ICMI AND EDUCATION:
An Effort to Prepare Muslim Intellectuals in Indonesia

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Abstract: This writing explains ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*) organization agenda to improve the quality Muslims intellectuals in Indonesia, particularly in educational aspect. This writing is using lybrary research to explore the role of ICMI in educational aspect in Indonesia. It is realize that there are many educational problems in Indonesia, such as teacher-oriented education, passive, less interested to get information from libraries, and not objectively oriented. The main agenda of ICMI organization in developing of Islamic education in Indonesia is that education has to be oriented to help the students to become better Muslims. Introducing modern education is very important in the improvement of the quality of human resources and people's ability to meaningfully participate in an evolving civil society in Indonesia. Moreover, education can be oriented to prepare students to have good behaviour, values, and norms, which

in turn plays an important role in the improvement of the quality of civil society in Indonesia.

Keywords: ICMI organization, education, intellectuals, and civil society.

I. Introduction

One important aspect of modern Indonesian society and education is the emergence of the Indonesian Muslim intellectuals' association (ICMI: *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*) in 1990. ICMI was established as an effort to improve the quality of intellectuals and the role of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals in national development.[1] The existence of ICMI is a logical consequence of the status of Muslims as the majority in Indonesia, and the religious idea that they should therefore have a role in directing national development. Many Indonesians hope that the existence of the ICMI will be able to advance the lives of Islamic people.[2] B.J. Habibie, the former ICMI chairman, stated that the existence of ICMI was the result of the 'long march' of Islamic people to improve humanitarian values and the lives of the Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, particularly in the development of civil society in Indonesia. It is the role of ICMI in the development of civil society which this essay is primary concerned with. It is the role which has been largely overlooked by the tendency to

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[1] http://www.icmi.or.id/profit/index.html

[2] Media Indonesia, *ICMI Menfocuskan pada Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia*, November 10, 2000, p. 2.

analyse ICMI as a component of the state or tool of the ruling elite. When Abdurrahman Wahid became a president of Indonesia in 1999, ICMI as the rulling elite organization decreased gradually. However, its role as an Islamic and social organization is still exis, especially in improving the quality of education for Indonesian society.

Education is the most important issue for the development of civil society in Indonesia according to ICMI leaders. Education is important not only in the short term, but also for creating leaders in the future. According to Zarkowi Soejoety, ICMI members have to work hard in order for the young generation to be prepared. The emphasis is not only on vocational skills but in such areas as analytics, logic, rational thinking, mathematics and numeracy.[3]

However, the reality of education in Indonesia is that it still faces many problems that are impossible to overcome in the short term. The main educational problems in Indonesia can be identified in terms of the way the education process is not supported by quality improvement.[4] There have been many efforts to improve the quality of

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[3] Zarkowi Soejoety, "Strategi Pendidikan dalam Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia untuk Mendukung Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Tekhnologi." In *Kumpulan Makalah Penunjang Simposium Cendikiawan Muslim tentang Membangun Masyarakat Indonesia Abad XXI,* ed. Komaruddin and Tasmian, Jakarta: Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI), 1994, p. 20.

[4] Darwis Sulaiman, "Budaya dan Strategi Pendidikan." In Komaruddin and Tasmian, p. 143 .

education in Indonesia, but the problems have increased since 1997. The problem of quality education is not only dependant on the availability of funds and equipment, but also on the people as contributors to civil life. What are the main problems of education in Indonesia and how to overcome the problems? What are the ICMI organization agenda to solve the educational problems in Indonesia?

