Challenge and Prospect of Indonesian Islamic Higher Education (PTKI) in the Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Higher Institution (PTKI) in Indonesia is now encountering the problem of the output/its alumnae as indicated by their lack and/or unability to be involved optimally in a scale development of this nation. This is a logical consequence of its weak scientific basis (epistemology). This is also due to the obscure vision and mission of the PTKI in making a choice, i.e. whether it becomes an academic, a preaching, or a practical-pragmatic institution. The two problems above are important to be taken into consideration if the problem of the output is assumed to be a significant matter. Thus, if the scientific basis (epistemology) held by PTKI is not relevant with the changes, it should be adapted to the need of the era. In addition, we also need to affirm the vision-mission of PTKI if we want to make this institution survive against the attack of global capitalism, whether it is an academic, a preaching, and/or practical-pragmatic institution. Probably, the relevant problem that needs to be discussed nowadays is how we can strengthen our institution internally, build, and reinforce the external network to develop the quality of Islamic higher institution in this modern era.
Key Words: *Challenge, Prospect, PTKI, and The Modern Era*

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, Islamic University in Indonesia face output problem/its graduation which is indicated that they are incapable enough optimally involved in developing country widely. It is as logical consequence from the weak of the basic of building knowledge (epistemology). It is also important that the vision and mission of *PTKI* is not strict to choose whether they want to be academic institution, preaching or practical-pragmatics.

Both of the problems must be proposed, if the output problem of *PTKI* is considered as a significant problem. Thus, epistemology and or the paradigm of the science studies which is handled by *PTKI* for this time and especially the irrelevant with the change, must be straighten up as the need in this era. Besides that, the vision –mission of *PTKI* must be selected well especially if they want to be surviving in the attack of global capitalism- are they as academic institution, preaching or practical-pragmatics?

Bassam Tibi has ever reported his research, almost all Islamic universities in Middle East and Africa – he didn't mention Indonesia— emphasize the capacity of memorizing so students could pass in their study; it doesn't emphasize on the capacity of thinking critically and analytically. The students are prepared not to answer the challenging of change but just for stabilizing and prestige. As a result, after graduating from study, the students are provided certificate (certificate oriented), but they are not prepared of the applicable qualification which is useful in process of developing countries. The universities graduation commonly in society, for the first time, they are not asked about their skills and qualification but their academic title, and what universities they are from (Tibi, 1991). Tibi's opinion above is the same as the condition of *PTKI* in Indonesia. As reported by Azyumardi Azra, those Indonesia students who study in university firstly, they only want to get status and a piece of certificate not skill, competence and professionalism (Azra in Stanton, 1994).

Now it is time to debate again about whether it is important or not to change the status of institution (transforming/conversion), for example from Institute becomes University, College into Institute, and others. Probably it is relevant to be discussed how to make better and strengthen internally especially relating to the building the science of paradigm- also to develop and strengthen the external networking in order to improve the quality of *PTKI* in this modern era.

2. RESEARCH RESULT

2.1 Dynamics The History Of Islamic Studies Of Ptki In Indonesia

The big plan of transforming IAIN (State Islamic Institute) becomes UIN (State Islamic University) and/or STAIN (State Islamic Higher Education) to be IAIN again (back to the previous as branch of IAIN in some areas) until this time it is still debatable and invites some controversy. The controversy arises as a result from epistemology perspective which asks whether all this time Islam follows dualism Islamic studies is debatable by many people is true or not. Then it becomes a problem itself. It also can not be separated from the low of quality of management system, so those problems affect the output very much which are considered incapable to compete in global competition era. Therefore, the decision maker –especially two the ministrys, Kemenag (Ministry of Religion) and Kemendiknas (Ministry of National Education)— released a discourse of developing IAIN to be UIN and STAIN becomes IAIN, then it is followed by two big official under Kemenag and Kemendiknas, so it becomes mushrooming in rainy season; even though not all IAIN and STAIN follow the discourse. However this discourse almost is not heard again as a circular of Directorate of General Ministry of Religion RI No. DJ.II/PP.03.2/698/2006, August 2nd 2006 talked about a disagreement of process of a new proposal especially about the changing status of institution of PTKI, except PTKIS which has been processed previously. However practically, a circular of Directorate of General is ignored by arising new proposal about the changing status of some PTKI, and in fact the process also can run well.

If it is arranged chronologically, in long history, Islamic studies in Indonesia actually do not grow and develop from the blank of historical reality; it exists chronologically in clear context of place and time, as history response to a number of religious problems must be faced by Islamic adherents in this country. Substantively, Islamic studies were started in 13th century and it reached the spiritual moment in 17th century. Nowadays Islamic studies is patterned by process of transforming religious values hugely, it is done by the Sufi Moslems teachers and 'Ulama' mainly in traditional education institutions such as Islamic boarding school/pesantren (Mudzhar, 2000). The process of Islamic transforming has been lasting until Indonesia proclaimed its independence day on August 17th 1945, Indonesia were demanded to think and straighten up the process of institutional in all sectors of life, unexceptional the sector of religious life as important element, because Indonesia is religious country.

