



## Challenges and Solutions for Education in Aceh: Perspective of Dayah Education

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### ABSTRACT

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The educational framework in Aceh exists within a broader national system, yet lacks a unified conceptual foundation to guide its various stakeholders. Instead, disparate visions operate in isolation, often left unrealized. A deeper philosophical approach is needed—one that fosters a dynamic and integrated model of education capable of cultivating competent and professional individuals. The overlap and indistinct boundaries between institutions further blur the path to innovation, reinforcing structural inefficiencies. A truly holistic system must transcend the conventional divisions between secular and religious education, creating a seamless integration of knowledge that embodies a higher universal principle. This calls for an overarching governance structure—an entity that dissolves institutional dichotomies and redefines management under a singular, cohesive vision. The persistence of dual systems has perpetuated fragmentation, hindering the holistic development of Aceh's youth. To move forward, a synthesis of curriculum, policy, and resource allocation must be embraced, uniting all aspects of education under a singular, purpose-driven paradigm.

### 1. Introduction

Education should be driven by planning based on needs rather than desires. Education in Aceh has not been able to bring about changes in line with the aspirations of its citizens, perhaps because it is driven by the desires of its administrators. The result is anomalies or irregularities in the continuity of education in Aceh, at the school, education office, and university levels. Several cases of mismanagement of higher education funding sourced from the Aceh Provincial Budget (APBA) and the State Budget (APBN) have even ended up in court.

This anomaly has resulted in a loss of mutual trust between institutions involved in education in Aceh. The loss of mutual trust due to this anomaly has led to “pubuet kiban-kiban nyang galak” or doing programs as they please. Education programs are no longer based on needs, but on power and short-term interests.

This problem is exacerbated by the absence of a grand design or blueprint for the direction of education in Aceh that can serve as a guideline for all stakeholders in the field of education. Therefore, comprehensive efforts are needed to overcome the anomalies in education in Aceh and refocus on meeting the needs and achieving the goal of quality education for all Acehnese citizens.

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The Special Autonomy Fund should have improved the quality of education in Aceh, but the anomalies that occurred have caused Aceh's education to remain at a low level in Indonesia. A 2013 World Bank study showed that the development of the education sector in Aceh still prioritizes infrastructure and neglects improving the quality of education. As a result, even though school facilities in Aceh, especially at the high school/vocational school level, are adequate, the quality of education is still poor. Other data from the World Bank in the same year showed that only one in five teachers at all education levels were certified. Although this data has since improved significantly because the majority of teachers in Aceh have been certified, their competence still needs to be improved.

### **1.1 Educational Anomalies in Aceh**

Education is a process of improving, refining, and changing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior of an individual or group through guidance, teaching, and training activities. However, the reality of education management in Aceh seems to have lost sight of the very definition of education itself. Based on the data obtained, the Aceh Provincial Education Office must reduce six classic practices that still occur in order to improve the quality of education for the people of Aceh.

First, the number of teachers is irrational, with an imbalance between teachers and students at various levels of education. Second, the number of facilities and infrastructure is not commensurate with the number of students, with each elementary school accommodating an average of only 19 students per class. Third, the ratio of teachers to schools is uneven, with a surplus of teachers in urban areas and a shortage of teachers in rural and remote areas.

Fourth, the appointment of school principals has not gone through the proper procedures and is rife with issues of collusion and nepotism, as well as a lack of supervision of the teaching and learning process. Fifth, the appointment of school supervisors is unique, in that many supervisors are appointed from among problematic school principals or officials who want to extend their retirement, and there is overlapping supervision between the province and the regencies/cities. Sixth, the declining trend in APK and APM, especially at the elementary school level, which has an impact on the decline at the junior high and high school levels.

To understand the complexity of the education phenomenon in Aceh, interconnectivity and transparent collaboration in the management system at the Education Office are needed. This is important to create a civilized social culture in Aceh through improving the quality of school graduates. Thus, educational issues in Aceh need to be addressed comprehensively and in an integrated manner to achieve the true goals of education.

### **1.2. Examining Dayah Education**

Substantively, the section on education in Law No. 11 of 2016 on the Government of Aceh has not been given special attention. The special provisions of the PA Law are in the economic, political, and governmental sections. When compared to Law No. 44 of 1999 on the Special Status of Aceh and Law No. 18 of 2001 on Special Autonomy, the education section receives special attention with in-depth, lengthy, and specific discussion, in contrast to the PA Law.

