

Constructing the Body of Knowledge of Pesantren Education: A Philosophical, Historical, and Curricular Inquiry

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Abstract

Purpose - Pesantren education, as Indonesia's oldest Islamic educational institution, holds a rich tradition of nurturing intellectually and spiritually grounded individuals. However, despite its significant historical and cultural role, pesantren education has lacked a formalized Body of Knowledge (BoK) that could support its academic development within higher education. This study aims to construct and map the BoK of pesantren education to provide a structured epistemological foundation for pesantren-based academic programs. **Methods** - This research adopts a qualitative library research methodology with analytical and interpretive approaches. Data were collected from classical Islamic texts and contemporary studies on pesantren and Islamic education, and were analyzed using inductive-comparative techniques grounded in Islamic epistemology and educational theory. **Findings** - The findings indicate that pesantren education is underpinned by an integrative epistemology that combines revelation (naqli), reason ('aqli), and spiritual insight ('irfani), and operates through a holistic and adaptive curriculum. The study identifies six key domains forming the BoK: Philosophy of Pesantren Education, Curriculum and Methodology, Leadership and Management, Socio-Anthropology, Innovation, and Classical Islamic Text Studies. **Implications / limitations** - This study's main limitation lies in its conceptual nature, suggesting a need for empirical validation. **Originality** - lies in the systematic formulation of a pesantren education BoK an academic

framework that had not been explicitly mapped before thus offering significant value for curriculum design and academic development in Islamic higher education.

Keywords: *Body of Knowledge, Pesantren, Education, Philosophy, Curriculum.*

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren education is one of the oldest, most authentic, and deeply rooted systems of Islamic education in the intellectual and social history of the Muslim community in Indonesia. Pesantren serve not only as centers for the transmission of classical Islamic sciences (*turāth*), but also play a strategic role in shaping character, ethics, and community leadership through a distinct Sufi and moral approach.¹ Since their inception, pesantren have functioned not only as educational institutions but also as centers for *da'wah*, community development, and social empowerment.

Amid the dynamics of modernization and the demands of educational globalization, pesantren education faces the challenge of asserting its academic position, especially in the context of developing study programs in higher education institutions. This creates an urgency to formulate a systematic Body of Knowledge (BoK) for pesantren education as an epistemic and curricular foundation for this unique discipline.² BoK itself is a conceptual framework encompassing the structure of knowledge, fields of study, methodology, and core values underlying a specific discipline.³

To date, discussions on pesantren education have tended to be more descriptive-historical or practical-administrative in nature. In-depth conceptual studies on the systematics and epistemology of pesantren as a distinct *discipline of knowledge* remain limited. Meanwhile, the development of Pesantren Education programs at various Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) demands a strong academic foundation—philosophically, historically, and curricularly.⁴ Without a well-established BoK, the orientation and scientific direction of this study program risk epistemic and methodological ambiguity.

Furthermore, pesantren education possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from other educational systems, namely the integration of knowledge (*'ilm*), practice (*'amal*), and ethics (*akhlāq*). Pesantren education does not merely aim to transfer knowledge, but to shape the whole human being through spiritual education, discipline, and direct role modeling by the *kyai* (religious scholars).⁵ These dimensions

¹ Dhofier, Z. (1980). *The pesantren tradition: a study of the role of the kyai in the maintenance of the traditional ideology of Islam in Java*. The Australian National University (Australia).

² Muhaimin, Ali, N., Suti'ah, & Azizah, S. L. (2001). *Paradigma Pendidikan Islam: Upaya mengefektifkan pendidikan agama Islam di sekolah*. Remaja Rosdakarya.

³ Istiqomah, I. (2023). Telaah atas Gagasan Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Mulyadhi Kartanegara dan Penerapannya pada Universitas Islam. *Risalah*, 9(1), 15-29.

⁴ Firdaus, F., & Husni, H. (2021). Desain Kurikulum Perguruan Tinggi Pesantren dalam Mewujudkan Pendidikan yang Berkualitas. *Tsamratul Fikri | Jurnal Studi Islam*, 15(1), 83-102.

⁵ Qomar, M. (2002). *Pesantren: Dari Transformasi Metodologi ke Demokratisasi Institusi*. Jakarta: Erlangga.

are essential and must be articulated and structured within a representative and applicable BoK framework.

Based on the above background, this study aims to formulate and map the Body of Knowledge of Pesantren Education through three main approaches: philosophical, addressing the values and epistemological foundations of the field; historical, tracing the evolution of its institutions and systems; and curricular, analyzing its structure and content of instruction. It is expected that this study will contribute both theoretically and practically to strengthening the academic discipline of Pesantren Education, while also preserving the authenticity and relevance of pesantren in shaping knowledgeable and ethical Muslim generations.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the method of library research. Library research enables the researcher to explore and reconstruct scientific ideas from primary and secondary sources critically, systematically, and in-depth, making it highly relevant to the research objectives.

