

A Century of Darussalam Gontor: Transformation, Contribution, and Challenges of Modern Pesantren Education in Indonesia

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Abstract

Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School has undergone significant transformation amid globalization and educational modernization, yet comprehensive century-long analyses integrating institutional change, educational contribution, and future challenges remain limited. Purpose: This study analyzes the centennial trajectory of Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School, focusing on its institutional transformation, contributions to Islamic education, and strategic challenges in its second century. Methods: A historical-library research design with descriptive-analytical approach was employed. Data were drawn from primary institutional documents and secondary scholarly sources, and analyzed through historical reconstruction, thematic classification, and source triangulation. Findings: The study reveals that Gontor has transformed pesantren education through curriculum integration of religious and general sciences, implementation of the KMI system, bilingual language policy, dormitory-based character education, and structured leadership regeneration. Its contributions include establishing a replicable model of modern pesantren and promoting moderate Islamic education across Indonesia. However, it faces critical challenges including digital transformation, globalization pressures, academic research strengthening, leadership succession, and institutional sustainability. Implications: The sustainability of Gontor's model depends on continuous educational innovation and revitalization of foundational values such as *Panca Jiwa*, although findings remain interpretive due to reliance on historical-documentary sources. Originality: This study provides a century spanning integrative analysis linking transformation, contribution, and future challenges within a single analytical framework of modern pesantren development.

Keywords: *Gontor; Pesantren Education; Educational Transformation; Panca Jiwa; Islamic Education Modernization.*

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren (Islamic boarding school) is among the oldest and most influential Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia's socio-religious history. From pre-independence times to the contemporary era, pesantren have served not only as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, but also as institutions for character formation, the development of ulama (Islamic scholars), and centers for the social empowerment of the Muslim community. Throughout their development, pesantren have undergone a highly dynamic transformation, particularly in the face of educational modernization, scientific advancements, socio-political changes, and the increasingly complex currents of globalization. Therefore, the study of modern pesantren is crucial for understanding how Islamic educational institutions maintain their traditional identity while adapting to changing times.¹

In Indonesia, the modernization of pesantren began to take on a more systematic form in the early 20th century. This period was marked by the emergence of Muslim awareness of the importance of educational reform in response to Western colonialism, the decline of the Muslim community, and the challenges of modernity. In this context, some Islamic educational institutions began to adopt the classical system, an integrated curriculum, foreign language proficiency, and more modern educational management. One institution that has had a significant influence on this modernization process is the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School.²

As one of the most influential modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, Gontor holds a significant place in the history of national Islamic education. This boarding school has not only successfully maintained its existence for a century but also has built an educational system that is distinctive, independent, and oriented towards developing cadres. Through the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (KMI) system, the use of Arabic and English as official languages, the discipline of 24-hour dormitory life, and an emphasis on character and leadership development, Gontor has successfully established a model of modern Islamic boarding school education that differs from both traditional and modern public schools.³

Gontor's influence on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia is extensive. Many modern Islamic boarding schools in various regions use Gontor's educational system as a primary inspiration for their institutional renewal.⁴ Gontor's contribution to Islamic education in Indonesia is not limited to the success of its own pesantren. More importantly, it has produced a replicable educational model that has inspired the modernization of pesantren management, curriculum, discipline,

¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiai dan Visinya mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), pp. 41–55.

² Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012), pp. 123–128.

³ Imam Zarkasyi, *Diktat Pekan Perkenalan Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press, n.d.), pp. 15–23.

⁴ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren* (Jakarta: INIS, 1994), pp. 89–97.

language environment, and cadre formation. In this sense, Gontor has become one of the most important reference points for modern pesantren development in Indonesia, especially for institutions seeking to preserve the spirit of traditional Islamic boarding education while responding to the needs of modern society.

The themes of transformation, contribution, and challenge were chosen because these three aspects are key elements determining the sustainability of a modern Islamic educational institution. Transformation is necessary to examine the dynamics of change in Gontor's education system, institutional governance, da'wah orientation, and academic development over the course of a century. These important contributions are examined to understand Gontor's real role in shaping the face of modern Islamic education in Indonesia. Future challenges are a crucial focus because the world of Islamic education is currently facing significant changes due to the development of digital technology, cultural globalization, changes in the orientation of the younger generation, international educational competition, and the increasing need for integration of science and religion.⁵ Building on these three themes, this article positions itself within the literature on pesantren education by offering an integrated century-long analysis of Gontor that links institutional transformation, educational contribution, and future challenges in a single analytical framework, an approach that remains scarce in existing studies which tend to address these aspects separately.