The process of transforming Islamic in this era can not separated from the role of 'Ulamas' and the leader of Sufi movement because it is admitted that there is relation extensive historical   between ummah/Islamic adherents in Indonesia and 'ulama in Jazirah Arab like Mecca and Medina, the later is Cairo (Azra, 1994). The religious relationship has been established both of those Moslems communities in turn it will create an intellectual exchanges climate relatively dynamic and dialectical among them. The land of Jazirah Arab is known as fertile oases which produce Islamic intellectual works and their works area also consumed by Indonesia Moslems. The process of transmitting epistemology lasted in various ways, either directly or indirectly, not only starting from the dissemination of intellectual works of Midle East 'ulama' in many Islamic boarding schools but also sending the Islam young generation to deepen the science of religion to those countries (Abaza, 1994).

Although Indonesia has close intellectual relationship with the religious tradition in Arab, especially Mecca and Medina, it does not mean that Islam of Indonesia can be said as the replica of Arab Islam. The process of transmitting Islamic from Arab intellectual tradition lasted in very dynamic patterned, so Islam performance which develop in Indonesia can be different from in Islam 'genuine' Middle East. However, Islam Indonesia is not all of a sudden considered as peripheral Islam as claimed by Geertz (Geertz, 1960). The image projection of Islam Indonesia is reductive and distort even it is argued by Woodward (1989), Ricklefs (1979), and Hefner (1987) who still viewed Islam in this country as variety of religious which are forcibly removed from the root —borrowing terms Fazlur Rahman— normative Islam" (Rahman, 1980). The problem of Islam Indonesia performance is different from the performance Islam in Mid East only in cultural historical level as a result of adaptation process, assimilation, and acculturation relatively in long period, it is not about the level of substantive doctrine.

The process of institutional Islamic studies in Islamic boarding school lasted continuously as the process of transforming and modernization to the traditional institution (Wahid, 2001). The process of transforming and modernization happened when the Dutch colonial introduced school education system to the indigene society which affected to the Islamic boarding school through carrying out the system of instructional class (classical). As a result of carrying out this instructional model, so it was established schools (madrasah) in the environment of Islamic boarding school which only taught material of education classical religious including fiqih, tasawuf, Islamic ethics and so on. Furthermore after the era of independence, many Islamic boarding schools also taught secular material such as geography, mathematics, science (physics and biology), and language study (English). The pattern of secular teaching usually is implemented in some Islamic boarding schools which adopted from the modern method like Gontor and Assalam Solo –then it is followed by other Islamic boarding schools in the same pattern and the system of teaching. The process of transforming and modernization of Islamic boarding schools especially in the two last decade indicated that there is sensibility of this institution to the change of era in turn it also formed a tradition of Islamic studies in Indonesia entirely (Azra, 2000).

One of the basic implication that there is a process of transforming this education institution caused part of the element of Moslem society wanted the presence/existence of higher institution in conducting studies and learning Islam (Islamic higher learning institution). One of the responses to such willingness was offered an opinion by Dr. Satiman Wiryosandjojo, a leader of Masyumi and later he became as prime minister, it was also important to establish an institution of Islamic studies through Daily Society Directive in 1938. This was proposed in order that the status of Moslem increased in the environment of Dutch colonial. Welcoming that idea, on April 1945, four months before proclaiming Indonesia independence, a group of Moslem leaders met in Jakarta to establish a committee of preparation which was led by Moh. Hatta then he became the first vice of president RI. The task of the committee was to prepare the Islamic higher institution by founding STI (Sekolah Tinggi Islam/Islamic High School) on July, 8 in 1945 (Mudzhar, 2000).

After proclaiming independence of Indonesia Republic, the capital of Indonesia moved to Yogyakarta as a result of revolution, so the existence of STI (Sekolah Tinggi Islam) followed the movement of Republic activists. On 10th April, 1946, an Islamic institution was established in Yogyakarta then it changed into University of Islam Indonesia (UII) on 10th March in 1948 which also had four faculties: Faculty of Religious Proselytizing (recently it becomes Faculty of Religious Proselytizing and *Ushuluddin*), Faculty of *Qada'* (Faculty of *Syari'ah*), and Faculty of *Tarbiyah*. The Faculty of *Adab* was found more or less eight years later, it was purpose to complete the four faculty then they were integrated to be ADIA (Academic Service of Islamic

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Science/Akademi Dinas Ilmu Agama) in Jakarta, an academic which was designed to graduate candidates of civil service of Religion Department of Republic Indonesia (Mudzhar, 2000; Azra, 2000).