The data sources in this study are divided into two main categories: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include seminal works on pesantren, classical Islamic texts, and the pesantren curricula used across various institutions. Secondary sources consist of reference books on Islamic education, journal articles, dissertations, and other academic documents that support theoretical and historical analysis.

The data collection technique used is documentation study, which involves identifying, recording, and classifying relevant documents based on the research themes. Data analysis is conducted using a descriptive-qualitative approach through an inductive-comparative process. The analysis proceeds in three stages: data reduction (selecting relevant data), data presentation (organizing data according to analytical themes), and conclusion drawing (formulating the structure and model of the Body of Knowledge for pesantren education).

To ensure data validity, source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various types of references and authors. In addition, academic literature that has undergone peer review in scholarly journals or higher education institutions was utilized to ensure that the scientific construction being developed is well-grounded both academically and contextually.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Relationship between Pesantren and Character Education

Pesantren are the oldest places of learning in Indonesia.⁶ Pesantren are educational institutions that are considered to have long-implemented character education for their

⁶ M. Yunus Abu Bakar, "Pembentukan Karakter Lulusan melalui Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Pondok Modern Gontor Ponorogo dan Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri", published in JOIES: *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, Volume 1, Nomor 1, Juni 2016, p. 42.

students. The implementation of character education in pesantren is strengthened by a dormitory system where the existence of kiai and teachers become role models in the daily lives of students. Character education in pesantren is not just a narrative but has become a real application.

The Definition of Body of Knowledge (BoK) in the Academic World

In the academic world, the Body of Knowledge (BoK) refers to the entire structure of knowledge within a particular discipline. BoK encompasses a set of knowledge, fundamental concepts, principles, methodologies, values, and scopes of study that form the foundation of a field of science or profession. Simply put, BoK can be understood as a map or conceptual framework that explains “what must be known” and “how the approach toward the object of study is conducted” within a scientific domain.⁷

According to Mullins (2005), the Body of Knowledge is not merely a collection of information or instructional material but an integration of theory, practice, and reflection that evolves historically and is validated by the academic community. A field of knowledge can only be recognized as an independent scientific discipline if it possesses a strong BoK, which includes: (1) domain of study; (2) core and derivative theories; (3) methodologies; (4) scientific objectives; and (5) relationships with other disciplines.

Meanwhile, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD, 2004) defines BoK as a systematic framework encompassing the full dimensions of knowledge and skills required by a profession or field of study. This framework serves as the main reference for formulating curricula, learning strategies, and academic competency standards. In higher education, BoK underpins the development of Graduate Learning Outcomes (CPL) and curricula aligned with the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI).

In Islamic education literature, the concept of BoK has begun to attract attention with the emergence of academic programs rooted in Islamic scholarly traditions, such as Pesantren Education, Tafsir and Hadith Studies, and Islamic Religious Education. However, the formulation of BoK in these fields has not yet developed systematically as in modern social sciences. This poses a serious challenge in strengthening academic identity, particularly in articulating the epistemological and ontological positions of these fields of study.⁸

Furthermore, BoK plays a strategic role in the differentiation of scientific disciplines. A scientific discipline must distinguish itself from others in terms of its formal object, material object, and methodological approach. Therefore, the

⁷ Henseler, J. (2017). *Bridging Design and Behavioral Research With Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling*. Journal of Advertising, 46(1), 178–192.

⁸ Muhaemin. (2004). *Paradigma Pendidikan Islam: Upaya Mengefektifkan Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

formulation of a BoK must begin with philosophical reflection and historical analysis of the development of that body of knowledge, in order to construct a scientific structure that is both contextual and responsive to contemporary needs.⁹

In the context of pesantren education, the urgency of BoK formulation becomes even more critical as the institution evolves from a traditional non-formal education system into an integral part of the national education structure through regulations issued by the Directorate General of Islamic Education at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Nevertheless, the unique holistic character of pesantren—grounded in ethics and Sufism—needs to be academically mapped into a BoK so that it may serve as a foundation for the development of appropriate curricula and methodologies.¹⁰

Thus, the Body of Knowledge represents a key pillar in the development of academic disciplines, as well as an identity and foundation for a field of study. In this study, the BoK of Pesantren Education will be formulated through philosophical, historical, and curricular approaches to construct a scholarly structure that is valid, authentic, and academically grounded.