Based on this background, this article is formulated into several main questions: (1) how the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School has transformed over the past century; (2) what Gontor's main contributions are to modern Islamic education in Indonesia; and (3) what challenges Gontor faces as it approaches the future.

This article aims to analyze the dynamics of Gontor's transformation over the past century, explain its contribution to the development of modern Islamic education in Indonesia, and identify the various strategic challenges Gontor faces as it enters its second century of development. Furthermore, this article also aims to provide an academic reflection on the prospects for modern Islamic boarding schools in facing global social, cultural, and technological changes in the future.

METHOD

This research employs historical and library research methods using a descriptive-analytical approach. The historical method is applied to trace the development of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor from its founding period to the contemporary era. Through this method, the study examines the continuity and transformation of Gontor's educational ideas, institutional system, leadership model, curriculum development, and contribution to Islamic education in Indonesia. The descriptive approach is used to present the historical facts systematically, while the analytical

⁵ Abuddin Nata, *Kapita Selekta Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2013), pp. 201–215.

approach is employed to interpret the meaning, relevance, and strategic significance of those developments within the broader context of pesantren modernization and Islamic educational reform.⁶

The data for this study are derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include institutional documents published by Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, such as *Warta Dunia Pondok Modern*, KMI curriculum documents, official statutes and institutional guidelines related to *Wakaf*, *Panca Jiwa*, and *Panca Jangka*, as well as the writings, speeches, and educational thoughts of the Trimurti and subsequent Gontor leaders. These sources are important because they represent Gontor's internal perspective, institutional philosophy, and official historical narrative. They also provide direct evidence of how Gontor defines its educational mission, cadre formation, leadership system, language policy, and institutional development.

In addition to primary sources, this study also uses secondary sources consisting of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, research reports, and academic writings on pesantren, Islamic education, educational modernization, and the historical development of Gontor. The secondary literature reviewed in this study mainly covers publications from 1990 to 2024 in order to capture both classical discussions and more recent developments, including issues of digitalization, internationalization, curriculum reform, and the transformation of pesantren management. The literature was selected based on three main criteria: direct relevance to Gontor or comparable modern pesantren institutions, credibility of the author and publisher, and relevance to the contemporary challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

The data analysis was conducted through historical reconstruction, descriptive classification, and analytical interpretation. First, the historical data were organized according to key periods in Gontor's development, including its founding, the establishment of *Kulliyatu-l-Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah*, institutional expansion, cadre development, alumni network formation, and contemporary transformation. Second, the data were classified into major themes, such as curriculum, leadership, language environment, student organization, institutional management, and educational contribution. Third, source triangulation was applied by comparing institutional documents, official Gontor publications, and secondary academic studies to ensure factual consistency and reduce single-source bias. Through this process, the research seeks not only to describe Gontor's historical development, but also to analyze its strategic role, educational legacy, and challenges in the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia.

⁶ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019), pp. 291–300.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historical Background and Educational Philosophy of Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School

The emergence of the Modern Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School cannot be separated from the social, political, and intellectual dynamics of Indonesian Muslims in the early 20th century. This period was a crucial time in the history of the revival of Islam in the archipelago, when Muslims faced major challenges due to Western colonialism, the decline of traditional Islamic education, and the increasing influence of modernity in social life. In this context, the birth of Gontor became part of the Islamic education renewal movement that sought to address the needs of the times without abandoning the fundamental Islamic identity and traditions of the Islamic boarding school.⁷

At the beginning of the 20th century, Islamic education in Indonesia was still dominated by a traditional system centered in rural Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). The pesantren education system at that time generally emphasized the teaching of classical texts (*kitab kuning*), the development of religious morals, and the personal relationship between the kiai (Islamic teacher) and the students (*santri*). The learning pattern was non-classical through the *sorogan* and *bandongan* (*wetonan*).⁸ The curriculum was not systematically structured, the educational levels were unstructured, and academic evaluations did not use modern standards like those found in Western schools.⁹