Similarly, the Aceh education qanun, Qanun No. 11 of 2014 on the Implementation of Education, and Qanun No. 5 of 2008 on Education. In terms of substance and local wisdom, Qanun No. 5 of 2008 has a systematic and substantive discussion. However, this article is not intended to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each regulation.

In the UUPA, Chapter xxx, Article 215 states that education in Aceh is integrated with the national education system and adapted to the characteristics, potential, and needs of the local community. Then, in Qanun No. 11 of 2014, it is stated that education in Aceh is based on: Islam;

nationality; Acehese identity; truth; humanity; justice; usefulness; affordability; professionalism; exemplary behavior; diversity; and non-discrimination. This means that the implementation of Dayah education in Aceh can still be classified as education that is needed by the local community.

Article 1 of Qanun Number 11 of 2014 states that Dayah/Pesantren education is a special educational unit that provides Islamic religious education with the aim of developing the abilities, knowledge, and skills of students to become experts in Islamic religious knowledge (Mufaqiqh Fiddin) or Muslims who have the skills and expertise to build an Islamic life in society.

In the policy on dayah education, it should be emphasized that the implementation of dayah education in Aceh is no longer community-based but has become government-based. The policy on the implementation of dayah education in Aceh can be described through its history as follows:

First, the policy of classifying dayah began with a series of gubernatorial decrees (Pergub) in 2003 during the term of Abdullah Puteh, which were then renewed by Irwandi Yusuf through his instructions in 2008, and renewed again during the administration of Zaini Abdullah Muzakir-Manaf. One important point was to comprehensively and professionally classify dayah education in Aceh into type A, B, C, and non-type dayah. This phase was the beginning of government-based intervention in dayah education.

Second, the policy on registering the number of dayah was also issued through Governor's Decree (Pergub) No. 451.2/474/2003. The main point is that dayah registration is carried out every three years using funds from the regional budget (APBD). In 2008, a similar measure was also taken for the use of the budget for the construction of dayah facilities and infrastructure through an instruction from Governor Irwandi Yusuf, which was carried out by the BPPD with the obligation to coordinate with the relevant technical agencies. Later, a new Pergub was also issued to do the same thing.

Third, the policy of providing assistance to dayah. From 2003 to 2007, assistance to dayah was provided by the Provincial Education Office through the Dayah Sub-Office. Then, in 2008, this authority was transferred to the Dayah Education Development Agency based on Qanun No. 5 of 2007. Subsequently, Governor's Instruction No. 03/INSTR/2008 was issued to the Provincial Development and Education Agency, regarding technical guidelines for the construction and development of dayah/pesantren facilities and infrastructure. This instruction states that the provision of assistance and development is carried out through a cooperation system and prioritizes the interests of students and the community around the dayah. The types of assistance provided include the construction of prayer rooms, dormitories, mosques, toilets, and main teaching buildings. Other references mention several short-term programs carried out by the Aceh Regional Government, such as computer training for dayah students, life skills training for female students (convention), life skills training for male students (electronics repair), assistance for student extracurricular activities, musabaqah qiraatil kutub and sayembara baca kitab kuning (competitions in reading religious texts), journalism training for students, as well as guidance and development of the dayah curriculum.

### **1.3 Management of Dayah Education**

In implementing government-based education, organizers such as Teungku who own dayahs must follow government procedures and regulations. For this reason, a comprehensive study of dayah education management is needed. There are several points regarding dayah education management in Aceh that need to be studied together, including:

Improving the quality of dayah education covers various aspects such as education policy, education costs, curriculum, infrastructure, improving the quality of educators and educational personnel, and controlling the quality of education. Dayahs require intense attention in the areas of

management, funding, and curriculum. In addition, aspects of quality improvement such as human resources, which include dayah leaders and teaching staff, must also be considered.

Dayah leaders, known as abu, abah, abi, or walid, play an important role in the establishment, growth, development, and management of a dayah. The success of a dayah largely depends on the expertise, depth of knowledge, charisma, authority, and skills of its leaders. Generally, dayah leaders do not have a steady income and also work as farmers or traders. This affects the funding and style of education developed in the dayah. The majority of dayahs in North Aceh do not have a steady and adequate source of funding for the dayah, teacher salaries, and other operational costs.

