

Higher Education of MUI Cleric Cadres In North Sumatera 1980-2020

Syahril Rambe¹, Hasan Bakti Nasution², Junaidi Arsyad³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
Corresponding Author: *syahrilrambe@umsu.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has established the Pendidikan Tinggi Kader Ulama (PKU), or Scholars Cadre Education Program, to train future ulama. This research aims to explore the dynamics and effectiveness of PKU programs in North Sumatera from 1980 to 2020, assessing their impact on producing capable scholars and evaluating their alignment with community expectations. A social historical approach is used to assess religious and social institutional elements relevant to the research theme. The study covers various aspects such as the objectives, curriculum, human resources, alumni, institutional management, and facilities of PTKU-MUI in North-Sumatra. The focus is on analyzing how the institution operates and develops in the social and educational context. The research results show that the PKU initiative is essential for ensuring the continuity of Islamic scholarship, addressing the shortage of knowledgeable scholars, and adapting to the evolving needs of the Muslim community.

Keywords: Education Program, Islamic Scholarship, Scholars Cadre

A. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is an Islamic organization that gathers scholars, leaders, and Muslim intellectuals to discuss issues for the benefit of the community. The outcomes of these discussions become fatwas, which serve as guidelines for Muslims throughout Indonesia.

The term "fatwa" is closely related to Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). Fatwa, derived from the Arabic term "al-fatwa," means advice or a response to questions regarding legal issues faced by individuals. The answers provided by scholars are not merely personal opinions but are based on the Quran, Hadith, ijma' (consensus), qiyas (analogy), and other accepted evidence. Therefore, a scholar must master the Quran, Hadith, fiqh, Arabic, and classical texts, as issuing a fatwa requires significant expertise.

MUI was established on July 26, 1975, in Jakarta during its first National Congress. Its members include religious figures, intellectuals, and Islamic leaders, including scholars who are trusted due to their knowledge and dedication. The answers they provide can be relied upon and held accountable both in this world and the hereafter.

Scholars play a crucial role in guiding the community as they are trusted for their knowledge, religious understanding, and virtuous behavior. The community views scholars as guides, custodians of religion, and role models. The Quran honors scholars, and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also highlights their esteemed position. Scholars, being the inheritors of the prophets, do not inherit material wealth but rather knowledge. This emphasizes the importance of their role in issuing fatwas, guiding, and reforming the community.

In Indonesia, religious educational institutions like madrasahs and pesantrens were traditionally the centers for producing scholars. However, due to changing societal demands and government policies like the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB Tiga Menteri), these institutions have shifted focus towards preparing students for higher education and careers, leading to a decline in religious education quality. This shift has caused concern among MUI and the Muslim community about the future of Islamic scholarship.

To address the issue, MUI has established the Pendidikan Kader Ulama (PKU), or Scholars Cadre Education Program, to train future scholars. PKU is seen as a solution to the scarcity of capable scholars and is part of MUI's commitment to educational development.

PKU programs have been set up in various regions such as North Sumatra, Medan, and Binjai, each with different durations and structures. The establishment of PKU is crucial due to the diminishing number of experienced scholars and the need to produce new generations of scholars who can uphold and propagate Islamic knowledge.

In conclusion, the PKU initiative is essential for ensuring the continuity of Islamic scholarship, addressing the shortage of knowledgeable scholars, and adapting to the evolving needs of the Muslim community. This research aims to explore the dynamics and effectiveness of PKU programs in North Sumatra from 1980 to 2020, assessing their impact on producing capable scholars and evaluating their alignment with community expectations.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Higher Education for Ulama Cadres (PTKU)

- Purpose and Similarities (Wahid 2017, Subhui 2016):
 - PTKU and PKU have the same goal of regenerating future ulama.
 - Both are institutions for the education and training of ulama, with PTKU focusing on graduates from upper secondary education, such as alumni from Madrasah Aliyah and pesantren.
- Differences from Madrasah and Pesantren:
 - PTKU is considered higher education, unlike pesantren and madrasah, which accept students from lower secondary education (Madrasah Tsanawiyah or equivalent).
- Type of Education:
 - PTKU is a program for higher education and training that can be pursued after completing upper secondary education, including for graduates from bachelor's (S-1) and diploma (D-III) programs.
 - PKU, on the other hand, is a non-formal and non-degree educational program with varying durations (from one semester to three years) depending on the managing institution's policies. Factors such as funding, facilities, teaching staff, and time allocation affect the duration of PKU education.