The Concept of Pesantren Education

Pesantren education is a traditional Islamic education system that has developed in Indonesia with distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from modern education systems. Pesantren emerged as a response to the community's need for institutions capable of transmitting Islamic sciences, instilling moral values, and shaping Muslims with noble character.¹¹ In this context, pesantren functions not only as an educational institution but also as a socio-cultural entity that serves as a center for religious outreach (da'wah), community development, and societal empowerment.

Generally, pesantren consists of four core elements: (1) an Islamic educational institution with a boarding system, (2) the *kyai* (Islamic scholar) as the central figure, (3) the mosque as the spiritual and activity center, and (4) the study of Islamic sciences under the guidance of the *kyai*, attended by students (*santri*) as its main activity.¹² These elements reflect the structure and internal dynamics of pesantren education, which is rooted in the tradition of classical Islamic scholarship.

In terms of educational objectives, pesantren emphasizes not only the cognitive aspect (knowledge acquisition) but also the affective (character formation) and psychomotor (practical worship and application of values) dimensions. Education in pesantren is integrative, combining knowledge and practice, and is centered around

⁹ Mulyadhi, D. (2013). *Filsafat Ilmu: Telaah Epistemologis, Ontologis, dan Aksiologis*. Bandung: Refika Aditama.

¹⁰ Qomar, M. (2007). *Pesantren: Dari Transformasi Metodologi ke Demokratisasi Institusi*. Jakarta: Erlangga.

¹¹ Dhofier, Z. (2011). *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kiai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia*. Jakarta: LP3ES.

¹² Habibah, R., Putra, N., & Mufti, F. (2023). PEMIKIRAN KH IMAM ZARKASYI TENTANG PENDIDIKAN ISLAM MODERN DAN IMPLIKASINYA DI PESANTREN : -. *AL-ADABIYAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 4(2), 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.35719/adabiyah.v4i2.442>

the exemplary role of the *kyai*.¹³ Therefore, pesantren is renowned for its strong character-based education model, grounded in Islamic values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), simplicity, self-reliance, Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), and freedom.¹⁴

From a curricular perspective, pesantren typically employs *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts or *turāth*) as the core learning material. These texts cover fields such as Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), Hadith, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), theology (*aqīdah*), ethics (*akhlāq*), Sufism (*tasawwuf*), and Arabic language. They are taught using traditional methods such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *wetonan*, and *halaqah*, which prioritize textual mastery and deep understanding.¹⁵ Nonetheless, in recent decades, many pesantren have introduced curricular innovations by incorporating general subjects and adopting classical classroom systems and modern assessment methods.¹⁶

Pesantren education also has a unique pedagogical approach. The relationship between teacher (*kyai*) and student (*santri*) is very close, even spiritual in nature. Santri not only seek knowledge but also blessings (*barakah*) from the *kyai*. As a result, learning takes place not only in classrooms or study circles but also through exemplary behavior, daily interaction, and the services that students provide to the *kyai*. This aspect makes pesantren education holistic—addressing the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the learner.

Historically, pesantren have played a vital role in the development of Islamic intellectualism in the Indonesian archipelago. They have served as centers of Islamic learning that produced great scholars, national movement leaders, and founders of prominent Islamic organizations. Moreover, pesantren have demonstrated adaptability in responding to social-political dynamics, including national education policies. With the enactment of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and Law No. 18 of 2019 on Pesantren, pesantren is now officially recognized as a formal educational entity with expanded opportunities to contribute to the national education system.¹⁷

Thus, the concept of pesantren education cannot be separated from its classical Islamic roots, local cultural character, and responsiveness to contemporary changes. Pesantren education promotes an integrated vision of knowledge and morality, making it one of the most authentic and contextually relevant Islamic education

¹³ Azra, A. (2019). *Pendidikan Islam: tradisi dan modernisasi di tengah tantangan milenium III*. Prenada Media.

¹⁴ Rochmat, C. S., Salmi, M., & Sari, I. L. (2025). PANCA JIWA PESANTREN SEBAGAI WUJUD INTERNALISASI NILAI PENDIDIKAN KARAKTER GUNA MEREALISASIKAN FUTURE RELIGION DI TENGAH GEJOLAK ERA VUCA. *Shibghoh: Prosiding Ilmu Kependidikan UNIDA Gontor*, 3(1), 694-709.

¹⁵ Zarkasyi, H. F. (2015). SISTIM PENDIDIKAN DAN PENGKAJIAN ISLAM DI PESANTREN DALAM KONTEK DINAMIKA STUDI ISLAM INTERNASIONAL. *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan*.

¹⁶ Hasbullah. (2001). *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia: Lintasan Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*. Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada.

¹⁷ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia. (2019). *Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 tentang Pesantren*. Jakarta: Dirjen Pendidikan Islam.

models in Indonesia. In developing the Body of Knowledge for Pesantren Education, understanding this foundational concept is essential in formulating its epistemological structure, scientific objectives, and distinctive, integrated curricular direction.

