strengths, abilities, and existence of his followers. This vision was developed by the leaders themselves or indeed already exists institutionally that has been formulated by previous predecessors but is still in line with the development of needs and demands at present.

A leader is said to be transformational measured by the level of trust, obedience, admiration, loyalty, and respect of his followers. The followers of transformational leaders will be motivated to do even better things to achieve organizational goals (Baharuddin & Umiarso, 2020). Transformational leadership has several behavioral characteristics, such as: 1). Having a big vision and trusting intuition; 2). Positioning ourselves as the driving force of change; 3). Dare to take risks with careful consideration; 4). Providing awareness to subordinates of the importance of work results; 5). Have confidence in the ability of subordinates; 6). Flexible and open to new experiences; 7). Striving to increase higher motivation than just material motivation; 8). Encouraging subordinates to put the interests of the organization above personal and group interests; and 9). Able to articulate core values (culture/tradition) to guide subordinate behavior.

From these aspects, there are several important aspects carried out by *Islamic* education leaders in realizing organizational transformation, namely: 1). Making the components of the *Islamic* education organization aware of the importance of a job, 2). Mobilizing the components of the *Islamic* education organization to prioritize the interests of the organization over their interests; and 3). Effectively prioritizing the needs of the components of *Islamic* education organizations at a higher level. At this level, *Islamic* educational organizations that use a transformational leadership style will have the characteristics of transparency and cooperation in which all components have the same system, namely the pattern of movement and the running of *Islamic* educational organizations are not driven by the bureaucracy, but by a common consciousness.

On the other hand, transformational leaders view the values of *Islamic* education organizations as noble values that need to be designed and determined by all organizational components so that organizational components have a sense of ownership and commitment in their implementation. The leader must transform the value of *Islamic* education organizations to help realize the vision of *Islamic* educational institutions institutionally and the vision of *Islamic* education ethically-normatively.

Preparation of the *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum

The *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor was compiled and introduced by the Trimurti Founder of Gontor, especially KH Imam Zarkasyi. This curriculum has relatively not changed. One of the Leaders of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, Prof. Dr. KH. Amal Fathullah Zarkasyi, MA., said that curriculum changes are only made if there are new problems. In other words, curriculum evaluation is not carried out regularly. Nevertheless, Pondok Gontor has its curriculum team. This team is the one who prepares the curriculum, including *Aqidah* learning. The *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum that has been prepared by this team is then brought to the Pondok Leadership to be assessed, evaluated and ratified. If it has been approved, the books will be published. However, the draft curriculum submitted to the leadership of the Pondok is not always accepted. Sometimes it is rejected.

The curriculum is structured in such a way with a specific purpose. For example, the 1st class *Islamic* date is made *simple*. There is no need to go deep. Grade 2 is also simple. But in grade 3 it is made more *advanced*, the content and language are made *masdu*. The same is true for grade 4. There are levels and stages. In other words, the material for grade 1 does not need to be in-depth because there are still many other lessons. "Later in grade 3 and grade 4, it can be deepened. For grade 1, that's enough. Everything has stages," he explained.

Kyai Amal's opinion is supported by the theory of curriculum development presented by Ornstein & Hunkins (2009) which states that curriculum development does not only involve technical aspects such as content or learning methods, but also philosophical, psychological, and social considerations. The same thing was said by Oliva (1992) in Hamalik (2017) that curriculum development must consider logical and psychological factors.

Initially, the *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum at Pondok Gontor came from the thoughts and ideas of the founders of Pondok Modern Gontor (Trimurti). Then the thoughts and ideas are

conveyed to the curriculum formulation team, and this team then discusses them. The results of this team were then submitted to the director of KMI and forwarded to the Pondok Leader. This mechanism also applies to curriculum revisions. One of the teams that formulated the *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum at Pondok Gontor, Dr. Mohammad Kholid Muslih, Lc., MA., said that in 2011 there was a revision of the *Aqidah* Curriculum for grade 2. After that, it was continued with revisions for the next classes. The Pondok Leadership does not necessarily approve the curriculum formulation proposed by the drafting team. Such an experience has happened before. "The world of *Islamic* Boarding Schools is centered on Pak *Kyai*. At that time, it was an instruction from Mr. *Kyai* Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi. Then a team was formed. I was asked to come along. Because at that time he was sick it was not possible (to judge him). Well, when (the curriculum formulation) is submitted back to the (current) Leader, the formulation is asked to be improved," said Ustadz Kholid, the nickname of Dr. Mohammad Kholid Muslih, Lc., MA.