Existence of PTKU

PTKU, as an institution for training future ulama, has been operating since the 1980s and continues to exist into the 2020s (Wahid 2020). Its establishment is driven by:

1. Shortage and Crisis of Ulama: The need for specialized education to address the lack of ulama and to train a new generation.
2. Shift in the Goals of Islamic Educational Institutions: Changes in focus among pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic higher education institutions have created a demand for specialized institutions like PTKU.

Urgency of PTKU

The general urgency of PTKU is to prepare the future generation of ulama. Specifically, PTKU aims to (Roziqin 2024, Fihri 2023):

1. Form Personalities: Develop the personalities of ulama candidates by practicing pure Islamic teachings.
2. Develop Ethics: Instill morals and ethics in line with Sharia.
3. Enhance Preaching Skills: Improve the skills and abilities related to preaching.
4. Instill Leadership: Cultivate charismatic leadership qualities.
5. **Solve Problems:** Address life issues based on the Quran, Hadith, and ijtihad in accordance with Islamic principles.

Educational Components in PTKU

In general, the function of national education according to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 is to develop abilities, shape character, and create a dignified national civilization to enlighten the nation's life (Suryadi 2023). This education aims to Develop students' potential to become individuals who are faithful, pious, of noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible citizens.

Educational goals serve as standards that determine the direction of the educational process to achieve the desired outcomes and provide guidelines for setting and directing efforts to meet these objectives.

Curriculum of PTKU Education:

The curriculum is defined in the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) as a set of subjects taught in educational institutions or a set of courses related to a specific field of expertise. In Arabic, the term for curriculum is *manhaj*, which means a clear path that educators must guide their students through to develop their knowledge, skills, and personality (Ginting 2020).

From the perspective of Islamic education, the curriculum is a tool for educating students to develop both physical and spiritual potential, enabling them to become knowledgeable and pious individuals.

Human Resources in PTKU:

Human resources (HR) encompass all individuals who work and contribute within an organization or institution. HR is a key factor in an organization, playing a strategic role in carrying out activities and utilizing resources to achieve the organization's vision, mission, and goals. HR consists of the combined abilities of an individual's spiritual, intellectual, and physical aspects (Mukmin 2019).

In the context of educational institutions, HR includes both educators and students of PTKU. Educators are teaching staff who possess the necessary competence and qualifications as teachers, lecturers, or instructors involved directly in the educational process. HR in PTKU plays a dominant role in administering education and achieving high-quality educational outcomes.

PTKU Alumni:

The existence of alumni in an educational institution is a given, as alumni are the final outcome of the educational process. They play a crucial role in evaluating and serving as a benchmark for the success or failure of the institution. Alumni are individuals who have graduated from an educational institution (Saipuddin 2021).

The future paths of PTKU alumni generally include returning to their hometowns to serve there or continuing their education at higher institutions to expand their knowledge and insights. PTKU alumni are expected to become successors to the previous scholars, with the main targets being to become experts in religion, practitioners of religion, and defenders of religion. These three main targets determine the suitability and graduation of PTKU students, ensuring they are well-prepared to fulfill these roles upon graduation.

Institutional Structure of PTKU

Pendidikan Tinggi Kader Ulama (PTKU) is an institution established to educate and train future ulama, initiated by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). The term "institution" refers to a place, organization, or body set up to carry out activities or efforts to achieve organizational goals. Institutions are bodies or organizations aimed at conducting research or carrying out specific efforts. The concept of "lembaga" (institution) comes from the idea of a foundational structure or entity that shapes and organizes efforts toward a particular purpose (Zaizuddin 2022).

Facilities and Infrastructure of PTKU

Facilities and infrastructure are essential components for conducting educational processes and achieving educational goals (Saridjo 2009). They support the effective execution of teaching and learning by providing necessary tools and spaces. Facilities include physical items used directly in teaching, such as classrooms, desks, chairs, libraries, laboratories, and prayer rooms. Infrastructure refers to the underlying systems and structures, like land, buildings, and specialized rooms (e.g., offices, classrooms, labs, libraries, and prayer spaces), that indirectly support education.