The integration of both Islamic institutions was found an Islamic studies institution then it was known as Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) which were provided by five faculties: Dakwah, Ushuluddin, Shari'ah, Tarbiyah and Adab. While IAIN of Yogyakarta established independently, the same institution was also found in Jakarta. Both of them are the oldest Islamic Institute in Indonesia (www.ditpertais.net). Lately, it was thought out by the policy maker of Islamic institute to restitution the spirit of Islamic studies more comprehensive; the disciplines studies which are handled by UIN not only Islamic science/studies, but also other secular studies/sciences which have related to Islamic nuance, such as psychology, communication, sociology, anthropology and others. In the future, IAIN would be developed in the framework of University of State Islam (UIN) which supervises Islamic studies and other secular studies/sciences.

2.2 The Challenges And Prospects Of Indonesian Islamic Higher Education (Ptki) In The Modern Era

The big plan to transform IAIN (State Islamic Institute) into UIN (State Islamic University) is based on the Indonesian Moslem's visionary awareness of the urgent need to master the science and technology in order that they are able to get along with the fast accelerated change of the world. Besides, it emerges from the Moslem's self awareness not to take the western's dichotomy of science; the Islamic science and the secular science, which is part of the Holland Colonial's inheritance in Indonesia. But, apart from the expected benefit from the Islamic university transformation above, it still remains a paradigmatic problem of the Islamic study in the Indonesian Islamic universities. As the result, that transformation becomes debatable, and leaves a lot of mysteries. The controversy rises from the epistemological perspective questioning whether or not Islam supports the dualism of science as being debated. The reconciliation of the dispute above, however, must not be taken by transforming IAIN into UIN which is in charge of two different disciplines, the Islamic science and the secular science because the other state universities, although without an Islamic tag, basically also belong to Indonesian Moslems. Isn't it true that introducing non-Islamic studies in IAIN will make the system of high education in Indonesia more complicated and their presence will make them overlapped?

Apart from the controversy of transforming IAIN into UIN, a more interesting issue to be taken into deep consideration is the prone development of the Islamic studies conducted in those Islamic universities. Since its first establishment, the Islamic universities hold two main important missions, first as a religious institution and second as scientific institution. As a central body of Islamic studies, the Islamic universities serve a noble mission to promote a religious enlighten among Muslims. Besides, as science development institution, the Islamic universities are expected to be an *avant garde* in studying Islam more as an academic discipline than a religion doctrine (Azra, 1999). These two missions do not always run hand in hand, but, often, it is found a conflict in promoting them. In one side, as an academic institution, the Islamic universities are expected to follow the rules of the games of the academic system in which religion, as a discipline, must be studied scientifically. Thus, unavoidably, the result of the study sometimes is against the Islamic norms. In another side, the Islamic universities are expected to function as a religion institution which tends to put aside the principals of scientific approach.

Dating back to their history, the Indonesian Islamic universities, once, were dominated by a doctrinal normative approach of study which takes the Islamic formal law (*shari'ah*) and theology (*ushul ad-din*) into priority. That tendency was reasonable since the universities functioned more as a religion institution. As the result, it emerges an Islamic study which is prone to be very scriptural, referring to the practices of *ibadah* (worship) and Islamic *aqidah* (faith). It is caused, according to Azra, by the domination of the normative-idealistic approach developed by some Islamic universities in the Middle East especially Al-Azhar University in Cairo (Azra, 2000). Even it is getting worse that the Islamic universities tend to focus on only one Islamic school of thought (*madzhab)* and ignore other schools for they are suspected to spoil the Moslems' faith.

Related to the institutionalization of Islamic studies at Indonesian Islamic universities, it is interesting to note some criticisms delivered by Sudirman Tebba. In his perspective, the Indonesian Islamic universities have failed in developing the classical tradition of scientific methods founded by the early Islamic scholars. This failure is not only in term of developing the methods of Islamic studies in the Islamic laws but also in Islamic theology. For example in *Fiqh*, the reasoning foundation developed by the early scholars is not well utilized by the academic faculties, but they prefer picking up the product of their thinking (*ijtihad)* to the

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ijtihad methodology. Consequently, the Indonesian Islamic universities have failed in presenting the portrait of Islam as a dynamic religion. While in theology, the Indonesian Islamic universities seem to be busy only in studying the historical perspective of the early Islamic scholars' school of thought such as Mu'tazilah, Asy'ariyah, and Maturidiyah, ignoring the contextual analysis of the social reality why those schools rose (Tebba, 1993). As the result, those studies sound more a romantic reflection of the academic faculties of the Indonesian Islamic universities which dream of the revivalism of the Moslems' golden age in the mid centuries.