As is known, the Leadership of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor consists of three *Kyai*. Among the three there is an elder. For now, the elder is KH Hasan Abdullah Sahal. The other two leaders of the Pondok are Prof. Dr. KH Amal Fathullah Zarkasyi, MA, and Drs. KH Akrim Mariyat, Dipl.A.Ed. "In Gontor, there are always those who are old, the old are the ones who 'hold'. At that time, Mr. Syukri. When he was sick, then Pak Hasan (the elder). When (the curriculum formulation) was submitted, he instructed it to be revised," said Ustadz Kholid.

Then what is the reason? The reason is that Gontor is madzhab *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, in which there is an understanding of *salaf* and there is an understanding of *khalaf*. In the early days of Pondok Gontor, the *Aqidah* book only existed in two classes, namely in grade 1 and grade 2. In the 1990s it was added for grades 5 and 6. Then the next one is added again for grade 4. As for grade 3, there are still no books until now. "We 'yesterday' talked about rearranging this *Aqidah* book," said Ustadz Kholid. For grades 1 and 2, the creed is '*ala madzhab khalaf as-sba'irah*'. "The question is why there is no *Aqidah* book for grades 4 and 3 and then it is completed. Indeed, Gontor is like that. Gontor walked while perfecting. The impression is indeed jumping, there is *Aqidah* (learning) in grades 1 and 2 and then directly in grades 5 and 6. Is it because there used to be no books for 3rd grade? The books used for grades 5 and 6 are Ibn Taymiyah and Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab's book, *madzhab salaf thob'an*. Then get a *Madrosi* book, which is then used for grades 4, 5, and 6. As for grade 3, there are other materials, namely *Adyan material*, religious material, not *Aqidah* material, but *Ad Din Al Islami*. This material is *tsaqafah*, not *Aqidah* material. Currently, the Gontor curriculum team is talking about filling out *Aqidah* materials for grade 3. Later the design will be classes 1, 2, and 3 '*ala madzhab khalaf*' and grades 4, 5, and 6 '*ala madzhab salaf*'. Because Gontor believes that the *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah Aqidah* consists of *salaf* and *khalaf*.

Why for grades 1, 2, and 3 *khalaf* and grades 4, 5, and 6 *salaf*? Ustadz Kholid explained, in the past, the founders of Gontor only prepared *Aqidah* materials for grades 1 and 2. Everything is *khalaf*, there is no *salaf*. The founders of Gontor (Trimurti) started from *khalaf*, most likely because the majority of Muslims in Indonesia, even the *Islamic* world at that time '*ala madzhab khalaf*' when Gontor was founded. Especially at that time, people's lives were filled with *superstitious practices*. The question is, does the absence of the *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum in grade 3 affect the quality of Gontor graduates? Especially related to *aqidah* after passing KMI? Considering that at the beginning of the establishment of Gontor, *Aqidah* learning materials were only given in grades 1 and 2, then there were additions for other classes, it can be concluded that the *Aqidah* material is not enough only given in grades 1 and 2. Moreover, the discussion in grade 1 is in Indonesian, and in grade 2 is in Arabic, which is a repetition of the Indonesian language material (grade 1 material). In other words, there is almost no material addition. Grade 1 material uses Indonesian and grade 2 Arabic. In the subsequent development of Gontor, *Aqidah* materials were also given for grades 4, 5, and 6. The material for grades 4, 5, and 6 is about the pillars of faith. Because Gontor's education lasts six years (plus one year of service), Gontor graduates are expected to obtain *Aqidah*

material in its entirety. In other words, if a student stops in the middle of the road, not until grade 6, then the *Aqidah* material is incomplete. So the provision of *Aqidah* material is carried out as a unit, one package. So that students must reach grade 6 so that their understanding of the creed is considered sufficient.