Key Points:

- Facilities: Directly used in the educational process (e.g., desks, chairs, libraries).
- Infrastructure: Supports the overall educational environment (e.g., buildings, classrooms).

Both are crucial for facilitating teaching and learning, with facilities easing instructional delivery and infrastructure supporting the broader educational operations.

Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of North Sumatra as the Institution for PTKU from 1980 to 2020

Since the 1980s, many Islamic organizations in Indonesia, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and others, have recognized the importance of ulama cadre training to address the shortage of ulama by implementing education and training programs. The Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) also acknowledged this need and established the Pendidikan Tinggi Kader Ulama (PTKU) as a solution (Aji 2021).

MUI, as a forum for ulama and Muslim scholars, plays a crucial role in addressing and solving socio-religious issues. Established on July 26, 1975, in Jakarta, MUI has been instrumental in addressing the ulama crisis in Indonesia. MUI is committed to training ulama who can correctly teach and disseminate Islamic teachings and guide the community in understanding their faith. MUI North Sumatra, along with the central MUI and its branches, has been actively involved in developing and advancing PTKU. The goal of PTKU is to prepare future ulama by providing them with religious knowledge and additional skills so they are well-equipped to serve in society. This effort is part of MUI's mission to educate the community and effectively spread Islamic teachings.

C. METHODS

This research uses historical methods to trace and analyze the dynamics of the Education of Islamic Scholars (PTKU) MUI institution in North Sumatra from 1980 to 2020. The historical method is chosen to analyze and interpret historical data through stages of analysis, critique, and interpretation. This approach follows historical research procedures, including the analysis of data sources, historical evidence, and factors leading to the establishment of PTKU-MUI in the region. A social historical approach is used to assess religious and social institutional elements relevant to the research theme.

The study covers various aspects such as the objectives, curriculum, human resources, alumni, institutional management, and facilities of PTKU-MUI in North Sumatra. The focus is on analyzing how the institution operates and develops in the social and educational context.

research techniques involve several systematic steps:

- Topic Determination: Selecting a relevant and important topic, such as the history of PTKU-MUI.
- Heuristics: Collecting and categorizing data from primary sources (interviews with historical actors) and secondary sources (documents, photos, records).
- Verification (Source Critique): Testing the authenticity and credibility of data sources through external and internal critique.
- Interpretation: Analyzing historical facts with relevant theories to form a comprehensive interpretation.
- Historiography: Writing the final report following good writing practices, describing events chronologically, and presenting verified historical evidence.

The aim of this research is to provide a clear and comprehensive account of the historical dynamics of Islamic education at PTKU-MUI in North Sumatra, covering various operational and social aspects from 1980 to 2020.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 History of the Medan City Ulama Cadre Education (PKU)

Established in the 1980s, PTKU MUI North Sumatra was a pioneering institution in Islamic education and scholarship in Indonesia, particularly in North Sumatra. Its establishment inspired various levels of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to continue striving for the creation of future generations of scholars. The scarcity of scholars, coupled with challenges from technology and liberal thinking, has highlighted the urgent need for scholars to maintain religious and moral values.

Inspired by PTKU MUI North Sumatra, MUI Medan founded the Ulema Cadre Education Institute (PKU) in 2007 with the following goals:

1. Produce Quality Scholars: To produce a generation of scholars who are experts in religion, practitioners, and defenders of the faith.
2. Address the Scarcity of Scholars: To fill the gap left by deceased scholars in Medan.
3. Role of Scholars: To be community guides and provide religious rulings for the benefit of the Muslim community.
4. Focus of Education: To address the shift in Islamic educational institutions towards prioritizing professional and higher education, rather than producing scholars.

PKU MUI Medan, located in the MUI Medan building, faced limitations in facilities compared to PTKU MUI North Sumatra. Its educational activities ran from 2007 to 2010 and included six batches. The education was conducted in a semester format, with two batches per year, unlike PTKU MUI North Sumatra's six-semester system.

4.2 Curriculum Dynamics of PTKU MUI Binjai

The curriculum at PTKU MUI Binjai is designed to emphasize the study of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning). It aligns with the curriculums of PTKU MUI Sumatera Utara and PKU MUI Medan, reflecting its inspiration from PTKU MUI Sumatera Utara and its common goal of preparing future scholars.