The early history of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School is closely linked to the roles of three key figures known as the "Trimurti Gontor": Ahmad Sahal, Zainuddin Fananie, and Imam Zarkasyi. These three figures were not only the founders of the institution, but also the formulators of the educational vision, institutional ideology, and direction of modern Islamic boarding school renewal in Indonesia.¹⁰

Among the Trimurti, Imam Zarkasyi was the most influential figure in the development of Gontor's modern education system. His experience studying at various modern Islamic educational institutions gave him extensive insight into the importance of integrating the Islamic boarding school system with modern educational methods. Zarkasyi designed the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (KMI) system, developed an integrated curriculum, introduced the classical system,

⁷ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 101–115.

⁸ *Sorogan* refers to individual recitation before the kiai; *bandongan* or *wetonan* refers to collective listening while the kiai reads and explains the classical texts. See Muhammad Iqbal Rosyid, Rifdatul Aisy, and Nurul Mubin, "Sinergi Tradisi dan Psikologi: Efektivitas Sorogan dan Bandongan dalam Pembelajaran Pesantren," *Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Islam* 3, no. 5 (2025): 168, <https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpai.v3i5.1563>.⁸

⁹ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*, pp. 44–58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–30.

dormitory discipline, and actively used Arabic and English in the daily lives of his students.¹¹

The success of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School in maintaining its existence and influence for a century is inseparable from the strong core values and educational philosophy that serve as the institution's foundation. These values are systematically formulated in the *Panca Jiwa* (five values) concept, its educational motto, its cadre orientation, and its student character development system.¹²

Panca Jiwa refers to the five main values that constitute the soul of life at Gontor: sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom.¹³ The value of sincerity instills a spirit of selfless devotion in all activities. Simplicity fosters a moderate lifestyle. Self-reliance instills independence in life. Islamic brotherhood fosters social solidarity among students and with the wider Muslim community. Meanwhile, freedom is defined as the freedom to think and determine one's future responsibly within the framework of Islamic values.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the well-known educational motto instilled at Gontor is: "Highly moral, healthy, knowledgeable, and free-thinking."¹⁵ This motto reflects Gontor's educational orientation, which emphasizes not only intellectual aspects but also morality, physical health, and freedom of thought. Education, according to Gontor, should produce complete human beings (*insan kamil*), not merely academically intelligent individuals.¹⁶

Gontor's Transformation of the Education System and Da'wah

One of the main factors that has enabled the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School to survive and thrive for a century is its success in continuously transforming its education system. This transformation not only involved changes to the curriculum and teaching methods but also encompassed the formation of an educational culture that integrates classical Islamic traditions with the needs of modernity. Gontor succeeded in developing an educational model that was neither entirely traditional nor entirely Western, but rather a creative synthesis that embodied the distinctive identity of a modern Islamic boarding school.¹⁷

In the early stages of Islamic boarding school development in Indonesia, the education system generally still employed a traditional pattern based on the study of yellow books using the *sorogan* and *wetonan* methods. This model had strengths in

¹¹ Imam Zarkasyi, *Pelajaran Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press, n.d.), pp. 10–18.

¹² Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Nilai dan Sistem Pendidikan Pondok Modern Gontor* (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press, 2005), pp. 1–15.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 5–9.

¹⁴ Imam Zarkasyi, *Apa yang Diketahui tentang Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor* (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press, n.d.), pp. 22–30.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁶ Nata, *Kapita Selekta Pendidikan Islam*, p. 228.

¹⁷ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 130–137.

transmitting religious knowledge but was unable to meet the demands of modern administration, scientific developments, and the needs of contemporary society. Recognizing these weaknesses, Gontor's founders undertook educational reform through the implementation of a classical system, the development of a tiered curriculum, systematic allocation of learning time, and the use of modern evaluation methods.¹⁸

Curriculum change was one of the most important steps in Gontor's educational transformation. The curriculum no longer only contains classical religious sciences such as fiqh, tafsir, hadith, nahwu, sharaf, and tauhid, but also includes general sciences such as mathematics, history, geography, natural sciences, psychology, education, and civics. This integration is based on the belief that Islam does not recognize a dichotomy between religious and general knowledge. All knowledge is seen as a means of devotion to God and the development of human civilization.¹⁹