II. Problems and the Way to Overcome Educational Problems in Indonesia

Uddin identifies eight educational problems and eight strategies to solve educational problems in Indonesia. The most important problem is teacher-oriented education. This educational system has as starting point in teachers, and it has been entrenched with certain characteristics starting from elementary school to university. Firstly, teachers are seen as all knowing, so their opinions are considered as always true and students are sinful if they interrupt their teachers. Secondly, teachers are the centre of information, so they have responsibilities to explain all teaching material systematically and clearly to the students. The second important problem is that the students are passive and they find it difficult to stand alone. They are afraid to ask questions and the teachers do not encourage the students. Moreover, students imagine that information from the teachers is always true and so always depend on their teachers and thus do not show initiative. The third important problem that is students are less interested in

getting information from libraries, because the teachers have set the literature that the students have to read.[5]

The fourth important problem is the state needs to perpetuate Indonesian as a national language, but the consequence is that students are not encouraged to study English as an international language and as a key of knowledge. The fifth important problem is that education is not objectively oriented. Spelling out the core curriculum in the study program is still rare in Indonesia. Therefore, constructive aims have never been established and systematically implemented. The sixth important problem is that education is not oriented towards problem solving. The curriculum that is usually offered to educational institutions contains no explanation of the conceptual bases of knowledge. The teachers explain the concepts in a systematic order and the students are asked to digest them. Consequently, students have become accustomed only to memorise concepts. The function of using concepts to solve problems is still rare in Indonesia.[6]

The seventh problem is that education is oriented to verbal cultural devices. Speaking with aphorisms is a ceremonial custom, which causes listeners to become spellbound. This verbal cultural device is used in the teaching process, while cultural writing is ignored. Another

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[5]Jurnalis Uddin, "Pendidikan dan Tantangan Abad XXI." In Komaruddin and Tasmian, pp. 367 – 368.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 368-369

important problem is that education lays emphasis on the provision of maximum information. This concept is seen as a way to fill the students with as much information as possible. This is reflected in the huge number of lessons and lectures in high schools and universities.[7]

With the acknowledgment of these problems, Uddin provides eight strategies to fix the education system in Indonesia. The first strategy is that education has to be oriented towards student-centred education. This system is different from teacher-centred education, because in this system the students have to be activated. The teachers are only intended to be facilitators to stimulate the students in order for them to study by themselves. The second strategy is that the students have to stand by themselves. In the teaching process, the teachers need to motivate the students to be more autonomous, right from pre-school.[8]

The third strategy is that the library must be a central part of the learning process. This strategy motivates the students to maximise their potential to learn in the library, and the teachers only function as directors and consultants to assist students to seek information as much as possible.

The fourth strategy is to bring into being English as a second national language. English as a second national language facilitates access to global information from the Internet, scientific journals, and books. To implement

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 370

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 371

English as a second language, it is necessary to teach English from elementary school to university.[9] Secondly, English should be intensified in all non-English lessons, such as economics, politics, mathematics, and history. This policy has been implemented in the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Alauddin Makassar since 1998 and in some other universities in Indonesia.

The fifth strategy is objective-oriented education. Education is a learning process that realises the purpose of national education as a national development aim. Every student should understand the purposes of education in order to realise their full potential. The sixth, related strategy is problem-solving-oriented education. The condition in the educational system of providing many concepts to students has occurred for a long time in Indonesia, without students realising the function of the concepts.

The seventh strategy is that education must be oriented toward writing and verbal customs. The ability to transfer ideas in seminars, symposiums, a congress or meeting is needed by many people. This ability can only be reached by encouraging students to read and asking them to make conclusions from what they read.[10] The encouragement of students to pursue an MA or Ph.D. degree in developed countries, such as in the United States, Europe, and Australia, is also greatly needed. It cannot be

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[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 372 – 373.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 374 - 376

denied that the developed countries have a leading edge in education and infrastructure, such as better library access to journals, that are very necessary for the development of Indonesian economy and society.

It is clear that in order to anticipate social transformation and the impact of global social change in Indonesia, these strategies have to be implemented. The students need to be prepared through the development of various abilities that will be required for future struggles.