Philosophical Review: Foundations and Epistemology of Pesantren Knowledge

A philosophical examination of pesantren education highlights the importance of understanding the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of the knowledge system developed within this institution. The philosophy of Islamic education underlying pesantren is inseparable from the Islamic worldview, in which knowledge is viewed as part of divine light (*nūr ilāhī*) functioning to bring humans closer to God.¹⁸

Ontologically, pesantren education upholds the belief that the highest reality is Allah SWT as the source of absolute truth, and that knowledge is a means to know Him. The concept of knowledge in pesantren is not secular but is integrated with transcendent values. The object of knowledge in pesantren education is not limited to empirical matters but also encompasses spiritual, metaphysical, and moral dimensions. This is reflected in the dominance of religious sciences (*‘ulūm al-dīn*) such as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *tawḥīd*, and *taṣawwuf*, all of which are aimed at nurturing a vertical relationship between humans and God.

The epistemology of pesantren education is built upon the integration of revelation, reason, and experience. The primary source of knowledge is revelation (the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*), which is then interpreted and understood through rational capacity (*‘aql*) and validated through the daily practice of *santri* (students). This reflects the *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *‘irfānī* approaches as articulated by Al-Jabiri (1991), in which pesantren tends to emphasize the *bayānī* (textual) and *‘irfānī* (spiritual-intuitive) methods, while the *burhānī* (rational-logical) approach also appears, particularly in the study of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and logic (*manṭiq*).¹⁹

In the educational process, the transmission of knowledge begins with *taqlīd* (authoritative acceptance of the teacher's scholarly authority), which may develop into *taḥqīq* (critical verification) for more advanced students. This indicates that pesantren epistemology is not static but allows for progression from imitation to the attainment of the essence of knowledge through structured and intensive learning.

The axiology of knowledge in pesantren does not merely aim for the transfer of information or the achievement of academic competence, but is centered on the formation of the *insān kāmil*—a fully developed human being balanced intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Knowledge is not value-neutral; it is always linked to ethical

¹⁸ Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *Islam and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.

¹⁹ Al-Jabiri, M. A. (1991). *Bunyah al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi*. Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdah al-‘Arabiyyah.

responsibility and social benefit. This is evident in pesantren's core values such as sincerity, obedience, simplicity, and independence.²⁰

Hence, the orientation of pesantren education is strongly focused on character formation. A *santri* is expected not only to become a knowledgeable person (*'ālim*) but also to be a person of refined manners (*muta'addib*). In this framework, knowledge functions as a means of self-improvement and community transformation, not merely a tool for obtaining employment or social status.²¹

The structure of knowledge in pesantren is hierarchical and gradual. The books taught range from elementary to complex, containing a comprehensive systematization of knowledge that moves from *taqlid* to *ijtihād*. This reflects that pesantren epistemology acknowledges levels of understanding, aligned with the principle of *tadarruj* (gradual progression) in education.

Moreover, this epistemological structure demonstrates that knowledge in pesantren possesses its own system of validation. Scholarly authority is not solely determined by certificates or institutions, but by *sanad al-'ilm*—the chain of knowledge transmission from teacher to student, tracing back to authentic Islamic sources. This provides a distinctive scholarly dimension and establishes pesantren as an institution of education rooted in the authority of *sanad*.²²

This philosophical analysis provides a crucial foundation for formulating the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of Pesantren Education. First, pesantren ontology affirms that knowledge cannot be separated from divine values and transcendence. Second, its epistemology is integrative—combining revelation, reason, and spiritual experience. Third, the axiology of knowledge in pesantren places morality as the primary goal of education. Thus, the BoK of pesantren education must reflect these three dimensions comprehensively to preserve both its authenticity and relevance in the modern academic landscape.

Historical Review: The Evolution of Pesantren Education

Pesantren is the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, deeply rooted in the cultural and social systems of society. The long history of pesantren demonstrates its ability to respond to changing times without losing its Islamic identity. The evolution of pesantren education not only reflects the internal dynamics of Islamic knowledge but also illustrates its interaction with Indonesia's socio-political and cultural structures.

Historically, pesantren emerged from the tradition of Islamic teaching conducted in mosques, *surau* (prayer houses), and the homes of scholars, later developing into

²⁰ Habibah, R., Putra, N., & Mufit, F. (2023). PEMIKIRAN KH IMAM ZARKASYI TENTANG PENDIDIKAN ISLAM MODERN DAN IMPLIKASINYA DI PESANTREN : -. *AL-ADABIYAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 4(2), 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.35719/adabiyah.v4i2.442>

²¹ Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *Islam and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.