The curriculum, according to Ustaz Ramli Abdul Wahid, includes:

1. Kitab Kuning: Core texts.
2. Memorization: Including Quranic verses and Hadith.
3. Methodology: Teaching techniques.

4. Practical Work: Direct application of knowledge.

The PTKU MUI Binjai curriculum consists of ten key religious knowledge areas, with courses adjusted each semester based on student needs and evaluations. The curriculum is subject to revision based on feedback and performance.

The educational programs at PTKU MUI Binjai include:

- Duration: Six semesters over three years, with full-day classes and residence in provided dormitories.
- Learning Schedule: Classes from 07:30 to 15:30 and from 20:00 to 21:00 daily, except Sundays and major holidays.
- Main Focus: Studying classical texts (90% of coursework), memorizing at least four parts of the Quran, understanding Hadith, and practical training such as preaching and writing scholarly works.
- Religious Practices: Performing Sunnah practices like fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, and additional prayers.
- Language Requirement: Mandatory use of Arabic in the dormitory for one year, with encouragement to learn English.
- Entrepreneurship: Encouragement to study entrepreneurship.
- Collaboration: Partnerships with Islamic higher education institutions to facilitate further study, with alumni pursuing degrees in Islamic education or Sharia.
- Final Assessment: Completing a written thesis (30-50 pages) as part of the graduation requirements.

These programs aim to ensure the quality and effectiveness of education and training at PTKU MUI Binjai.

4.3 Human Resources at PTKU MUI Binjai

At PTKU MUI Binjai, the teaching staff is referred to as "dosen" (lecturers), similar to other PTKU institutions like PTKU MUI North Sumatra and PTKU MUI Medan. Since PTKU is considered higher education after secondary school, the term "dosen" aligns with the general higher education terminology. However, students address the lecturers as "Ustaz" or "Syekh," reflecting the institution's role as both an educational and Islamic institution preparing future ulama.

Lecturers at PTKU MUI Binjai must adhere to specific qualifications and regulations, demonstrating discipline and responsibility. Key regulations for PTKU MUI Binjai lecturers include:

- Punctuality: Lecturers must be punctual for their teaching sessions.
- Attire: Lecturers are required to wear a kopiah or lobe while teaching.
- Religious Knowledge: Lecturers must be capable of reading and understanding various classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning).
- Preparation: Lecturers must prepare lecture materials in advance to ensure thorough teaching.
- Lesson Planning: Each lecturer must create a lesson plan (RPS) for each semester.
- Teaching Method: The use of presentation slides is prohibited in teaching.
- Class Routine: Classes should begin with the recitation of Basmallah and a prayer, followed by five minutes of Quran recitation by students.

- Closing: Lecturers must conclude classes with a maximum five-minute advice session.

PTKU MUI Binjai implements a quality assurance system based on the input-process-output model to enhance the quality of education and training for future ulama. The quality assurance process for human resources at PTKU MUI Binjai includes several stages:

- Selection of Students: The admission process is rigorous, prioritizing graduates from pesantren and madrasah who can read the Quran with correct tajwid and makhraj, have a solid foundation in Islamic knowledge, and possess basic Arabic language skills.
- Teaching Materials and Facilities: Effective teaching requires well-planned curriculum materials, adequate teaching resources, diligent preparation and punctuality of lecturers, and a comfortable learning environment.
- Evaluation: Student mastery of the material is assessed through mid-term and final exams each semester.
- Educational Evaluation: The institution conducts evaluations through meetings with lecturers to gather feedback and critique, held twice each semester (at the beginning and end).
- Parent Meetings: An annual meeting between PTKU management and the parents of students is held to discuss progress and issues.

These five standards constitute the quality assurance program for PTKU MUI Binjai, which is organized, implemented, and supervised directly by MUI Binjai, particularly its education division. The goal of this program is to improve the quality of human resources and institutional performance at PTKU MUI Binjai.

4.4 Alumni of PTKU MUI Binjai's

Alumni Activities from December 2023 to April 2014, students and alumni of PTKU MUI Kota Binjai have been actively involved in community life. They conduct religious studies on worship jurisprudence at mosques across Kota Binjai, hold regular study sessions after Fajr prayers at local mushollas, and serve as Friday prayer Imams and Khateeb.