III. ICMI Agenda in Education

Uddin's analysis and strategy is representative of ICMI approaches to solving educational problems. ICMI emerged from involvement in modern education (the Muhammadiyah) so education is the cornerstone of ICMI's role. The transformation of modern education is very important in the improvement of the quality of human resources and people's ability to meaningfully participate in an evolving civil society.[11]

In order to be able to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, as a part of the discourse of civil society development, modern education needs to be implemented in all of the educational aspects in Indonesia. According to Nurcholis Madjid, modern education is a superior to other educational modes, especially in terms of methodologies. One of the areas of superiority of modern education is the

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[11] The Concept of ICMI's dedication, http://www.ICMI.NET. June 2001, p. 1

cultivation of rationality, and the ability to compile knowledge and information with a result that shapes the systematic body of knowledge.[12]

ICMI intellectuals see the main purpose of education improving the quality of human resources. In addition, the General Patterns of the National Direction (GBHN) and the education Act No.2/1989 states that one of the characteristics of humanity is faithfulness to God.[13] This formulation is similar to the aim of education in Islam that its purpose is to intensify human religious service and to bring prosperity on earth in a way consistent with God's teachings.

Faith and piety are the basis of Islamic education. According to Islamic teaching, each person needs both faithfulness and education in order to implement their duties as a 'caliph', a leader or God's representative, in the world. In the Education Act No. 2/1989, religious education is education that prepares students to carry out their role in religious teaching.[14] According to Djojonegoro,[15] religious education in the National Education System, either formal or informal, exhibits four categories in its implication.

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[12] Nurcholis Madjid, Kunjungan ke Pesantren Annajah, http://www.ICMI.NET. June 2001, p. 1

[13] Wardiman Djojonegoro, "Transformasi Pendidikan dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia." In Tamsil Linrung *et. al.,* p. 128

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 129

[15] An ICMI member who became minister of education (199 - 2000)

The first category is religious education as one aspect of study in all curriculums and education levels. In elementary schools, religious education is compulsory together with the other twelve areas of study, while in high schools religious education is compulsory together with Pancasila and civics education. The importance of religious education is as a mode of moral instruction. The Department of Education Affairs established a policy to improve the quality of religious study at all educational levels in 1993 and 1994.[16] Several ICMI members who work in the Department of Education Affairs were involved in establishing this new policy.

The second category refers to the educational institutions, which represent organised religious education, such as in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and *madrasah* (Islamic schools). In the national education system, *pesantrens* have strong roots in Indonesian society, where religion is teaching, and study deeper and more intensive, even though the *pesantren* education format has a diversity of frameworks, spanning the spectrum from traditional to modern *pesantren*.[17] Most *pesantrens* are privately owned and have the potential to be developed. *Pesantren* existence is guaranteed on the basis of the Education Act No. 28 in 1990. In this Act, it is clear that *madrasahs,* including *pesantrens* as Islamic

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[16] *Ibid*.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 130

schools are very important assets for Islamic society.[18] ICMI members have had success through the strategic development of *pesantrens* in Indonesia. Many *pesantrens* throughout Indonesia are still under the traditional educational system, but this is being contested.

The third category is education in religious values. There is a value dimension in the way students can study how to love the environment, and realise its importance in human life, as well as the negative impact on human life if it is misused. Throughout environmental education, the students also realise that this universe is created by God, which is consistent with natural law.[19]

Another category is family as a part of informal education, which is the most important mode of religious education. Family is the first place of education and parents are the key to developing behaviour, cultural values, religious and moral values, and basic skills within children. In some developed countries there is a trend in society to make the family the basis of children's education under the slogan of 'back to the family', where the role of family is re-actualised to improve the quality of the children's personality and to development their moral values.[20]

It is clear that education can be oriented to prepare

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[18] Soejoety, Strategi Pendidikan dalam Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia untuk Mendukung Ilmu pengetahuan dan Tekhnologi, *op. cit.*, p. 29

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Wardiman Djojonegoro, *op. cit.*, p. 131

students to have good behaviour, values, and norms, which in turn plays an important role in the improvement of the quality of civil society in Indonesia. ICMI has made an effort to solve educational problem in order to improve the quality of the human resources which form the basis of a responsible and rational civil society. The feared alternative is the civil society of the Sukarno era which was characterised by the destructive tendencies of communalism and primordialism.

