The *Asah Potential Fitrah* Method in Encountering Radicalism in Lampung

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of Islamic education in encountering the threat of radicalism that is increasing in this era of globalization. This problem needs to be solved in order to overcome the radicalism that exists, especially in education.The students as the future generation of Indonesia have been influenced by too much of radical thinking. Currently, radical thinking has sprung up in educational institutions as well.This research studies the use of the *Asah Potential Fithrah* (APF) method in Islamic education to counter radicalism. Data was collected through interviews with principals from Islamic education institutions in Lampung. Islamic education has implemented democratic learning with the so-called APF method. The APF method is applied in the learning process based on the human identity which is born in a state of *fithrah*. This research shows that the application of APF in Islamic education among graduates can result in tolerant attitude, enhance their ability in the mastery of science, make them possess higher skills, and cultivate noble character. This research implies that radicalism can be overcome by applying the APF method which is in harmony with human nature.The deviation of human behavior in the form of violence is against humanity and Islam.

Keywords: Democratic, *fithrah*, graduates, Islamic education, learning,methods, radicalism

INTRODUCTION

Based on the Annual Report on Religions in Indonesia, there have been about 54 cases of violence in the name of religion in Indonesia from 2009-2010 (Arifin, 2017). These cases of violence, caused by the false understanding of Islam, religiously motivated attacks. Many big cases that came

to the world's attention are linked to Islamic education. The Bali bombing in 2002 which claimed the lives of more than 200 people has led to suspicions of *madrasas'* involvement as agents of radicalism (Azra et al., 2007). The WTC attack on 11 September 2001 that led to the Afghanistan war against terrorism was also linked to Islamic education. The Taliban movement in Afghanistan was allegedly the result of Islamic education. Graduates of Islamic schools who were close to the refugee sites on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border triggered hate that ignited radicalism (Alam, 2003; Azra et al., 2007; Warnk, 2009). In South Asia, especially India and Pakistan, many accuse graduates who received Islamic education as potential candidates for radical movements (Warnk, 2009). In Malaysia and Indonesia Islamic educated graduates are feared to have engaged with radical movements in the Middle East (Alam, 2003; Malik, 2007). In Malaysia, there is legislation to counter terrorism (Dhanapal & Sabaruddin, 2017).

According to Lukens-Bull (2010) radicalism is related to traditional Islamic education. Traditional Islamic education is often contrasted with modern Islamic education which is supposedly more accommodating of other religions. Typically, traditional Islamic education focuses on Islamic knowledge such as fiqh, hadith, and Quran. This type of education is unique and till today has been implemented in all traditional Islamic schools. Learning material in traditional Islamic education tends to produce rigid attitudes in followers when comprehending the diversity of people behavior. The mixing of traditions, customs,

interaction between people from different religions and communal cultures usually occur without borders these days.

Warnk (2009) in "Alternative education or teaching radicalism?" questioned the condition of Islamic education, whether *madrasa* was a form of alternative education or it preaches radicalism. Malik (2007) in *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?* questions if the *madrasas* in South Asia are preaching terrorism. Evans (2008) questioned whether the *madrasa* education as a rational choice by parents or it happened to be forced onto the young due to circumstances, where Muslims felt their faith was under severe threat.

Islamic education is flourishing rapidly in Pakistan. There have been hundreds of Islamic educational institutions developed since the 1980s, which means that there has been a growth in the number of Islamic educated graduates (Azra et al., 2007; Norton, 2002; Warnk, 2009). Likewise in Malaysia, many students have enrolled and graduated from Islamic higher education institutions (Noor, 2004). From the early 1990s, the Indonesian government had programmed a nine-year compulsory education system in public schools. However, in reality, the enrollment of learners from the lower and middle class families into Islamic institutions increased continuously (Azra et al., 2007). Indonesia has a population of more than 225 million whereby most of them are Muslims. There are more than 37,000 students who are involved in Islamic education and about 13% of them are learning in *madrasas*(Azra et al., 2007).

The significant growth and development in Indonesia's Islamic education needsa system that guarantees the quality of graduates. The learning process becomes important in increasing the quality of Islamic education in the national education system in Indonesia (Makbuloh, 2017a). Islamic education can facilitate students into visualizing a harmonious life, avoiding conflict and violence. Radicalism is a serious threat to the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, also referred to as NKRI. The history of the nation's struggle has been damaged through radicalism even though in Indonesia the NKRI does not tolerate this.