The background of dayah leaders generally comes from dayah education, which strengthens the dayah network but also influences management, mindset, curriculum scope, and teaching methods that are still stuck in the traditions of the past. The ability of dayah leaders to master religious knowledge is also still limited, so it is necessary to improve the capabilities of dayah leaders in the future to meet the demands of the times.

Students or santri are a very important element in the development of a dayah. Santri consist of two groups, namely santri lepas who do not live in the dayah and santri mukim or meudagang who live in the dayah. To improve the quality of teachers or teungku, it is necessary to provide guidance such as training, courses, cadre development, and grafting by bringing in people from outside the dayah who have sufficient scientific competence to replace the abu. These activities can be carried out in collaboration with the district government.

For the sake of smooth educational processes, educational institutions receive funding from various sources, namely the government, the community, and families, as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. The sources of funding for dayah education also come from contributions from students, individual or organizational donations, government donations, business ventures such as pesantren cooperatives, cooperation with external parties, investment returns, and other legal and halal sources.

Student/student contributions are fees paid by the students' parents on a monthly basis in accordance with the amount set by each dayah. Without the willingness of families to bear most of the cost of education, it is difficult to imagine that national education will continue to run as it should. Therefore, student contributions through their families cannot be ignored in supporting the success of education in dayah.

The community is also a regular donor for dayah funding, both individually and in groups. Many people want to help dayah because they want to play a role and give alms for the advancement of dayah educational institutions and hope for rewards from Allah SWT. Education organizers really hope that the community will be a source of education funding, both individually and in groups, for the success and smooth running of the learning process.

In addition, dayah administrators do not rely solely on funds sourced from contributions from students' families, the community, and the government. Many dayahs have opened businesses to obtain funding, such as pesantren cooperatives, plantations, trading businesses, fisheries, sewing, and other businesses that can generate income for the dayah.

The government also plays an important role as a source of funding for dayah education, both in the form of routine costs such as employee salaries and operational costs, as well as development costs such as land purchase or development, building construction, building repairs or renovations, furniture additions, and costs for non-consumable items. Dayah education, as a form of non-formal education, also receives funding from the government in the form of the Dayah Revenue and Expenditure Budget Plan (RAPB Dayah) in accordance with Qanun Number 5 of 2008 concerning the implementation of education.

Normatively, there are several components of education in dayah in Aceh, namely teungku, mosque, students, methods, and curriculum. Teungku plays an important role in the establishment, growth, development, and management of a dayah, as well as being a central figure who determines the character and success of the dayah. Mosques also have a close relationship with education in Islamic tradition, where mosques are used as places of worship as well as Islamic educational institutions.

Students or santri are an important element in the development of a pesantren, consisting of santri kalong who do not live in the pesantren and santri mukim who live in the pesantren. The teaching methods practiced in traditional Aceh dayah include sorongan, wetonan/bandongan, musyawarah/bahsul masail, muhazarah, pasaran, memorization (tahfizh), focus group discussions, and debates.

The pesantren education curriculum is the sole authority of the pesantren leadership, as stipulated in Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2000 and Qanun No. 23 of 2002. The pesantren education curriculum covers the branches of fiqh, tauhid, tasawuf, and nahwu sharaf, with an Islamic education orientation that includes the preservation of values, social needs, labor, students, and the development of science and technology in the future.

#### **1.4 Educational Obstacles in Dayah**

One of the most significant obstacles to the development of dayah is the difficulty in developing a curriculum. Curriculum development is generally carried out by agencies, institutions, teams, or departments responsible for education, but this is not the case in dayah institutions. In dayah, the leadership is the key to determining all policies, including those related to the curriculum. All policies within dayah must be approved by the central leadership, because dayah itself is a reflection of the personality of the leader (abu), who is usually also its founder.

To understand the basis for developing the pondok pesantren curriculum, we must first look at the personality of the abu himself, namely by understanding the abu's view of life regarding the factors that underlie the development of the dayah curriculum. As a result, the curriculum between one dayah and another is not exactly the same, even though the leaders come from the same institution. Because everything depends on and is closely related to the central leadership, it is difficult for a dayah to keep up with curriculum developments in line with the needs of the times. Dayah leaders also rarely receive education in the field of curriculum, so they are less able to develop a curriculum for a specific period and cannot pursue specific teaching targets.

