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The Formalization of Education Management: A Challenge to Indonesia's Traditional *Pesantren* System

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Abstract: Efforts to improve education quality through formalization have resulted in the disorientation of pesantren education (i.e. education conducted at traditional Islamic boarding schools), and even created a dilemma in the everyday life dynamics of these institutions. This study seeks to understand how the formalization process occurs in pesantren and the factors that hinder the formalization of education management. This study also seeks to understand the implications of formalization for the traditions of these institutions. It applies a descriptive-qualitative approach, with data collected through observations, interviews, and document reviews. This study finds that formal education management systems limit the ability of pesantren to adapt to new challenges and demands. At the same time, formalization has eroded the traditional characteristics of these institutions, including the dignity of the kyai and the values of independence, simplicity, and submission. Pesantren have been required to transform their cultural management systems into structural ones, and their family-based leadership models into professional ones. These institutions have not rejected change, but sought to accommodate it by maximizing the potential of new systems. Future research should consider a range of pesantren to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the formalization of education management influences such institutions.

Keywords: *Formalization, Education Management, Pesantren, Traditional Education, Indonesia*

Introduction

Indonesia's traditional Islamic boarding schools, or *pesantren*, have experienced significant change and begun losing their social influence. Recognizing graduates' anxiety when entering general society, where formal education is preferred over informal education, some *pesantren* have transformed themselves by abandoning their traditional management systems and even such values as independence, simplicity, and submission (Bashori, 2017; Faizin, 2015; Rizal, 2011; Suheri, 2016; Suradi, 2018). According to Ahmad Najib Afandi, only 10% of Indonesia's 14,798 *pesantren* have maintained their traditional values. The remainder have become "accommodations" for students to study Islam after learning science, social studies,