²² Azra, A. (2019). *Pendidikan Islam: tradisi dan modernisasi di tengah tantangan milenium III*. Prenada Media.

institutions with distinct learning systems and student communities.²³ The origins of pesantren are believed to date back to the 16th century, when scholars such as Sunan Ampel and the *Wali Songo* spread Islam through *halaqah*-based teaching and the use of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), which formed the foundation of the classical pesantren curriculum. This educational model emphasized moral-spiritual development, mastery of religious sciences, and the cultivation of proper conduct (*adab*).²⁴

Subsequent developments were marked by the formalization of the pesantren educational system, characterized by the establishment of clear structures such as the *kyai-santri* relationship, dormitories (*pondok*), mosques, and learning spaces (*madrasah*). During the colonial era, pesantren became a symbol of cultural resistance against secular Western education systems, while maintaining curriculum autonomy and traditional teaching methods.²⁵ In this period, pesantren also played a socio-political role, serving as bases for the national movement and nurturing reformist Islamic figures.

Entering the 20th century, many pesantren began undergoing internal modernization. Pesantren institutions started to incorporate general subjects and developed more structured curricula. This process expanded further after independence, when pesantren opened formal educational levels and complied with national education regulations by integrating with the *madrasah* and school systems. This phenomenon is known as the systemic transformation phase of pesantren.²⁶

In contemporary development, many pesantren have evolved into centers of higher Islamic education, even establishing pesantren-based study programs and universities. This educational model seeks to integrate traditional heritage with the demands of the modern era. The current evolution of pesantren includes strengthening institutional management, integrating technology, and expanding their roles in economic, social, and community empowerment sectors.²⁷

Thus, from a historical perspective, pesantren education has evolved from a traditional model focused on the transmission of religious sciences into a more inclusive and adaptive educational system. This evolution provides a vital foundation for formulating the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of pesantren education, as it illustrates both epistemological continuity and institutional flexibility in addressing the dynamics of changing times.

²³ Dhofier, Z. (1980). *The pesantren tradition: a study of the role of the kyai in the maintenance of the traditional ideology of Islam in Java*. The Australian National University (Australia).

²⁴ Alwi, B. M. (2013). PONDOK PESANTREN: Ciri Khas, Perkembangan, dan Sistem Pendidikannya. *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan*, 16(2), 205-219. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2013v16n2a8>

²⁵ Laffan, M. F. (2003). *Islamic nationhood and colonial Indonesia: The umma below the winds*. Routledge.

²⁶ Azra, A. (2019). *Pendidikan Islam: tradisi dan modernisasi di tengah tantangan milenium III*. Prenada Media.

²⁷ Dhofier, Z. (1980). *The pesantren tradition: a study of the role of the kyai in the maintenance of the traditional ideology of Islam in Java*. The Australian National University (Australia).

Curricular Review: The Knowledge Structure and Curriculum of Pesantren

A curricular review of pesantren education is essential in developing the Body of Knowledge (BoK), as the curriculum represents the concrete manifestation of the knowledge structure taught within an educational system. In the pesantren context, the curriculum is not merely understood as a list of subjects but as a living and evolving system of Islamic scholarly heritage that reflects the values, epistemological orientations, and social functions of the pesantren itself.

The knowledge structure in pesantren is centered on the study of *kitab kuning* (*kitāb turāth*), classical scholarly works written by Islamic scholars in various religious disciplines. The primary disciplines taught include: (1) jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), (2) Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and Qur'anic sciences (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*), (3) hadith studies and methodology (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*), (4) theology (*tawḥīd* and *kalām*), (5) ethics and mysticism (*akḥlaq* and *taṣawwuf*), and (6) instrumental sciences such as Arabic grammar (*naḥwu*), morphology (*ṣarf*), logic (*mantiq*), and rhetoric (*balāghah*).²⁸ This structure reflects a hierarchy of knowledge, with theology and worship as foundational priorities, followed by the strengthening of linguistic and philosophical logic as tools to understand religious texts. These sciences are not taught in isolation, but through a holistic and integrated pedagogical system. Students do not merely learn to read texts, but to understand their meanings, delve into their wisdom, and practice their values in daily life. This demonstrates that pesantren's knowledge structure balances theoretical, normative, and practical dimensions.

Traditional pesantren (salafiyah) curricula are non-classical and flexible, with the main focus on deep and tiered mastery of religious knowledge. Teaching methods include *sorogan* (individual reading before the teacher), *bandongan* (teacher reads and explains texts to students), *ḥalaqah* (study circles), and *wetonan* (weekly or monthly study sessions). This curriculum does not follow a credit or formal grading system like public schools, but relies on informal stages marked by mastery of specific classical texts.