This study illustrates Islamic education in Lampung, Indonesia which has been professionally managed according to the objectives of national education. There are several Islamic education institutions that have shown their graduates to exceed national education standards. Researchers argue that Indonesian Islamic education based on the al-Qur'an and Hadith can actually counter radicalism. Islamic teachings have never taught radicalism. On this basis, the Indonesian Islamic education institutions have found the right way to produce graduates who reject radicalism.

METHOD

This is a qualitative research as data were collected through interviews. Twelve (12) principals of Islamic Schools from the Lampung Province who played main roles in overcoming radicalism through the application of APF method and related learning processes to produce graduates that fulfill the national requirements contributed to data collected. The schools where this research was carried out were Ar-Raihan, Permata Bunda, Miftahul Jannah, Baitul Jannah, Insan Kamil, Daarul Ilmi, Fithrah Insani, Global Madani, Al-Zahra, Alkautsar, Insantama, and Muhammadiyah. They are Islamic education institutions that have succeeded in producing quality graduates who will be considered model graduates.

This research was carried out in Lampung as it is in a strategic area on the Island of Sumatera, which borders Java Island. Furthermore, Lampung has various ethnic groups with different religions and cultures. This heterogeneous community's peace will be at risk if effort is not taken to harmonize the community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The population of Lampung is multicultural. Each ethnic group lives in a particular sub-district and establishes inter-ethnic cooperation relationships (Basyar, 2014). Since it is a multicultural community, it positively encourages the growth of Islamic education institutions, the *madrasas* and Islamic schools. As Table 1 shows, Islamic education comes in various categories:

Based on Table 1, most Islamic education institutes are private ones. Private Islamic education focuses on the aspirations and needs of the local community. In the social context, education is a medium to create harmonious relationships that can complement each other (Makbuloh, 2016).

Table 1
Number of Islamic education institutions in Lampung

No.	Type and level	Amount	Number of classes	Number of students	Number of teachers
1	State Elementary School	52	464	18,109	1,090
2	Private Elementary School	708	2,460	87,343	8,004
3	State Secondary School	24	432	14,663	1,031
4	Private Secondary School	655	2,684	90,697	11,030
5	State Senior High School	17	274	9,360	781
6	Private Senior High School	274	825	28,782	4,880
	Total	2,343	7,139	277,016	29,709

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs (2017)

The number of admissions to Islamic education institutions is approximately 25,000 each year. This shows that Islamic education in Lampung is growing rapidly. Based on the data, the enrollment each year in Lampung reaches almost 75,000 people while the number of students opting for Islamic education each year is 20,000.

Islamic education in Lampung has implemented various new methods in the learning processto produce graduates who adhere to the ideals of the nation and goals of national education. In a multicultural society, the interaction between native people and other communities can create a complex relationship that paves way for conflicts. Therefore, it needs to be anticipated by building a shared life in harmony, based on mutual understanding (Raihani, 2015). In a pluralistic society, there are lots of differences in the context of the economic, social and political divisions but often the source of crisis is in the name of religion (Juhannis, 2012).

The Interpretation of Data from the Interviews

The 12 principals of Islamic Schools from the Lampung Province who volunteered to participate in this study were interviewed by the researcher. The selection of these schools was on the basis that they had implemented the APF Approach or Method in their school curriculums. As mentioned before, the schools where this research was carried out were Ar-Raihan, Permata Bunda, Miftahul Jannah, Baitul Jannah, Insan Kamil, Daarul Ilmi, Fithrah Insani, Global Madani, Al-Zahra, Alkautsar, Insantama, and Muhammadiyah.

The interviews were carried out for one month. The researcher held at least two hours of interview a week. By the end of the fourth week the researcher realized that data saturation had set in.

The Perspectives of the Principals on theAPF Method in the Learning Process

The 12 principals agreed that their schools have improved after changes were implemented. A new method called *Asah Potential Fithrah* (APF) was used

in learning. This method is connected to religious education. The implementation of the APF method is based on individual abilities and there is no coercion nor force. Students are motivated to maintain the spirit of looking at a competitive future. Challenges in the modern era have given people the freedom to actualize their potential in real life (Alam, 2016).

The 12 principals agreed that through the implementation of the APF method, students are happy as this method encourages the love for science and the memorization of Quranic verses as well. The reason for this is that many experts believe that diversion into radicalism could be due to boring learning methods, where only rigid religious education was emphasized.