There remains however contradictory opinions regarding the Islamic education system, especially among *pesantrens.* On the one hand, Muslim intellectuals think that Islamic education is education that is oriented to help the students to become better Muslims. On the other hand, they think that Islamic education might provide knowledge and skills to students in the aspects of science, technology, and social science. The problem is that the institutions which provide instruction in the latter (high schools) are regarded as insufficient in terms of moral and religious instruction. They believe that it would be better if Islamic education in *pesantrens* is oriented to education that combines strong Muslim values with knowledge in science and technology.[21]

Society has a significant role in the development of *pesantrens.* Members of the Islamic community provide land and funds to build schools. Community participation is an

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[21] Soejoety, *Strategi Pendidikan dalam Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia untuk Mendukung Ilmu pengetahuan dan Tekhnologi, op. cit.*, p. 28

asset for Islamic society and *pesantrens*. However, there are some problems in *pesantren* education. The first problem is that there are limited numbers of qualified teachers, which discourages children from becoming *pesantren* students. Moreover, *pesantrens* do not have enough money to pay teachers properly.[22] Therefore, the participation of ICMI is needed to solve these problems, especially the condition of *pesantrens* in the country areas. Soejoety states that one of ICMI's programs is that education has to be focused on young people, especially those who are living in the country areas, so that they will be able to participate in modern society. Most of the *pesantrens* are in country areas, so these schools are important to the development of civil society in Indonesia.[23]

One example of ICMI's work in pesantrens can be seen in the training of students at Cintawana *pesantren*, Tasikmalaya, from December 19 to 20. This training was oriented towards the basic knowledge of motorcycle mechanics. From March 39 to April 3 1998, ICMI continued the training at an intermediate level in the same *pesantren*. ICMI also facilitated a machine workshop in the *pesantren*. In this realisation, ICMI was supported by the Religious Affairs Department and the Astra Bakti Dharma Foundation (ICMI's financial partner).[24]

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[22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 32

[24] Uchrowi and Usman Ks, ICMI Bergerak Lintasan 10 Tahun, *op. cit.*, p. 78

In the Gontor *pesantren*, the most famous modern *pesantren* in Indonesia, an information system network for libraries was sponsored by ICMI. By July 1994, the Gontor *pesantren* conducted a congress for the study of information networks based on the ICMI library. The congress discussed a collection of *kitab kuning* (books of Islamic thought, which contain Islamic law, philosophy, Islamic education, and Islamic history), international and national journals, and books on Western and Islamic philosophy.[25] Although these are very small and limited examples, yet they indicate the base of future development.

V.   Conclusion

There are eight educational problems in Indonesia: 1) Teacher-oriented education. 2) Passive and they find it difficult to stand alone passive and they find it difficult to stand alone. 3) Students are less interested in getting information from libraries. 4) The state needs to perpetuate Indonesian as a national language, but the consequence is that students are not encouraged to study English as an international language and as a key of knowledge. 5) Education is not objectively oriented. 6) Problem-solving-oriented education. 7) Education is oriented to verbal cultural devices. 8) Education lays emphasis on the provision of maximum information. However, there are eight strategies to solve educational problems in Indonesia: 1)

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 76

education has to be oriented towards student-centred education. 2) Students have to stand by themselves. 3) the library must be a central part of the learning process. 4) bring into being English as a second national language. 5 Objective-oriented education. 6) Problem-solving-oriented education. 7) Education must be oriented toward writing and verbal customs. 8) Students have to get information from internet.

It is clear that education can be oriented to prepare students to have good behaviour, values, and norms, which in turn plays an important role in the improvement of the quality of civil society in Indonesia. ICMI has made an effort to solve educational problem in order to improve the quality of the human resources which form the basis of a responsible and rational civil society. The participation of ICMI is needed to solve these problems, especially the condition of *pesantrens* in the country areas. The main agenda of ICMI organization in developing of Islamic education in Indonesia is that education has to be oriented to help the students to become better Muslims. The transformation of modern education is very important in the improvement of the quality of human resources and people's ability to meaningfully participate in an evolving civil society

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