The selection of texts and subjects in pesantren heavily depends on the authority and competence of the *kyai* (Islamic scholar-leader). Thus, the curriculum is cultural and traditional in nature, yet maintains strong internal systematics. For instance, *Safinatun Najah* is used at the basic level for jurisprudence, while *Fath al-Qarib*, *Taqrib*, and *Fath al-Mu'in* are taught at intermediate and advanced levels.

Over time, modern pesantren (khalafiyah) emerged, integrating the national education system and general subjects into their curricula. This was a response to the demands of the times, the need for professional development, and the state's recognition of pesantren education. Modern pesantren adopt classical classroom

²⁸ Qomar, M. (2002). *Pesantren: dari transformasi metodologi menuju demokratisasi institusi*. Erlangga.

systems, follow the national academic calendar, and implement standardized evaluations such as examinations and certifications.²⁹

This model still preserves classical text studies while adopting a more structured curriculum that includes subjects such as mathematics, natural sciences, English, computer literacy, and life skills. Thus, pesantren curricula have transformed from traditional scholarly models into integrative combinations of religious and general knowledge.

Curriculum integration in pesantren is not merely about adding general subjects but also about constructing a coherent epistemological framework that unites revelation and reason, *'ulūm ad-dīn* (religious sciences) and *'ulūm ad-dunyā* (worldly sciences). This is referred to as the integrated curriculum, where all subjects are directed toward strengthening students' faith, character, and holistic competence.³⁰

This integrative curriculum also reflects the classification of knowledge in classical Islamic tradition, as articulated by scholars like Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun, who distinguished between *fardh 'ayn* knowledge (obligatory for every individual) and *fardh kifāyah* knowledge (obligatory upon the community collectively).³¹ From this perspective, pesantren curricula can be developed to maintain religious orientation while embracing relevant and beneficial contemporary knowledge.

This curricular review has direct implications for formulating the Body of Knowledge of pesantren education. First, the knowledge structure derived from classical texts shows a distinct epistemological basis that cannot be equated with conventional education. Second, the pesantren curriculum model is flexible and adaptive, making it suitable for academic development within a justifiable scholarly framework. Third, the integration of religious and general sciences demonstrates the potential for a transformative, integrative curriculum model aligned with the vision of Islamic education.

Mapping the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of Pesantren Education

Mapping the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of pesantren education is a systematic effort to formulate the knowledge structure, domains of study, and methodological approaches within the study of pesantren education. As the oldest educational system in the Islamic tradition of Indonesia, pesantren has given rise to a distinct set of sciences, values, and practices that hold significant academic value. Therefore, a clearly defined BoK for pesantren education is essential as a conceptual and academic foundation for knowledge development within higher education institutions, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study programs.

²⁹ Hanipudin, S. (2019). Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dari masa ke masa. *Matan: Journal of Islam and Muslim Society*, 1(1), 39-53.

³⁰ Anjarsari, P., & Susanto, H. (2019). Reconstruction of Islamic Education (Study of Islamic Education Thoughts of Prof. Dr. Muhaimin, MA). *At-Ta'dib*, 14(1), 53-64.

³¹ Zarkasyi, H. F. (1990). *Pemikiran al-Ghazali tentang pendidikan*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.

In the academic world, each discipline requires a well-structured BoK. The BoK serves as the foundation for curriculum development, graduate competencies, research methodologies, and the direction of scholarly advancement. Pesantren education has developed mostly in a practical form, but it has yet to be widely articulated within an explicit academic framework. As a result, pesantren education is often perceived as a traditional system that is difficult to standardize scientifically. Mapping the BoK is therefore both an academic and strategic necessity—aimed at strengthening the position of pesantren education within contemporary Islamic scholarship and establishing it as a legitimate reference point on par with other Islamic education fields such as *Tarbiyah* and Islamic Studies.

The BoK of pesantren education can be structured around three main elements: (1) knowledge domains, (2) epistemological foundations, and (3) methods of learning and knowledge development.

The knowledge domains in pesantren education consist of core studies, supporting studies, and applied studies. Core studies include Islamic sciences such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *tawhīd* (theology), *tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis), *ḥadīth* (Prophetic traditions), *taṣawwuf* (Islamic mysticism), and instrumental sciences such as *naḥwu* (syntax), *ṣarf* (morphology), and *manṭiq* (logic). Supporting studies may include Islamic philosophy, Islamic history, and Islamically oriented social sciences. Meanwhile, applied studies encompass pesantren teaching strategies, pesantren education management, and curriculum innovation based on *turāth* (Islamic classical heritage).

