

Concept of Islamic Education According to Walisongo

Abdul Azis Khoiri¹, Faldo Riski Al Hidayah^{1*}

¹IAIN Sorong

*✉: Faldoriskiyn@gmail.com

Abstract

Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep pendidikan Islam menurut Walisongo melalui pendekatan library research, dengan menganalisis literatur relevan tentang metode dakwah dan pendidikan masing-masing wali, seperti Sunan Gresik yang mengajarkan pertanian dan membangun sekolah agama, serta Sunan Ampel yang memelopori pesantren inklusif. Hasil temuan menunjukkan bahwa Walisongo menerapkan pendekatan holistik dan akulturatif, mengintegrasikan syariat, tasawuf, seni budaya lokal (seperti wayang, tembang, dan gamelan), serta keterampilan praktis untuk menyebarkan Islam secara damai di Nusantara, mencakup tokoh seperti Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Muria, dan Sunan Gunung Jati. Implikasinya, model pendidikan mereka relevan untuk dikembangkan dalam konteks pendidikan Islam kontemporer di Indonesia guna membentuk karakter yang toleran, adaptif, dan berakhlak mulia.

Kata Kunci : Pendidikan Islam, Walisongo, akulturasi budaya.

Abstract

This research examines the concept of Islamic education according to Walisongo through a library research approach, by analyzing relevant literature about the methods of da'wah and education of each saint, such as Sunan Gresik who taught agriculture and built religious schools, and Sunan Ampel who pioneered inclusive Islamic boarding schools. The findings show that Walisongo applies a holistic and acculturative approach, integrating sharia, Sufism, local arts and culture (such as wayang, song and gamelan), as well as practical skills to spread Islam peacefully in the archipelago, including figures such as Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati. The implication is that their educational model is relevant to be developed in the context of contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia in order to form a tolerant, adaptive and noble character.

Keywords: Islamic education, Walisongo, cultural acculturation.

INTRODUCTION

In simple terms, walisongo means nine guardians, but philosophically it means nine people who are able to reach the level of guardian, a possible position them to control the swamp of the air (control the nine holes in humans). As a result, they were given degree guardian. (Saifullah, 2010) According to the Islamic Encyclopedia, nine scholars known as

walisongo were pioneers and fighters for the development of Islam on the island of Java in the fifteenth century (during the Demak Sultanate). "Wali" in Arabic means defender, friend, and leader. (Sultoni, 2016) The Walisongo group carries out Islamic da'wah based in traditional Islamic boarding schools (salafi), each of which establishes its educational institutions according to its da'wah area. Walisongo religious education consists of religious lessons derived from the Qur'an and as-Sunnah. In addition, his preaching strategy uses religious education, which is carried out locally, in accordance with the culture and traditions of the local community, so that it does not conflict with Islamic beliefs and can be accepted by the community without opposition. (Rosyadi & Ibdaisyah, 2022)

The concept of Wali Songo Islamic education is a da'wah-based educational model that developed in the Islamic traditions of the archipelago. This combines the teachings of monotheism, Sufism, with socio-cultural values which has become a culture for local community, so that education appears in the form of non-formal learning such as Islamic boarding schools, surau, art and oral traditions. (Salamah et al., 2025) The scholars used the process of assimilation and syncretization to ground Islamic teachings to the public. Implementation using this method tends to take longer, but with this method people are more receptive because the delivery uses peaceful methods. (Nahar et al., 2021)

METHOD

Library research (library research) refers to the process of conducting research using library resources, such as books, journals, databases, and other materials, to collect information and support academic or scientific questions. It involves utilizing the resources available in the library to explore and analyze existing literature, data, and sources related to a particular research topic or question (Abdurrahman, 2024). This research uses a library research approach (library research) which aims to study various literature that is relevant to the topic. This approach involves utilizing the resources available in the library to explore and analyze existing literature, data, and sources related to specific research topics or questions, resulting in a comprehensive synthesis that supports theoretical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Sunan Gresik

Most people consider Maulana Malik Ibrahim to be the first saint to preach Islam in Java, and he is considered the father of the walisongo. His first business was opening a shop. The stall offers cheap basic necessities. In addition, Malik Ibrahim is specifically committed to helping the community for free. In Gresik, he also helped improve the

quality of life of its residents. He thought of draining water from the mountains to irrigate the fields and rice fields. He taught new agricultural techniques and embraced many of the general public, namely Javanese who lived outside Majapahit rule. Malik Ibrahim tried to attract the attention of people who were being hit by civil war and economic crisis. He built a religious school in Leran, Gresik in 1419. (Nursaudah, nd)