However, those phenomena of Islamic studies, which are normative-theological, don't last longer because a new tendency appears as a response of the Indonesian Islamic universities to the new development and the changing of era. The Islamic studies in the early 1970s tend to focus on the contexts which are more historically socio-cultural. The national development programs which goal in the modernization make some of Islamic intellectuals such as Nurcholis Madjid, Harun Nasution (1997), and Mukti Ali (it is necessarily noted here that they are the products of western high education) change the orientation of the Islamic studies in IAIN. This effort gains its momentum with the fact that more and more young Moslem intellectuals go to western universities to take their graduate degree.

The vivid result of this reorientation of the Islamic study in Indonesian Islamic universities is a more heterogeneous approach of Islamic study; Islam is not only viewed from only one school of thought but also from other schools which have never been introduced before. This new approach also contributes in the application of a more empirical and academic method of Islamic study without negating the fact that Islam is a system of faith and religion. As the result, the students are getting more open and tolerant to a different method of understanding Islam (Connolly, 1999). This condition, in turn, will lead to the release of a non-school of thought approach in Islamic study along with the weakening loyalty and blind fanaticism of Moslem to a certain school (Azra, 2000).

Another dimension of this changing is that Moslems are getting more aware to the socio-cultural reality surrounding them. This awareness, even, implies radically in redefining the relation of man-religion; whether man dedicate their life for religion or religion is dedicated for man's lives. A normative approach, of course, put religion as the supreme target or goal of man's dedication in this life. On the contrary, the empirical contextual approach puts religion as the medium to regulate the man's life in this world, not merely regulating the man's after life. In conclusion, religion functions as way of life, a medium which assists a man to achieve the God's confirms (*ridho),* not functions as a final end of a man's life as what assumed by the normative-theological approach.

That changing of approach in Islamic study also brings a different color in viewing other religions. Before that, the approach applied to study other religions is apologetic approach which justifies Islamic truth above of other religions. In this approach, non Moslems are considered *kafir* (**crusader**) who are allowed to be legally killed. Since Mukti Ali's comeback from Canada, after receiving his MA, the approach of inter-religion study has changed radically. The claim of truth paradigm which has been long followed by the Islamic universities is gradually changed and replaced by a more tolerant, inclusive, and pluralistic thought in which the presence of other different religions is considered as a must (*sunnatullah)* which cannot be negated. They are not allowed to be attacked that they do not initiate an attack against Moslems, and their relationship is regulated under a transaction law (*muamalah*) which ties both parties. This change is more strengthened to regulate the national interfaith relationship when Mukti Ali was appointed the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs (Kaptein, 2000).

Some very fundament questions about the Islamic study at the Indonesian Islamic universities are posed by Atho Mudzhar. *First*, with the transformation of Islamic studies at those institutions, it must be clearly formulated which subject is considered the core and which is considered the auxiliary. This question is necessary to be answered because the Islamic study at those Islamic universities which has been enriched with 'secular' approach is not intended to weakening of the Islamic study itself, but it is intended to support the Islamic study to be applicable, historical, and empirical. In this perspective, for example, *Fiqh* must be classified whether it is the core subject or the auxiliary one and so must Sociology or Anthropology. It all is intended to avoid an overlap and to see the issues proportionally. *Second*, how can a communication with the supporters of dogmatic-theological approach be conducted? The logical answer of this question is that it needs to be initiated an intra and inter discipline study to understand the ideal of Islam in its historical frame. *Third*, as the series of the questions above, it is the right time for the Indonesian Islamic universities to

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establish non Islamic study programs to promote a more comprehensive understanding of Islam as what has been firstly done by Al Azhar University and other universities in Islamic countries (Mudzhar, 1998), but they, at the same time, are not leaving their 'Islamic' identity or transforming their 'institution' from an institute to be a university or from a college to be an institute, and so on.

But, anyway, the socio-cultural condition among different types of universities is not the same. In Egypt, it widely possible to open a full-fledged university such as Al Azhar University, but in Indonesia the condition is more complex. However, the Indonesian Islamic universities must reevaluate their original missions as the footstep to classify the core subjects and the auxiliary subjects. The problem is how can we do it all?

3. CONCLUSION

The discourse of the institutional transformation –from institute to university, from college to institute- seems irrelevant to be seriously discussed in condition that the structure and the approach of Islamic study is still viewed and done monolithically. The idea of science dualism in Islam is also considered to slow down the development of Islamic study at the Indonesian Islamic universities. If they want to be more competitive and survive in this global competition, they must put aside such dualism without changing the institution. Some approaches offered by the early Islamic scholars constitute a great contribution which must be appreciated and elaborated to study Islam at the Indonesian Islamic universities, by not only taking the products of their *ijtihad* –especially the products which is in context to the recent era.

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