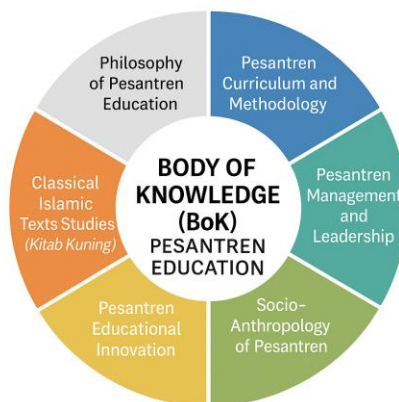
The epistemology of pesantren education is based on the integration of revelation (*naqlī*), reason (*ʿaqlī*), and spiritual intuition (*ʿirfānī*). Knowledge in the pesantren tradition is not only evaluated based on logical-rational validity but also on spiritual depth and the continuity of scholarly transmission (*sanad*). This epistemological orientation distinguishes pesantren education from Western educational epistemology, which is often secular and positivistic.

Knowledge development in pesantren education is carried out using distinctive methods such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *ḥalaqah*, and *wetonan* in traditional pesantren, and more active, student-centered approaches in modern pesantren. These methods emphasize student engagement, discipline, and moral-spiritual formation. Academically, these methods can be further developed using qualitative, phenomenological, and ethnopedagogical approaches, as often employed in contemporary Islamic education research.

The mapping of the study fields of pesantren education as an academic discipline can be categorized into several major areas of inquiry, as follows:

Table 1. The mapping of the study fields of pesantren education

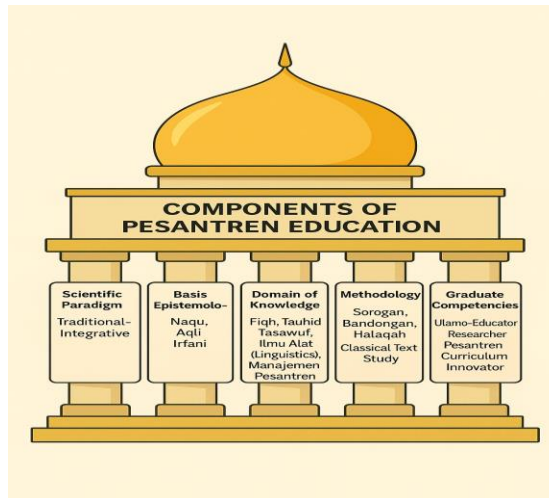
Field of Study	Description
Philosophy of Pesantren Education	Discusses the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of the pesantren education system.
Pesantren Curriculum and Methodology	Studies the structure of the curriculum, including both classical and modern teaching methods.
Pesantren Management and Leadership	Examines leadership patterns of <i>kiai</i> , pesantren administration, and institutional systems.
Socio-Anthropology of Pesantren	Analyzes the social role of pesantren in society and its function in cultural transmission.
Educational Innovation in Pesantren	Explores the transformation of pesantren in response to the challenges of globalization and technology.
Study of Classical Islamic Texts (<i>Kitab Kuning</i>)	Investigates the classical texts used in pesantren education through philological and pedagogical lenses.

Picture 1. The mapping of the study fields of pesantren education

These six fields of study serve as a recommended framework for the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of pesantren education. In practice, this BoK is supported by five foundational components of pesantren education, as outlined below:

Table 2. five foundational components of pesantren education

Component	Substance
Scientific Paradigm	Traditional–Integrative
Epistemological Basis	<i>Naqli</i> (Revealed Knowledge), <i>Aqli</i> (Rational Knowledge), <i>Irfani</i> (Intuitive Knowledge)
Domains of Knowledge	<i>Dirasah Islamiyah</i> (Islamic Studies: Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Theology, Islamic History); <i>Dirasah Lughawiyah</i> (Linguistic Studies: Arabic, English); <i>Dirasah Kauniyah</i> (Natural Sciences: Physics, Biology, Geography, Mathematics, Arithmetic); <i>Dirasah Basyariyah</i> (Humanities: History, Psychology, Sociology)
Methodology	<i>Sorogan</i> , <i>Bandongan</i> , <i>Halaqah</i> , and <i>Turath</i> Studies
Graduate Competencies	Islamic Scholars–Educators, Researchers, and Pesantren Curriculum Innovators

Picture 2. five foundational components of pesantren education

With this mapping, the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of pesantren education is no longer understood merely as a collection of traditional knowledge, but rather as a scientific system that can be developed, standardized, and utilized to support higher Islamic education. This mapping also serves as a conceptual foundation for shaping graduate profiles, designing curricula, and advancing research in pesantren education programs at universities.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that pesantren education is built upon a distinctive epistemological foundation—namely, the integration of *naqliyah* (revelatory), *aqliyah* (rational), and *dzauiqiyah/irfaniyah* (inner experiential) forms of knowledge. These three sources shape an integrative epistemological framework that is not explicitly found in modern Western education models, which tend to be secular and dualistic. In this regard, pesantren epistemology aligns closely with the concept of integral Islamic education as proposed by al-Attas (1993), who rejects the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences.