The pinnacle of Gontor's educational system transformation was realized in the establishment of the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (KMI) system. The KMI system was designed by Imam Zarkasyi as a model of integrated Islamic secondary education that combined the pesantren system with modern schools. KMI emphasizes comprehensive, 24-hour education through the integration of academic curriculum, dormitory life, organizational development, leadership training, and character education.²⁰

In addition to the transformation of its educational system, the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School has also undergone significant institutional transformation during its century of development. From a local Islamic boarding school in the Ponorogo region, Gontor has grown into a national and even international Islamic education network.²¹

One of the most important institutional innovations in Gontor's history is the institution's waqf system. In 1958, Gontor's founders donated the Islamic boarding school to the Muslim community through the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School Waqf Board. This step has strategic significance because it makes the Islamic boarding school independent of ownership by a particular family or individual.²²

Gontor's transformation has not only occurred in the educational and institutional spheres, but also in the social and da'wah spheres. Over time, Gontor has become a center for the development of cadres with a broad influence on the lives of Indonesian Muslims.²³ In the field of da'wah, Gontor is known for developing a moderate Islamic

¹⁸ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*, pp. 82–90.

¹⁹ Zarkasyi, *Pelajaran Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah*, pp. 15–25.

²⁰ Zarkasyi, *Apa yang Diketahui*, pp. 45–57.

²¹ Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Sejarah Balai Pendidikan*, pp. 55–68.

²² Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Piagam Penyerahan Wakaf Pondok Modern* (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press, 1958), pp. 1–5.

²³ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 140–145.

approach (*wasathiyah*). Gontor's da'wah emphasizes a balance between commitment to Islamic teachings and openness to modernity. This moderate stance is reflected in its rejection of extremism, narrow fanaticism, and excessive politicization of religion.²⁴

Entering the latter half of the 20th century, the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School began expanding its educational transformation to the university level. This step was a response to the growing need of Muslims for higher education that could integrate Islamic traditions and modern scientific developments.²⁵

One of the most significant transformations in Gontor's development over the past century has been the process of institutional and educational globalization. From the outset, Gontor's founders had a strong international orientation. They were inspired by various educational institutions in the Islamic world, such as Al-Azhar University, Aligarh Muslim University, and Shantiniketan.²⁶

This global transformation demonstrates that modern Islamic boarding schools can become part of the intellectual conversation in the contemporary Islamic world without losing their cultural and spiritual roots. In this context, Gontor has successfully positioned itself as an important model of modern Islamic education that connects local traditions with global dynamics.²⁷

Gontor's Contribution to Modern Islamic Education in Indonesia

One of the greatest contributions of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School to Islamic education in Indonesia is its success in modernizing the Islamic boarding school system without losing its fundamental identity. In the history of Indonesian Islamic education, Gontor is seen as one of the pioneers of modern Islamic boarding schools, able to integrate classical Islamic scholarly traditions with the modern education system in a relatively balanced manner.²⁸

This modernization is evident in the renewal of learning methods. While traditional Islamic boarding schools generally use the *sorogan* and *wetonan* methods, which center on the authority of the kiai (Islamic cleric), Gontor introduces a more structured classical system, a tiered curriculum, class divisions based on ability level, and a systematic academic evaluation system.²⁹ Learning no longer focuses solely on text memorization but also on comprehension, analysis, speaking practice, discussion, and the development of students' intellectual insight.

Another important contribution is the development of discipline, management, and the academic culture of Islamic boarding schools. Gontor has developed an educational system that places a strong emphasis on time discipline, collective responsibility, environmental cleanliness, work ethics, and administrative order. All

²⁴ Azra, *Islam Nusantara* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), pp. 115–120.

²⁵ Abuddin Nata, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2010), pp. 188–192.

²⁶ Zarkasyi, *Apa yang Diketahui*, pp. 72–75.

²⁷ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 160–164.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 170–175.

²⁹ Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah*, pp. 102–107.

student activities are systematically organized, from waking up and praying to studying, exercising, organizing, and even resting.³⁰

One of the most important innovations introduced by Gontor is the concept of "total education" through the boarding system. From Gontor's perspective, education takes place not only in the classroom but also 24 hours a day, encompassing all aspects of a student's life.³¹ Therefore, the Islamic boarding school environment is designed as a space for comprehensive character formation.