2. Sunan Ampel

Sunan Ampel made a monumental contribution to the spread of Islam in the archipelago through an inclusive education system that is evenly distributed to all levels of society without discrimination, ensuring that each individual obtains knowledge according to their respective levels of ability, talent and needs, thereby creating true educational justice. His strategic approach not only emphasizes the basic teaching of reading the Koran with tartil and truth, but also integrates the development of in-depth Sufism such as patience, asceticism towards the world, and spiritual fasting who is consistently exemplified in his daily life as the main role model. Apart from that, students are equipped with a comprehensive understanding of Islamic law and its spiritual nature, which is a strong foundation for them to continue their mission of da'wah using systematic and sustainable Islamic boarding school methods. Through this educational innovation, Sunan Ampel is not only remembered as one of the main figures of Walisongo, but also as the pioneer of the establishment of a traditional Islamic boarding school system in the archipelago that is inclusive, adaptive, and able to survive and continue to develop dynamically to this day, becoming an eternal legacy for the religious life of Indonesian people (Rosyidah et al., 2025).

3. Sunan Bonang

Sunan Bonang name initially Raden Makdum (Maulana Makdum Ibrahim), meant a respected Islamic scholar from Hindi, while the laqab "Bonang" refers to the Bong Swi Hoo clan (his father) or the Rembang area. His journey of knowledge expanded through a pilgrimage to Mecca with Sunan Giri, studying with Sheikh Maulana Ishak, as well as a visit to Malacca as the center of Malay Islam in Southeast Asia, establishing multidisciplinary mastery: fiqh, ushuluddin, Sufism, art, literature and architecture. His interaction with Sunan Giri, a faqih scholar, straightforwardly divided the role of da'wah: Bonang studied Sufism wrapped in literary art, producing monumental suluk works such as *Suluk Wujil*, *Suluk Kaderesan*, *Suluk Caliph*, *Suluk Regol*, *Suluk Wasiyat*, *Suluk Bentur*, *Gita Suluk Dazed*, *Gita Suluk Latri*, *Gita Suluk Ing Aewuh*, until *Suluk Sunan*

Bonang. This approach reflects his contextual intelligence, where Sufism does not stand alone but is integrated with local culture, influencing his students such as Raden Mas Said. His intellectual heritage confirms Sunan Bonang as a polymathic cleric who harmonizes Islamic orthodoxy with artistic expression, becoming a model for inclusive da'wah for the next generation in the archipelago. Sunan Kalijogo, is none other than his da'wah education method through a cultural approach, namely wayang and tembang (Khumaidiyah, 2021).

4. Sunan Drajat

Raden Qoshim preached in a wise and gentle manner, teaching his followers to live in harmony, peace, and not to hurt each other, and to avoid division. Raden Qoshim, or Sunan Drajat, gives fatwas through traditional art to solve problems. One example is the pangkur song, called Pangudi Isine Qur'an or deepening the meaning of the Qur'an, which is accompanied by gamelan songs. From a moral perspective, Sunan Drajat emphasizing the importance of generosity, empathy and a spirit of mutual cooperation. While spreading Islamic teachings and principles, he adapted many noble teachings and local traditions that were still strong in the Lamongan community at that time. This can be seen from the artifact inscribed with piwulang chess in his grave complex. Sunan Drajat is considered one of the most influential Walisanga figures in society. When he grew up, Sunan Ampel ordered him to spread Islam on the coast of Java, which was once a defense of Majapahit and was inhabited by many Hindus and Buddhists. As indicated by songs such as macapat pangkur, which convey Islamic principles and eternal philosophy, he used art as a tool for preaching. A gamelan called "singo mengkok" was also made by Sunan Drajat. In addition, he made relief carvings in the form of lotuses and flowers depicting human life, helping Islam to be accepted peacefully. Sunan Drajat also wrote a book in Javanese Kawi with the letter begun. His famous work, "Layang Ambiya", discusses 25 prophets and the teachings of Sufism (Istiqomah et al., 2025).