In Islamic education, all the basic concepts are sourced from God. Therefore, students are taught that Allah has created man complete with his potential of *fithrah*. On that basis, the APF method is used to find the talents of each student. The principals believed that the education system is rooted in the needs of human beings, as life becomes a wasteland if they do not find their *fithrah* needs. Personal values are related to the personal moral which consists of idealism, relativism and religious faith (Ismail & Omar, 2017). Mastering Qur'an makes an individual realize the truthfulness of life, understand the ultimate goal of humanity, perseverance, tranquility, and function as a role model (Salehi, 2016).

The principals believed that good thinking and activities that give benefits are taught in the Islamic education curriculum which has at the core, influences of the APF. Islam teaches us to behave well to both parents (Al-Ahqaf: 15). Likewise, parents are forbidden to kill their children due to fear of poverty or distress (Al-Isra': 31). According to Islamic values, the act of human killing is a great sin. This clarifies that Islamic education which is based on al-Quran and hadith instills high inspirational values in the homes, schools, society and the nation.

Islam clearly defines the relationship between family members and to their responsibility which is to maintain each other's morals. All family members have roles to play and contribute to each other to create a safe and honest lifestyle. This will be realized if all humans understand and respect their differences.

Islamic education not only teaches us on how to play roles in the family but also teaches us on how to embrace community life. Islam teaches us that a person cannot enter another's home before obtaining permission and salutations from its inhabitants (Al-Nur: 27-28). The values of this Islamic teaching are the teachings of how to lead a noble life by doing activities that is approved by everyone. Possessing good ethical behavior at all times depends on the depth of religious understanding (Ismail & Omar, 2017). Acquiring religious knowledge in the correct method instils good behavior and promotes the understanding of different religions and cultures. The APF method ensures that learners are taught these basic concepts from the very beginning.

The principals stressed that Islamic education teaches us how to interact with nature and the environment. The APF emphasizes this. A Muslim must have good interaction with the environment and other living creatures and elements, including water, air, land, plants, and animals. Man is forbidden to do any damage to this earth (al-Baqarah: 11-12).This is emphasized in the APF-inspired Islamic education in order to teach students to love and preserve nature.

In this era of globalization, Islamic education in Lampung has emerged as a modern phenomenon that provides integrative knowledge at each level (Shaleh, 2006). The emergence of an integrated Islamic education system is the best strategy that delivers humans into civilized life. Islamic education does not only teach religious sciences, but also teaches the science of technology and skills (Makbuloh & Velina, 2017). Religious sciences also complement the reading and writing of the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh and worship.According to Nasr (1987),both Islam and science are related in the most intimate manner to the principles of the spirit of the Qur`an. Islamic education that is contained in the Government's decree, 2003, is not limited to counseling, teaching and training, but also includes personality, intellectuality and social development (Saerozi, 2014). This merger of the teaching of Science and the Quran is what the APF strives for.

The source of Islamic education, the principals stressed, is based on the character of Prophet Muhammad SAW who is seen as a role model. Even before performing his duties as Prophet, he had noble character (Al-Qalam: 4; Al-Ahzab: 21). This is because it is impossible to for someone to improve the morals of others unless he himself is good mannered. The source of noble character is the Qur'an. Khatam al-Qur'an is included in the Islamic education curriculum (Hasan & Zailani, 2013). The correct understanding of Islam is presented in the teaching of religion and the perception of Islamic education which is not separated from the interpretation of the verses, the understanding of it and the ijtihad to carry it out (Kusmana, 2015). Therefore, the Qur'an becomes a subject matter that is memorized, read, understood, and practiced in Islamic education, inspired by the APF.

The Perspectives of the Principals on the Democratic Learning Process

Radicalism can be avoided with the use of democratic learning processes, whereby the teachers will have to carry out their duties with full responsibility. The main duty of a teacher in the education process is teaching, educating, training, guiding, fostering, facilitating, motivating, and evaluating (Makbuloh, 2016). They play a big role in their students' success. The principals believed that if teachers take their duty lightly, the whole education process will be compromised. The APF Method stresses a lot on teachers' responsibility in learner welfare. When learners are happy, they abstain from non-productive activity.

Islamic education faces challenges when it comes to contributing to the growth of humanity, both nationally and internationally. Islamic education does not only produce graduates who master religion, but also in the mastery of science and other skills. Islamic education institutions need to build quality culture to produce quality graduates. Therefore, the learning process is directed at extracting human potential according to *fithrah* as stipulated in the APF. According to Bondareva et al. (2017), the intellectual and creative potential of students need to be nurtured by teachers so as to enable them to function in all aspects in society. The learning process involves the active participation of all academicians in a synergistic method. Interpersonal interactions within Islamic education institutions contribute to the graduate's quality. The principals believed that a good climate in the learning process can lead to a sense of togetherness and this collective responsibility then leads to quality culture (Makbuloh, 2017b).