Another major contribution of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School is its success in developing Muslim cadres. Since its inception, Gontor has not only aimed to produce graduates who master religious knowledge but also to develop community leaders capable of contributing to various aspects of life.³²

The formation of leadership character is a core part of Islamic boarding school education. Students are trained to lead organizations, manage activities, speak in public, develop work programs, and be responsible for their communities. Student organizations and various dormitory activities serve as social laboratories to foster leadership skills from a young age.³³

In the history of Indonesian Islamic education, one of the most important intellectual contributions of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School is its idea of integrating science and religion. Gontor consistently rejects the dichotomy of knowledge that separates religious and general knowledge.³⁴

Therefore, the Gontor curriculum incorporates various general disciplines without compromising the depth of religious studies. Students study tafsir (interpretation of the Quran), hadith (the Prophet's traditions), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Arabic, and *aqidah* (belief), while also studying mathematics, history, geography, education, psychology, and English. This integration has resulted in an educational pattern that balances spirituality and intellectuality.³⁵

Another important contribution of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School is its role in strengthening the moderation of Indonesian Islam. Gontor develops a moderate, open understanding of Islam, oriented toward the development of civilization.³⁶

Islamic moderation at Gontor is reflected in the principle of *wasathiyah* Islam, a middle ground that avoids both extremism and excessive liberalism. Gontor education

³⁰ Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Nilai dan Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 40–48.

³¹ Zarkasyi, *Pelajaran Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah*, pp. 30–35.

³² Azra, *Islam Nusantara*, pp. 130–134.

³³ Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Pedoman Organisasi Pelajar Pondok Modern* (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press, 2010), pp. 5–12.

³⁴ Nata, *Kapita Selekta Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 240–244.

³⁵ Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah*, pp. 115–118.

³⁶ Madjid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren*, pp. 110–116.

instills a balance between commitment to Islamic values and openness to developments in the modern world.³⁷

The influence of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School on the world of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools is broad and profound. Gontor has not only developed as an educational institution but has also become a model and inspiration for the modernization of Islamic boarding schools nationwide.³⁸

One of the most obvious forms of influence is the replication of the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (KMI) system. Many Islamic boarding schools have adopted the KMI system because it is seen as capable of producing graduates who possess a balance between mastery of religious knowledge, language skills, modern insights, and leadership character.³⁹

Thus, Gontor's contribution to modern Islamic education in Indonesia is not only institutional, but also cultural and intellectual. Over the course of a century, Gontor has successfully established a tradition of modern Islamic education that combines spirituality, intellect, discipline, leadership, and a civilizational orientation within a relatively cohesive educational system.⁴⁰

Gontor's Challenges in Facing the Future

Entering its second century of development, the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School faces far more complex challenges than in previous eras. While in the early phase, the main challenges related to colonialism, the educational backwardness of the community, and the need for institutional modernization, in the contemporary era, these challenges evolved toward globalization, digitalization, international educational competition, cultural changes among the younger generation, and the dynamics of global religious ideologies.⁴¹

Major changes in technology, economics, social, and cultural lives require Islamic educational institutions to adapt without losing their fundamental identity and moral orientation. In this context, Gontor's primary challenge is not only to maintain its institutional existence but also to maintain the relevance of Islamic boarding school education in a rapidly changing world.⁴²

One of the greatest challenges facing the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School in the contemporary era is the impact of globalization and digitalization. The development of information technology has transformed almost every aspect of human life, including patterns of education, communication, culture, and social relations. The world is entering the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and

³⁷ Azra, *Islam Nusantara*, pp. 142–145.

³⁸ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*, pp. 110–114.

³⁹ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 165–170.

⁴⁰ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 200–205.

⁴¹ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 210–215.

⁴² Nata, *Kapita Selekta Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 250–255.