Contribution to Education and National Development Alumni also play a significant role in national development and education by working as educators in various institutions, including public schools, private schools, pesantrens, and madrasahs. They teach religious subjects such as Quran-Hadith, Fiqh, Islamic History, and Tahfiz.

Role in PTKU Some alumni, such as Ustadz Jaka Ragil and Ustadz Harry Permana, are also involved in the administration of PTKU. This reflects that the knowledge gained during their studies at PTKU MUI Kota Binjai is applied and beneficial in their daily lives.

4.5 Educational Institutions of PTKU MUI Binjai's

PTKU MUI Binjai operates at a level comparable to a bachelor's degree program but cannot issue formal diplomas or accreditation. To address this, PTKU MUI Binjai collaborates with STAI-JM Langkat through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This partnership allows students to receive a nationally recognized degree after completing a total of six years of education between PTKU MUI Binjai and STAI-JM Langkat. Since PTKU MUI Binjai is a non-formal educational institution, it relies on formal institutions to provide accredited diplomas.

Funding PTKU MUI Binjai is a non-profit, non-formal educational institution offering free education. It covers all expenses for students, including tuition, living costs, and dormitory fees. There are no charges to students or their families, allowing students to concentrate on their studies. The institution's funding sources are variable and include:

- Financial support from MUI Kota Binjai, sourced from the local government's budget (APBD).
- Donations from zakat institutions, banks, infak, and various other sources.

This funding is not guaranteed or fixed, making PTKU MUI Binjai reliant on external, non-binding donations to sustain its operations.

4.6 Facilities Development of PTKU MUI Binjai's

At the beginning, the first batch of PTKU MUI Binjai in 2015 studied at the MTQN building on Jalan Bejomuna, Binjai Timur, Sumatra Utara, as PTKU MUI Binjai did not yet have its own building.

By the time of the second batch (2018-2021), PTKU MUI Binjai had moved to its own building on Jalan AR. Hakim, Binjai Utara, marking a significant improvement in its facilities. This development is notable compared to PTKU MUI Sumatera Utara, which took years to secure a dedicated learning building, and PKU MUI Medan, which shared its facilities with MUI Kota Medan. PTKU MUI Binjai's achievement in securing its own building, supported by land and building donations from the Binjai City Government, represents a major advancement in its infrastructure.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on Higher Education of MUI Ulama Cadres in North Sumatra 1980-2020

- a. Objectives of PTKU MUI: All PTKU MUI institutions in North Sumatra (Sumut, Medan, and Binjai) share the same goal: to produce ulama cadres who are experts, practitioners, and defenders of religion. Although the general goal is the same, the vision, mission, and educational programs of each institution differ.
- b. Curriculum: All three PTKU MUI institutions use the yellow book (kitab kuning) as the basis for their curriculum, with a focus on Sharia sciences. The curriculum includes the study of yellow books, memorization, practical work, and academic writing.
- c. Human Resources: These institutions focus on empowering lecturers and students, requiring them to have mastery of yellow books, Islamic religious sciences, Arabic language skills, memorization of the Quran and Hadith, and foundational ulama personality traits. Some lecturers have educational backgrounds from the Middle East.
- d. Alumni:
 - Alumni of PTKU MUI North Sumatra have contributed in various regions, including outside Sumatra and abroad, as educators, preachers, and members of MUI.
 - Alumni of PKU MUI Medan have not shown clear success in community service, though many have become educators, preachers, or entrepreneurs.
 - Alumni of PTKU MUI Binjai, despite being a newer institution with only three batches, are active in social and religious activities, and many are involved in mosque activities and education.

- e. Educational Institutions:
 - PTKU MUI Sumut is a non-formal Islamic higher education institution with a non-degree program, managed by the MUI Provincial Council of North Sumatra, with a three-year study system.
 - PKU MUI Medan is a non-formal education institution with a duration of one or two semesters and has ceased operations since late 2010.
 - PTKU MUI Binjai, also a non-formal higher education institution, has consistently operated since 2015 and continues to do so in 2024.
- f. Facilities:
 - PTKU MUI North Sumatra has met the standards for educational facilities and student dormitories.
 - PKU MUI Medan did not have its own learning facility and shared facilities with MUI Medan.
 - PTKU MUI Binjai, though relatively new, has adequately developed its facilities over time.

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