According to Ustadz Kholid, the team preparing the *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum will determine the *Aqidah* learning material for grade 3. The material is not taken from the material that is already in grades 4, 5, and 6. But it is taken from the discussion of *Aqidah* in the understanding of *khalaf* which consists of three main discussions, namely *ilahiyyat*, *nubuwat*, and *sam'iyat*. The plan is that for grade 1 it is *ilahiyyat*, grade 2 *nubuwat*, and grade 3 *sam'iyat*. Thus, there will be a deepening of the material at each grade level.

Objectives of *Aqidah* Learning

What are the objectives of learning *Aqidah* at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor? Dr. Mohammad Kholid Muslih, Lc., MA., a member of the team that prepares the *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum of Pondok Modern Gontor, said that there are two objectives of learning *Aqidah*. *First*, learning *Aqidah* is intended to build a personality as a servant of Allah. The peak really glorifies godliness and then tries to become a servant who surrenders to Allah SWT. The highest servant is the highest submission and resignation.

Second, with the learning of *Aqidah*, students and also Gontor alumni will not be swayed by situations and conditions and environments that can erode the principles of *Aqidah*, so students and alumni have a solid *Islamic* personality. With the provision of learning *Aqidah* from Gontor, a student already has provisions for life as a good Muslim. "My experience as an alumnus, what Gontor taught is very enough," said Ustadz Kholid.

According to Sayid Sabiq in Muliati (2020), the purpose of *Islamic Aqidah* is for a person to makrifat (know the truth) to Allah SWT through his intellect and heart. Makrifat will make his soul strong and strong and leave a good and noble impression. Not only that, makrifat will also direct one's goals and views in a good and correct direction. *Aqidah* is a very important aspect of a servant's life. Therefore, the values of *Aqidah* must be taken seriously, especially in educating children who will later become the successors of *Islamic* treatises. This has an effect not only on the glory of *Islam* in the future but also on the safety of these children's lives in this world and the hereafter (Bahaf, 2015). Therefore, the first lesson that Luqman ordered to his son was about the importance of instilling *Aqidah* values for children, as Allah SWT said:

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

"And when Luqman said to his son when he taught him, 'O my son, do not associate with Allah, for it is indeed a great injustice!'" (QS. Luqman: 13)

Ustadz Kholid said that the merger between *madzhab Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* according to the understanding of *salaf* and *khalaf* in Gontor is very good. This is because the understanding of *khalaf* provides a framework of thought, a strong logical framework, while the understanding of *salaf* provides a *more practical* framework of naql.

Conclusion

The learning of *Aqidah* at Pondok Modern Gontor develops in line with the challenges of the times. In the early days of Gontor's establishment, *Aqidah* learning used *Aqidah* books which only existed in two classes, namely in grade 1 and grade 2. Then around the 1990s, books for grades 5 and 6 were added. Then the next one is added again for grade 4. As for grade 3, until now, there are still no books. When this research was carried out, the Pondok Modern Gontor *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum team planned to compile a book that would be used for *Aqidah* Learning in grade 3. So far, the material for grade 3 is *Adyan material*, religious material, not *Aqidah* material, but *Ad Din Al Islami*. This material is *tsaqafah material*, not *Aqidah* material.

The *Aqidah* Learning Curriculum preparation team will determine the *Aqidah* learning material for grade 3. The material is not taken from the material that is already in grades 4, 5, and 6. However, it is taken from the discussion of *Aqidah* in *madzhab Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* with an understanding of *khalaf* which consists of three main discussions, namely *ilahiyat*, *nubuwat*, and *sam'iyat*. The plan is that for grade 1 it is *divine*, grade 2 *nubuwat*, and grade 3 *sam'iyat*, so that there is a deepening of material at each grade level.

Pondok Modern Gontor designed *Aqidah* learning materials for grades 1, 2, and 3 are materials for *madzhab Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* with an understanding of *khalaf* and for grades 4, 5, and 6 *madzhab Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* with an understanding of *salaf*. This is done because Gontor believes that the *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah Aqidah* consists of *salaf* and *khalaf*. The founders of Gontor (Trimurti) started from *khalaf*, because the majority of Muslims in Indonesia, even the *Islamic* world at that time when Gontor was founded adhered to the *madzhab Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* with the understanding of *khalaf*. In other words, Pondok Modern Gontor combines the understanding of *salaf* and *khalaf*.

Acknowledgements

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