Society 5.0, marked by the integration of digital technology, artificial intelligence, big data, the internet of things, and automation into everyday life.⁴³

Changing learning patterns among the younger generation pose a serious challenge for modern Islamic boarding schools. Traditional education systems, which emphasize discipline, diligent reading of scriptures, and a gradual learning process, often clash with the fast-paced and instantaneous digital culture. Therefore, Gontor needs to develop educational methods that maintain intellectual depth while adapting to the characteristics of the digital generation.⁴⁴

However, digitalization also opens significant opportunities for the development of Islamic boarding school education. Information technology can be utilized for the development of online learning, the digitization of Islamic literature, the strengthening of international networks, digital preaching, and the development of modern educational media. Therefore, the main challenge is not to reject technology, but rather to utilize it productively within the framework of Islamic values and the philosophy of Islamic boarding school education.⁴⁵

In addition to the challenges of digitalization, Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School also faces significant challenges in the scientific and academic fields. In today's global era, the quality of an educational institution is measured not only by the number of students or the strength of its traditions, but also by its contribution to the development of science, research, innovation, and scientific publications.⁴⁶

In this context, the need to strengthen research and scientific publications is becoming increasingly important. The Islamic boarding school tradition has historically focused more on the transmission of knowledge and character building, while a modern academic research culture has not yet developed optimally. Therefore, Gontor needs to strengthen its academic ecosystem that supports the development of research, scientific writing, academic journals, and intellectual contributions at the national and international levels.⁴⁷

Another equally important challenge is the integration of science, technology, and Islamic studies. In the future, Muslims need a generation that not only understands religious knowledge but also master's science, technology, the digital economy, artificial intelligence, and various other strategic fields. Therefore, Islamic boarding school education must be able to develop an integrative paradigm that connects Islamic studies with developments in modern science.⁴⁸

The sustainability of an Islamic boarding school (pesantren) depends heavily on the success of cadre development and leadership regeneration. Historically,

⁴³ Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown Business, 2016), pp. 1–12.

⁴⁴ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 180–185.

⁴⁵ Azra, *Islam Nusantara*, pp. 160–165.

⁴⁶ Burhanuddin Tola, *Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan Tinggi* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2012), pp. 55–62.

⁴⁷ Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp. 120–127.

⁴⁸ M. Amin Abdullah, *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, dan Transdisiplin* (Yogyakarta: IB Pustaka, 2020), pp. 44–50.

Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School has been known for its relatively strong cadre development system, which encompasses organizational education, character development, and alumni service. However, as it enters its second century, the challenges of cadre development have become increasingly complex.⁴⁹

Regeneration of Islamic boarding school leadership is a strategic challenge that determines the future direction of the institution. As the institution grows and complexity, pesantren leadership is no longer solely based on personal charisma but also requires managerial, academic, diplomatic, and professional skills.⁵⁰

Another challenge is the professionalism of institutional management. The larger Gontor's educational network, the more complex the administrative systems, financial management, human resource development, and institutional governance required. Modern Islamic boarding schools are required to develop a professional management system that is transparent, effective, and accountable.⁵¹

Modernization of education requires significant economic support. Therefore, economic challenges are a key issue in the future development of Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School.⁵² Modern education requires technological infrastructure, academic facilities, laboratories, digital libraries, human resource development, and international networks, all of which require high costs. In such a situation, Islamic boarding schools must be able to build an independent and sustainable economic system.⁵³

Gontor has long been known for its strong tradition of economic independence through the development of Islamic boarding school business units. The philosophy of self-reliance, which is part of the Five Principles of Islamic Education, encourages Islamic boarding schools not to be entirely dependent on external assistance.⁵⁴ However, the rapid growth of modern education demands the strengthening of a more professional and productive institutional economy.

One of the strategic challenges in the economic sector is the productive management of waqf assets. Gontor's waqf system is a major strength for the institution's sustainability. However, managing waqf assets in the modern era requires a high level of professionalism to provide optimal economic benefits.⁵⁵

In addition to technological and economic challenges, Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School also faces increasingly complex ideological and socio-religious challenges in the era of globalization.⁵⁶ One major challenge is the growth of religious radicalism and extremism in various parts of the Islamic world. The flow of

⁴⁹ Suharto, Gontor dan Pembaharuan, pp. 280–286.

⁵⁰ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 190–194.

⁵¹ George R. Terry, *Principles of Management* (Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 1977), pp. 18–24.

⁵² Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 220–225.

⁵³ Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, pp. 110–118.

⁵⁴ Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Nilai dan Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 77–82.

⁵⁵ Monzer Kahf, *Waqf: A Quick Overview* (Jeddah: IRTI-IDB, 1998), pp. 12–18.