Another obstacle is in the field of management, where dayah leaders generally lack knowledge in organizational management. Their leadership tends to be based on their own experience and reflections, rather than on management theories or training. Management issues can be considered a significant obstacle to the existence and sustainability of a dayah. The reality that can be traced from various cases in Islamic boarding schools in Aceh shows that the lack of leadership skills in managing Islamic boarding schools has led to various imbalances, such as irregular study hours, a lack of teaching staff, and numerous violations committed by students who are not controlled by their leaders.

Economic constraints are also a problem, because Islamic boarding schools are generally the private enterprises of religious scholars, not foundations. These Islamic boarding schools were established based on the personal responsibility of each religious scholar to develop Islamic education, and generally the founders of these Islamic boarding schools are themselves alumni of an Islamic boarding school. Most dayah leaders have livelihoods similar to those of the village community, such as farming, gardening, and relying on the generosity of the community who send their children to the dayah. As a result, most dayah do not receive regular funding from other institutions, either from the government or from community self-help groups, but rely solely on the

personal income of the dayah leaders and voluntary donations. This makes it difficult to develop Islamic boarding schools as long as they adhere to this economic system.

The obstacle of regeneration is also a problem, because most Islamic boarding schools only survive until the death of their leaders. This is because the leaders do not prepare the next generation to lead the institution. Since Islamic boarding schools are private institutions, not foundations or institutions involving many people, it is difficult to maintain their existence when their leaders pass away. However, there are also dayahs that are able to overcome this by preparing the next generation from within their own circles, such as the leader's children or in-laws, to continue the dayah institution.

Traditional dayahs with various traditions that have been preserved for generations also face obstacles in the field of technology and information. One problem that is difficult to change is that most traditional dayahs view modern technology and information as taboo and even consider them "haram" (forbidden) to bring into the dayah environment. Because of this paradigm, traditional dayahs lag behind in terms of adapting to advances in technology and information. This situation is very difficult to resolve as long as the leaders of traditional dayahs have not switched to modern management and computations.

## **2. Methodology**

The research method employed in this study involves a comprehensive literature review of secondary sources relevant to adolescent mental health in schools. This process begins with the identification and selection of scholarly articles, books, research reports, and policy documents related to mental health prevention and intervention strategies in the school environment. Data will be collected from various academic databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. Inclusion criteria will cover publications from the past 10 years, relevance to the research topic, and the quality of methodology reported in the studies.

Subsequently, analysis will be conducted using thematic synthesis methods to identify patterns, trends, and gaps in the existing literature. Data from various studies will be categorized based on main themes, such as the effectiveness of mental health programs, implementation challenges, and the contributions of stakeholders like teachers and parents. The results of this analysis will provide a comprehensive overview of how mental health strategies are implemented in schools and what has been learned from previous research. The aim of this method is to develop evidence-based recommendations for enhancing mental health strategies in the school environment.

## **3. Analysis and Conclusion**

Aceh's education system, as part of the national education system, should have a comprehensive grand design as a reference for various related agencies such as the Education Office, the Aceh Provincial House of Representatives, the Dayah Education Office, the Special Bureau of the Aceh Provincial Secretariat, the Islamic Sharia Office, and the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. However, so far, each agency only has its own grand design, which has also been abandoned in its implementation.

In terms of dayah education policy studies (legislation), the Aceh government and the Aceh DPR must at least consider a philosophical concept of education to produce reliable and professional human resources in the future. The programs created must be innovative, not merely similar to the programs of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Kopentren Division and the Aceh Education Agency.

This effort is part of an integral education implementation strategy that combines general and religious education processes at all school levels in Aceh in the form of institutional management. The integral education process will reflect the concept of rahmatan lil 'alamin from the scientific products studied.

The next step that must be taken is to strive for the establishment of an educational management institution in the form of one-roof management in Aceh. So far, there has been a dichotomy in the conceptual, managerial, and implementation processes of learning, where the Education Office manages public schools, while the Ministry of Religious Affairs manages religious schools. This dichotomy may have been the main key to the failure of the process of educating the young generation of Aceh today. Therefore, education management in Aceh needs to take place under a single management system, especially in terms of conceptualization, curriculum, funding, and policy.

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