Creating a climate of togetherness and responsibility is integrated in Islamic education starting from the division of learning classes. The division of learning classes is in accordance to the interests of the students. This is the first stage to ensure conducive learning processes. According to Azra (2018) radicalism can be prevented by improving the content of the teaching material and the learning processes (learners learn what they like), and this determines the outcome of education. The democratic learning process produces democratic graduates. The informal learning process takes place after the formal learning process.

The Principals' Perspectives on How the APF Islamic Education Method Produces Graduates who are against Radicalism

The number of graduates of Islamic education in Lampung for all levels of schooling in the last three years has increased. This shows that the number of students who choose Islamic education institutions in Lampung as a place for their future education continues to increase. This is because the Muslims here are open minded. All the Islamic educational institutions have a very specific vision and mission that determine their role in society; in the aspects of culture, social, politics and the economy.

Table 2 shows that there is a gradual increase in the number of graduates from Islamic Education schools in Lampung in the past three years. In 2015, there were 63,765 graduates and the number increased in 2016 to 64,013. Year 2017 recorded 68,247 graduates. This according to the 12 principals shows that the community in Lampung have confidence in the system of education which has APF as its basis.

The principals believed that Islamic Education in Lampung has succeeded in producing graduates who oppose radicalism. This can be seen with the development of Islamic education institutions with the name of integrated Islamic schools which are increasing public interest. Nationally, traditional Islamic education, including Islamic boarding schools have produced many achievements (Ismah, 2012). Islamic

Table 2
Number of graduates of Islamic education in Lampung

No.	Type and level	2015	2016	2017	Amount
1	State Elementary School	2,102	2,130	2,704	6,936
2	Private Elementary School	13,240	13,452	14,349	41,041
3	State Secondary School	4,476	4,858	5,034	14,368
4	Private Secondary School	30,387	30,834	31,317	92,538
5	State Senior High School	2,912	2,983	3,199	9,094
6	Private Senior High School	8,638	8,744	9,630	27,012
	Total	63,765	64,013	68,247	190,989

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs (2017)

education is categorized as being able to facilitate students in developing harmony, suppressing conflict and avoiding violence (Nuryanto, 2011).

According to Daradjat (1995), Islamic education has a definite and clear goal, which is to make religion a part of every aspect of life, which includes behavior, thoughts and feelings. Islamic education covers all dimensions of humanity regulated in Islam. The purpose of Islamic education includes educating all human components; that of physic, spirit and mind, (Daulay, 2014). The principals believed that Islamic education based on al-Qur'an and hadith has a valuable contribution within the spirit of humanity, that which is promoted as the identity of human life in the context of space and time (Muzakki, 2007).

Graduates of Islamic education are spiritual, sociable, knowledgeable and skilled with the technology needed by humanity. The Islamic community is open to learning various kinds of knowledge. The interaction of science from various sources has carved out the history of the progress of human civilization. In the early centuries when Islamic civilization was at its peak, Muslim scholars approached questions related to knowledge with this vision of Islamic science.

The principals believed that in Islamic education, having science alone is not enough. According to Al-Abrasyi (1969), moral education is the soul of Islamic education. The maximum effort to achieve a perfect character is the true goal of the process of Islamic education. Therefore, moral education occupies a very important position in Islamic education; every aspect of the process of Islamic education is always associated with noble moral guidance. The 12 principals believed that Islamic education in Lampung succeeded in contributing to the life of the nation by producing graduates with noble character. Noble character here refers to abstaining from practices that involve radicalism.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education in Lampung has played an active role in overcoming radicalism through the application of the APF method which emphasizes the need for peace among

human beings in the learning process. A harmonious relationship that is maintained avoids various conflicts. Students are encouraged to recognize their potential and learn the differences of others. This results in the construction of wise and good attitude. The 12 principals believed that radicalism in the era of globalization can be overcome by applying APF learning methods in the learning process, which eventually promotes unity in the society.

The democratic learning process within the APF is not only limited to school time, but it also fosters continuous relationships which opens room for communication between teachers and students outside the classroom. In the context of this research, it can be concluded that the target has been achieved, that the APF has helped nurture students in these 12 institutions to become spiritually upright Muslims.

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