⁵⁶ Azra, *Islam Nusantara*, pp. 170–176.

digital information enables the spread of transnational ideologies that can influence some of the younger generation of Muslims. In this situation, Islamic boarding schools have a significant responsibility in developing a moderate, tolerant, and peace-oriented understanding of Islam.⁵⁷

As an institution that has developed the principles of *wasathiyah* (moderation) in Islam from the outset, Gontor holds a strategic position in maintaining the moderation of Indonesian Islam. However, ideological challenges in the digital era are far more complex, as the spread of radical ideologies can occur through social media and global networks without geographical boundaries.⁵⁸ Therefore, Gontor's greatest challenge in the future is maintaining its pesantren identity amidst globalizations. This identity encompasses the values of sincerity, simplicity, independence, Islamic brotherhood, and an orientation toward community service that have long been the foundation of Gontor education.⁵⁹

Prospects and Development Strategies for Gontor in the Second Century

One important prospect for Gontor's development in its second century is strengthening academic quality to enable it to compete nationally and internationally. In today's global era, the quality of an educational institution is no longer measured solely by the number of students or historical reputation, but also by academic quality, intellectual contributions, scientific productivity, and the ability to produce superior human resources.⁶⁰

In the context of higher education, Darussalam Gontor University has a significant opportunity to develop as a center for modern Islamic studies based on Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) capable of engaging in dialogue with global scientific developments. This is important so that Islamic boarding schools not only become consumers of modern knowledge but also become producers of intellectual thought and solutions for contemporary Muslims.⁶¹

Digital transformation is an unavoidable necessity in the future of education. Therefore, the digitalization of Islamic boarding school education is a crucial strategic agenda for the development of Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School in its second century.⁶²

In this context, Gontor has a significant opportunity to develop a "smart Islamic boarding school" model that combines the tradition of boarding school education with modern digital technology. The development of a digital library, online learning

⁵⁷ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 305–312.

⁵⁸ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1998), pp. 188–193.

⁵⁹ Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Nilai dan Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 83–90.

⁶⁰ Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, pp. 120–128.

⁶¹ Universitas Darussalam Gontor, *Rencana Strategis Pengembangan Akademik*, pp. 35–42.

⁶² Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, pp. 45–52.

platform, integrated academic information system, multimedia laboratory, and strengthening students' digital literacy are important strategic steps.⁶³

However, the digitalization of Islamic boarding school education must be carried out selectively and based on values. Technology must not diminish the spirit of Islamic boarding school education, which emphasizes role models, direct teacher-student interaction, character development, and moral supervision. Therefore, digitalization at Gontor must be positioned as an educational instrument, not a replacement for Islamic boarding school culture.⁶⁴

Another important prospect for Gontor's development in the second century is strengthening a culture of research and innovation. In the future, Islamic educational institutions will not only function as centers for the transmission of knowledge but must also become centers to produce knowledge and the development of civilizational solutions.⁶⁵

Therefore, the development of research centers is an important strategic agenda for Gontor. Research can be directed at various fields such as contemporary Islamic studies, sharia economics, Islamic education, educational technology, religious moderation, community empowerment, and the development of Islamic civilization.⁶⁶

Since its inception, Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School has had a strong international orientation. Its founders were inspired by various educational institutions in the Islamic world and instilled a global perspective in their students.⁶⁷ In its second century, this international orientation needs to be strengthened more systematically and strategically.

Strengthening international networks is crucial to improve academic quality, expand intellectual exchange, and strengthen the position of Islamic boarding schools in the global Islamic world. International cooperation can be achieved through student and lecturer exchanges, research collaborations, double degree programs, international conferences, and the development of a global alumni network.⁶⁸

Gontor has the potential to become a center for the international spread of moderate Islamic boarding school-based education. An educational system that integrates discipline, spirituality, modernity, and tolerance can be an important alternative in a global Islamic world facing an identity crisis and radicalism.⁶⁹

Amidst the currents of globalization and modernization, the greatest challenge facing Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is maintaining their fundamental spirit

⁶³ Universitas Darussalam Gontor, *Masterplan Digitalisasi Pendidikan* (Ponorogo: UNIDA Gontor Press, 2022), pp. 10–18.

⁶⁴ al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, pp. 150–154.