5. Sunan Kudus

Sunan Kudus, or Raden Ja'far Sadiq, played an important role in the history of Islamic education in Central Java through a tolerant cultural da'wah approach, integrating Islamic teachings with local Hindu-Buddhist traditions to facilitate public acceptance. His education itself began with Sunan Ampel and Sunan Kalijaga, mastering jurisprudence, Sufism, literature and practical skills, which were applied when

establishing the Kudus Tower Mosque (1549 AD) as a learning center with acculturation architecture such as the Asta Sanghika padasan which resembled a Buddhist temple. The educational method is based on Gusjigang pajajar (dressed polite), nyawiji (unite), overlapping salira (help each other) equipped with symbols such as the prohibition on slaughtering cows, the art of the songs Maskumambang and Mijil, as well as wayang klitik to convey monotheism gradually without violence, thereby attracting the Abangan people to convert to Islam voluntarily. His legacy creates a model of inclusive education that is still sustainable in Kudus, where the mosque is a space for recitation, dhikr and memorization of the Koran. (Rubini, 2015)

6. Sunan Giri

Sunan Giri's educational concept (Raden Paku, 1442–1506 AD) focuses on a holistic approach that integrates religious knowledge with practical skills and local culture through the Giri Kedaton Islamic Boarding School in Gresik, which was the largest center of Islamic education in East Java at that time. He implemented a comprehensive curriculum covering fiqh, monotheism, Sufism, governance, commerce, agriculture, and carpentry, with students from different regions sent back for preaching in their origin, thus accelerating the organic spread of Islam without confrontation. The teaching method emphasizes bil hikmah (contextual wisdom), bil hal (exemplary morals), bil oral (dialogical lectures), bil qalam (written works), and bil fann (cultural arts such as wayang, songs, as well as children's games such as enggreng-enggrengan, congklak, hide and seek interspersed with Islamic values), forming the character of students who are honest, fair and adaptive to society. (Setiawan, 2015)

7. Sunan Kalijaga

Sunan Kalijaga's educational concept emphasizes the acculturation of Javanese culture with Islamic teachings through gentle and inclusive cultural da'wah, aimed at forming the character of human beings who are faithful, have noble character, are intelligent, and are adaptive to social contexts without causing conflict. The approach starts from long self-education with various teachers in the archipelago and abroad, producing dialogue-based teaching methods (encouraging freedom of expression of opinion), interactive lectures (recitation, discussion, question and answer), logical parables for understanding monotheism, moral example, drill experience worship, and ibrah-mau'izah for inner awareness. Educational media include shadow puppets to insert Islamic stories such as Dewa Ruci, macapat songs (Lir-Iilir, Sluku-Sluku Bathok),

gamelan, suluk, grebeg Maulud, and the transformation of offerings into salvation, which includes physical goals (health), morals (moral syar'i), intellectual (critical thinking), and practical benefits. (Riva'i & Nurdianti, 2018)

8. Sunan Muria

The educational concept of Sunan Muria (Raden Umar Said, son of Sunan Ampel) centers on inclusive cultural preaching in the Muria-Kudus region, integrating Islamic teachings with local Javanese traditions through the approach of tapa ngeli (fasting to survive in the mountains) and pager bowl (symbol of simplicity: plate as roof, bowl as house), aims to form a community character that is devout, tolerant, and spiritually and socially independent. He educated practical skills such as agriculture and crafts, the art of song (dudukampi, sinom) to insert the value of monotheism, the feast of salvation as a transformation of pre-Islamic rituals, as well as exemplary teaching through direct teaching in tombs and rural communities, emphasizing harmony between sharia, Sufism, and local wisdom without coercion. (Arafat et al., 2025)

9. Sunan Sunan Gunung Jati

The educational concept of Sunan Gunung Jati (Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah, 1448–1568 AD) focuses on fostering morals and Sufism through a contextual persuasive approach, integrating sharia, tarekat, essence and makrifat with Sundanese-Cirebon culture for peaceful Islamization in West Java. He founded the Gunung Jati Islamic boarding school and taught around, applying the maw'izhatun hasanah (gentle advice) method, mujjadi bilati hiya ahsan (wise dialogue), al-hikmah (wisdom), tadaruj (gradual), ta'awun (cooperation), deliberation, as well as the formation of a cadre of religious teachers, with art media such as wayang (shari'a), barong (tarekat), mask (essence), ronggeng (makrifat), proverbs, and acculturation mosque architecture. This approach includes free teaching in remote villages, monthly recitations, and direct example, forming a society that is devout, tolerant, and spiritually-politically independent. (Passa, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Walisongo applies a holistic and acculturative approach to Islamic education, integrating sharia, Sufism, local arts and culture such as wayang, tembang, gamelan, and practical skills to spread Islam peacefully in the archipelago. This approach includes figures such as Sunan Gresik (agriculture and religious schools), Sunan Ampel (inclusive Islamic boarding school), Sunan Bonang (suluk and art), to Sunan Gunung Jati (Islamic boarding school and persuasive

dialogue). The Walisongo educational model is relevant for contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia, forming a tolerant, adaptive and noble character through non-violent acculturation of local culture. This approach emphasizes inclusivity, exemplary, and integration of religious knowledge with practical skills as well as traditional arts.

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