This concept also reinforces al-Faruqi's (1982) argument regarding the need for the "Islamization of knowledge" as a middle path between secular Western sciences and sometimes ahistorical traditional Islamic knowledge. In the pesantren context, the Islamization of knowledge occurs organically through the study of *kitab kuning* (classical texts), which are rich in philosophical values and contextual understanding.

In the curricular domain, the findings show that pesantren curricula are flexible, holistic, and deeply rooted in tradition. This reflects the critical curriculum theory of Paulo Freire (1970), who emphasized that education should be liberating and grounded in social realities. Pesantren do not merely transmit knowledge; they also instill values, shape character, and accompany learners in achieving social and spiritual independence.

Compared to modern education systems, which tend to be technocratic and focused on cognitive achievements, pesantren prioritize a pedagogical ethos based on ethics and moral development. This underscores that pesantren cultivate a culturally religious curriculum that bridges the spiritual and social needs of learners.

In the discourse of educational management, the study reveals that pesantren do not solely rely on rational-formalistic management like modern institutions, but rather emphasize spiritually grounded and charismatic leadership. Concepts such as *khidmah* (service) and *barakah* (divine blessing) serve as the core principles of governance and social relations within the pesantren. This model closely resembles transformational leadership as described by Bass and Avolio (1994), though in the pesantren context it is more spiritual and transcendental.

This marks a significant distinction between pesantren leadership and conventional school leadership systems. In pesantren, managerial success is not only measured by administrative efficiency but also by the blessing of knowledge and the spiritual depth of the students.

When compared to Islamic educational institutions in the Middle East such as Al-Azhar or the University of Qom, Indonesian pesantren exhibit more communal, contextual, and locally rooted characteristics. On the other hand, when compared to madrasah systems in Pakistan or India, those institutions tend to be more bureaucratic and rigidly institutionalized, lacking the flexibility and organic nature of the Indonesian pesantren system.

Findings related to educational innovation in pesantren reveal an adaptive dynamic that does not abandon traditional roots. Several pesantren have integrated technology, entrepreneurship, and even STEAM approaches into their learning activities. In this regard, pesantren act as institutions capable of learning from their environment, filtering external values, and internalizing them in a way that aligns with Islamic principles.

Nevertheless, such innovation must not deviate from the core mission of *tafaqquh fid-din* (deep understanding of religion). Innovation in pesantren education, therefore, should not be viewed as Westernization, but as value-based transformation. This reflects the meeting point between *turāth* (tradition) and *tajdīd* (renewal), as articulated by Fazlur Rahman (1982).

This discussion affirms that the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of pesantren education is holistic, integrative, and rooted in living Islamic values within the local context. It is not merely a collection of academic fields but encompasses a paradigm, epistemology, methodology, and ultimate goals of education. These findings strengthen the position of pesantren as a legitimate academic entity worthy of being developed into a distinct field of scholarly inquiry.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that pesantren education possesses a strong philosophical foundation, rooted in divine values, spirituality, and noble character traits such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), humility (*tawadhu'*), service (*khidmah*), and divine blessing (*barakah*), all of which are deeply embedded in the Islamic scholarly tradition. Historically, pesantren have proven to be a distinctive educational system in the Nusantara that has not only survived but dynamically adapted to changing times, all while preserving local character and the spirit of Islam. In terms of curriculum, pesantren have developed an integrative learning system that combines classical Islamic sciences, practical life experiences, and the socio-cultural values of the community, making them not merely institutions of knowledge transmission, but centers for character and spiritual transformation.

The main finding of this research is the systematic formulation of the Body of Knowledge (BoK) of Pesantren Education, comprising six core fields of study: Philosophy of Pesantren Education, Curriculum and Methodology, Pesantren Management and Leadership, Socio-Anthropology of Pesantren, Innovation in Pesantren Education, and the Study of Classical Texts (*Kitab Kuning*). These six domains form the scientific basis and intellectual framework that can be used to develop academic programs, design higher education curricula in pesantren studies, and strengthen the academic identity of pesantren education. This study offers a new contribution in the form of a systematically structured BoK mapping, which has not previously been explicitly formulated in academic literature.

Therefore, the strengthening of the Body of Knowledge of Pesantren Education is not merely an academic endeavor but also a strategic agenda to preserve the intellectual heritage of Islamic scholarship in the Nusantara and to respond to the challenges of future education. Collaboration among pesantren communities, academics, and policymakers is thus essential to position pesantren education as a vital pillar in a nationally competitive education system that remains firmly rooted in Islamic values.

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