⁶⁵ Abdullah, *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, dan Transdisiplin*, pp. 66–72.

⁶⁶ Universitas Darussalam Gontor, *Roadmap Penelitian Universitas Darussalam Gontor* (Ponorogo: UNIDA Gontor Press, 2022), pp. 5–15.

⁶⁷ Zarkasyi, *Apa yang Diketahui*, pp. 80–84.

⁶⁸ Jane Knight, *Higher Education in Turmoil* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008), pp. 22–30.

⁶⁹ Roy, *Globalized Islam*, pp. 330–336.

and identity. Therefore, revitalizing the *Panca Jiwa* (five values) is a crucial agenda in Gontor's development in the second century.⁷⁰

Therefore, the revitalization of the *Panca Jiwa* must be carried out contextually, in line with the challenges of the times. Sincerity must be translated into moral integrity in the era of modern professionalism. Simplicity needs to be understood as a moderate lifestyle amidst a consumerist culture. Self-reliance must be developed into economic and intellectual independence. Islamic brotherhood needs to be expanded into global humanitarian solidarity. Meanwhile, freedom must be understood as responsible freedom of thought within the framework of Islamic values.⁷¹

The most strategic prospect for Gontor's development in the second century is its ability to become a future Islamic boarding school model capable of harmoniously integrating science, morals, and technology.⁷² A future educational model will not only produce intellectually intelligent individuals, but must also produce individuals with moral integrity, spiritual depth, social skills, and humanitarian responsibility. In this context, Gontor's boarding-based education system, character education, integration of knowledge, and leadership development are highly relevant.⁷³ Going forward, Gontor can develop an educational paradigm that integrates in-depth Islamic studies, mastery of science and technology, strengthening digital literacy, moral development, global leadership, and universal humanitarian awareness.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

This study of the century-long development of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School demonstrates that this institution is not simply a traditional Islamic boarding school that has survived the changing times, but rather an Islamic educational institution that has successfully undergone significant, ongoing transformation without losing its fundamental identity. Over the course of its century, Gontor has grown from a local Islamic boarding school in Ponorogo to one of the most influential centers of modern Islamic education in Indonesia, even possessing a network and influence that transcends national boundaries.

Gontor's principal contributions to modern Islamic education in Indonesia are twofold: it reformed the paradigm of pesantren education by demonstrating that an Islamic boarding school can become a modern institution without abandoning its identity, and it strengthened the moderation of Indonesian Islam through an educational model that combines openness to modernity, an Indonesian-Islamic spirit,

⁷⁰ Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *Nilai dan Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 91–98.

⁷¹ Nata, *Kapita Selekta Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 270–275.

⁷² Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp. 145–150.

⁷³ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan*, pp. 215–220.

⁷⁴ Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, pp. 90–96.

and a peaceful, inclusive civilizational orientation — a model of strategic significance amid contemporary tensions of radicalism and socio-religious polarization.

Entering its second century, Gontor faces challenges of greater complexity than in any previous era: globalization and digitalization are reshaping the learning patterns of the younger generation, the development of modern science demands stronger academic quality and research culture, and — most fundamentally — institutional modernization must not erode the *Panca Jiwa* values of sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom that have served as the moral foundation of Gontor since its inception.

Based on this study, there are several strategic recommendations for the development of Gontor in the second century. First, strengthening academic quality and research culture needs to be a top priority so that Islamic boarding schools can contribute more to the development of modern Islamic science and civilization. Second, the digitalization of education must be developed productively while maintaining the character of Islamic boarding school education, which is based on exemplary behavior and moral formation. Third, strengthening international networks and global collaboration is crucial so that Gontor can play a broader role in the international Islamic world.

Fourth, the revitalization of the *Panca Jiwa* values must continue to ensure that modernization does not diminish the moral and spiritual identity of Islamic boarding schools. Fifth, the development of an integrative educational model based on knowledge, morality, leadership, and technology needs to be continuously strengthened to address the challenges of future global society.

Thus, Gontor's century-long journey is not only a historical record of the success of a modern Islamic boarding school but also a reflection of the ability of Islamic education to continuously transform, survive, and contribute to the development of human civilization. In this context, Gontor remains relevant as a laboratory for modern Islamic education that combines knowledge, morality, and a vision of civilization to face the challenges of the future world.

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